

AN

# E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

## PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

## G E N E S I S.

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- I. We have now before us the *Holy Bible*, or *Book*, for so *Bible* signifies. We call it *the Book*, by way of eminency; for it is incomparably the best book that ever was written, the Book of books, shining like the sun, in the firmament of learning; other valuable and useful books, like the moon and stars, borrowing their light from it. We call it the *Holy Book*; because it was written by holy men, and indited by the Holy Ghost; it is perfectly pure from all falsehood and corrupt intention; and the manifest tendency of it is to promote holiness among men. The great things of God's Law and Gospel are here *written* to us, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might spread further, remain longer, and be transmitted to distant places and ages, more pure and entire than possibly they could be by report and tradition: and we shall have a great deal to answer for, if these *things which belong to our peace*, being thus committed to us in black and white, be neglected by us as a strange and foreign thing, Hos. viii. 12. The *Scriptures*, or *Writings* of the several inspired penmen, from Moses down to St. John, in which divine light, like that of the morning, shone gradually, (the sacred Canon being now completed,) are all put together in this blessed Bible, which, thanks be to God, we have in our hands, and they make as perfect a day as we are to expect on this side heaven. Every part was *good*, but altogether *very good*. This is the *light that shines in a dark place*, 2 Peter i. 19, and a dark place indeed the world would be, without the Bible.
- II. We have before us that part of the Bible which we call the *Old Testament*, containing the acts and monuments of the church, from the creation almost to the coming of Christ in the flesh, which was about four thousand years, the truths then revealed, the laws then enacted, the devotions then paid, the prophecies then given, and the events which concerned that distinguished body, so far as God saw fit to preserve to us the knowledge of them. This is called a *Testament*, or *Covenant*, (*διαθήκη*;) because it was a settled declaration of the *will* of God concerning man in a Federal way, and had its force from the designed death of the great Testator, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, Rev. xiii. 8. It is called the *Old Testament*, with relation to the *New*, which does not cancel and supersede it, but crown and perfect it, by the bringing in of that better hope which was typified and foretold in it: the *Old Testament* still remains glorious, though the *New* far exceeds in glory, 2 Cor. iii. 9.
- III. We have before us that part of the Old Testament, which we call the *Pentateuch*, or five Books of Moses, that servant of the Lord who excelled all the other prophets, and typified the Great Prophet. In our Saviour's distribution of the books of the Old Testament into the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the *Psalms*, or *Hagiographa*, these are the *Law*; for they contain not only the laws given to Israel, in the four last, but the laws given to Adam, to Noah, and to Abraham, in the first. These five books were, for ought we know, the first that ever were written; for we have not the least mention of any *writing* in all the book of Genesis, nor till God bid Moses write, Exod. xvii. 14.; and some think Moses himself never learned to write, till God set him his copy in the writing of the Ten Commandments upon the tables of stone. However, we are sure these books are the most ancient writings now extant, and therefore best able to give us a satisfactory account of the most ancient things.
- IV. We have before us the first and longest of those five books, which we call *Genesis*; written, some think, when Moses was in Midian, for the instruction and comfort of his suffering brethren in Egypt. I rather think he wrote it in the wilderness, after he had been in the Mount with God, where, probably, he received full and particular instructions for the writing of it. And as he framed the tabernacle, so he did the more excellent and durable fabric of this book, exactly according to the pattern showed him in the mount; into which it is better to resolve the certainty of the things herein contained, than into any tradition which possibly might be handed down from Adam to Methuselah, from him to Shem, from him to Abraham, and so to the family of Jacob. *Genesis* is a name borrowed from the Greek. It signifies the *original*, or *generation*: fitly is this book so called, for it is a *history of originals*—the creation of the world, the entrance of sin and death into it, the invention of arts, the rise of nations, and especially the planting of the church, and the state of it in its early days. It is also a *history of generations*—the generations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, &c. not endless, but useful genealogies. The beginning of the New Testament is called *Genesis* too, Matt. i. 1. *βίβλος γενέσεως*. The Book of the *Genesis*, or *Generation*, of Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for that Book which shows us our *remedy*, as this opens our *wound*. Lord, open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things both of thy Law and Gospel!

## CHAP. I.

The foundation of all religion being laid in our relation to God as our Creator, it was fit that that book of divine revelations, which was intended to be the guide, support, and rule, of religion in the world, should begin, as it does, with a plain and full account of the creation of the world—in answer to that first inquiry of a good conscience, *Where is God my Maker?* Job 35. 10. Concerning this, the pagan philosophers wretchedly blundered, and became vain in their imaginations; some asserting the world's eternity and self-existence, others ascribing it to a fortuitous concourse of atoms: thus *the world by wisdom knew not God*, but took a great deal of pains to lose him. The holy scripture, therefore, designing by revealed religion to maintain and improve natural religion, to repair the decays of it, and supply the defects of it, since the fall, for the reviving of the precepts of the law of nature; lays down, at first, this principle of the unclouded light of nature, That this world was, in the beginning of time, created by a Being of infinite wisdom and power, who was himself before all time, and all worlds. *The entrance into God's word gives this light*, Ps. 119. 130. The first verse of the Bible gives us a surer and better, a more satisfying and useful knowledge of the origin of the universe, than all the volumes of the philosophers. The lively faith of humble christians understands this matter better than the elevated fancy of the greatest wisest, Heb. 11. 3.

We have three things in this chapter, I. A general idea given us of the work of creation, v. 1, 2. II. A particular account of the several days' work, registered, as in a journal, distinctly and in order. The creation of the light, the first day, v. 3. . . 5; of the firmament, the second day, v. 6. . . 8; of the sea, the earth, and its fruits, the third day, v. 9. . . 13; of the lights of heaven, the fourth day, v. 14. . . 19; of the fish and fowl, the fifth day, v. 20. . . 33; of the beasts, v. 24, 25; of man, v. 26. . . 28; and of food for both, the sixth day, v. 29, 30. III. The review and approbation of the whole work, v. 31.

1. **I**N the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. 2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

In this verse we have the work of creation in its *epitome*, and in its *embryo*.

1. In its *epitome*, v. 1. where we find, to our comfort, the first article of our creed, that *God the Father Almighty is the Maker of heaven and earth*, and as such we *believe* in him. Observe, in this verse, four things.

1. The effect produced; *the heaven and the earth*, that is, the world, including the whole frame and furniture of the universe, *the world and all things therein*, Acts 17. 24. The world is a great house, consisting of upper and lower stories, the structure stately and magnificent, uniform and convenient, and every room well and wisely furnished. It is the visible part of the creation that Moses here designs to account for; therefore, he mentions not the creation of angels: but as the earth has not only its surface adorned with grass and flowers, but also its bowels enriched with metals and precious stones, which partake more of its solid nature and are more valuable, though the creation of them is not mentioned here; so the heavens are not only beautified to our eye with glorious lamps which garnish its outside, of whose creation we here read, but they are within replenished with glorious beings, out of our sight, more celestial, and more surpassing them in worth and excellency, than the gold or sapphires do the lilies of the field. In the visible world it is easy to observe, (1.) *Great variety*; several sorts of beings vastly differing in their nature and constitution from each other. *Lord, how manifold are thy works*, and all good! (2.) *Great beauty*; the azure sky and verdant earth are

charming to the eye of the curious spectator, much more the ornaments of both. How transcendent then must the beauty of the Creator be! (3.) *Great exactness and accuracy*; to these that, with the help of microscopes, narrowly look into the works of nature, they appear far more fine than any of the works of art. (4.) *Great power*; it is not a lump of dead and inactive matter, but there is virtue more or less, in every creature; the earth itself has a magnetic power. (5.) *Great order*; a mutual dependence of being, an exact harmony of motions, and an admirable chain and connexion of causes. (6.) *Great mystery*; there are phenomena in nature, which cannot be solved, secrets which cannot be fathomed or accounted for. But from what we see of heaven and earth, we may easily enough infer the eternal power and Godhead of the great Creator, and may furnish ourselves with abundant matter for his praises. And let our make and place, as men, remind us of our duty as christians, which is, always to keep heaven in our eye, and the earth under our feet.

2. The Author and Cause of this great work, GOD; the Hebrew word is *Elohim*, which be speaks, (1.) The power of God the Creator. *El* signifies the *strong God*; and what less than an almighty strength could bring all things out of nothing? (2.) The plurality of persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This plural name of God, in Hebrew, which speaks of him as many, though he is one, was to the gentiles perhaps a savour of death unto death, hardening them in their idolatry; but it is to us a savour of life unto life, confirming our faith in the doctrine of the Trinity, which, though but darkly intimated in the Old Testament, is clearly revealed in the New. The Son of God, the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, was with him, when he made the world, Prov. 8. 30. nay, we are often told that the world was made by him, and nothing made without him, John 1. 3, 10. Eph. 3. 9. Col. 1. 16. Heb. 1. 2. O what high thoughts should this form, in our minds, of that great God whom we draw nigh to in religious worship, and that great Mediator in whose name we draw nigh!

3. The manner in which this work was effected; God *created*, that is, made it out of nothing; there was not any pre-existent matter out of which the world was produced. The fish and fowl were indeed produced out of the waters, and the beasts and man out of the earth; but that earth and those waters were made out of nothing. By the ordinary power of nature, it is impossible that something should be made out of nothing; no artificer can work, unless he has something to work on. But by the almighty power of God, it is not only possible that something should be made of nothing, (the God of nature is not subject to the laws of nature,) but in the creation, it is impossible it should be otherwise, for nothing is more injurious to the honour of the Eternal Mind than the supposition of eternal matter. Thus the excellency of the power is *of* God, and all the glory is *to* him.

4. When this work was produced; *In the beginning*, that is, in the beginning of time, when that clock was first set a going: time began with the production of those beings that are measured by time. Before the beginning of time there was none but that Infinite Being that inhabits eternity. Should we ask why God made the world no sooner, we should but darken counsel by words without knowledge; for how could there be sooner or later in eternity? And he did make it in the beginning of time, according to his eternal counsels before all time. The Jewish Rabbins have a saying, that there were seven things which God created before the world, by which they only mean to express the excellency of

these things—The Law; Repentance; Paradise; Hell; the throne of Glory; the House of the Sanctuary; and the Name of the Messiah. But to us it is enough to say, *In the beginning was the Word*, John 1. 1.

Let us learn hence, (1.) That atheism is folly, and atheists are the greatest fools in nature; for they see there is a world that could not make itself, and yet they will not own there is a God that made it. Doubtless, they are without excuse, but the god of this world has blinded their minds. (2.) That God is sovereign Lord of all, by an incontestible right. If he be the Creator, no doubt, he is the Owner and Possessor, of heaven and earth. (3.) That with God all things are possible, and therefore happy are the people that have him for their God, and whose help and hope stand in his name, Ps. 121. 2.—124. 8. (4.) That the God we serve, is worthy of, and yet is exalted far above, all blessing and praise, Neh. 9. 5, 6. If he made the world, he needs not our services, nor can be benefited by them, Acts 17. 24, 25, and yet he justly requires them, and deserves our praise, Rev. 4. 11. If all is of him, all must be to him.

II. Here is the work of creation in its *embryo*, (v. 2.) where we have an account of its first *matter*, and the first *Mover*.

1. A chaos was the first *matter*; it is here called the *earth*, (though the earth, properly taken, was not made till the third day, v. 10.) because it did most resemble that which afterward was called *earth*, mere earth, destitute of its ornaments, such a heavy unwieldy mass was it; it is also called the *deep*, both for its vastness, and because the waters which were afterward separated from the earth, were now mixed with it. This immense mass of matter was it, out of which all bodies, even the firmament and visible heavens themselves, were afterward produced by the power of the Eternal Word. The Creator could have made his work perfect at first, but by this gradual proceeding he would show what is, ordinarily, the method of his providence and grace. Observe the description of this chaos. (1.) There was nothing in it desirable to be seen, for it was *without form, and void*. *Tohu* and *Bohu*, *confusion and emptiness*; so these words are rendered, Isa. 34. 11. It was shapeless, it was useless, it was without inhabitants, without ornaments, the shadow or rough draught of *things to come*, and *not the image of the things*, Heb. 10. 1. The earth is almost reduced to the same condition again by the sin of man, under which the creation groans; See Jer. 4. 23; *I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void*. To those who have their hearts in heaven, this lower world, in comparison with that upper, still appears to be nothing but confusion and emptiness. There is no true beauty to be seen, no satisfying fulness to be enjoyed, in this earth, but in God only. (2.) If there had been any thing desirable to be seen, yet there was no light to see it by; for *darkness*, thick darkness, *was upon the face of the deep*. God did not create this darkness, (as he is said to create the darkness of affliction, Isa. 45. 7,) for it was only the want of light, which yet could not be said to be wanted, till something was made, that might be seen by it; nor needs the want of it be much complained of, when there was nothing to be seen but confusion and emptiness. If the work of grace in the soul is a new creation, this chaos represents the state of an unregenerate graceless soul: there is disorder, confusion, and every evil work; it is empty of all good, for it is without God; it is dark, it is darkness itself: this is our condition by nature, till almighty grace effects a blessed change.

2. The Spirit of God was the first *Mover*; he *moved upon the face of the waters*. When we con-

sider the earth without form, and void, methinks, it is like the valley full of dead and dry bones. Can these live? Can this confused mass of matter be formed into a beautiful world? Yes, if a spirit of life from God enter into it, Ezek. 37. 9. Now there is hope concerning this thing; for if the Spirit of God begins to work, and if he work, who or what shall hinder? God is said to make the world by his Spirit, Ps. 33. 6, Job. 26. 13, and by the same Mighty Worker the new creation is effected. He moved upon the face of the deep, as Elijah stretched himself upon the dead child; as the *hen gathers her chickens under her wings*, and hovers over them, to warm and cherish them, Matt. 23. 37, as the eagle stirs up her nest, and *flutters* over her young, (it is the same word that is here used,) Deut. 32. 11. Learn hence, That God is not only the Author of all being, but the Fountain of life, and Spring of motion. Dead matter would be for ever dead, if he did not quicken it. And this makes it credible to us, that God should raise the dead. That power which brought such a world as this, out of confusion, emptiness, and darkness, at the beginning of time, can, at the end of time, bring our vile bodies out of the grave, though it be a *land of darkness as darkness itself, and without any order*, Job. 10. 22, and can make them glorious bodies.

3. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

We have here a further account of the *first day's* work. In which observe,

I. That the first of all visible beings which God created, was light; not that by it he himself might see to work, (for the darkness and light are both alike to him,) but that by it we might see his works, and his glory in them, and might work our works while it is day. The works of Satan and his servants are works of darkness; but he that doeth truth, and doeth good, cometh to the light, and coveteth it, *that his deeds may be made manifest*, John 3. 21. Light is the great beauty and blessing of the universe: like the first-born, it does, of all visible beings, most resemble its great Parent in purity and power, brightness and beneficence; it is of great affinity with a spirit, and is next to it; though by it we see other things, and are sure that it is, yet we know not its nature, nor can describe *what it is, or by what way the light is parted*, Job 38. 19, 24. By the sight of it let us be led to, and assisted in, the believing contemplation of Him who is Light, infinite and eternal Light, 1 John 1. 5, and the *Father of Lights*, James 1. 17, and who dwells in inaccessible light, 1 Tim. 6. 16. In the new creation, the first thing wrought in the soul, is *light*: the blessed Spirit captivates the will and affections by enlightening the understanding, so coming into the heart by the door, like the good shepherd whose own it is, while sin and Satan, like thieves and robbers, climb up some other way. They that by sin were darkness, by grace become light in the Lord.

II. That the light was made by the word of God's power; he said, *Let there be Light*; he willed and appointed it, and it was done immediately; *there was light*, such a copy as exactly answered the original idea in the Eternal Mind. O the power of the word of God! *He spake, and it was done*; done really, effectually, and for perpetuity, not in show only, and to serve a present turn, for *he commanded, and it stood fast*: with him it was *dictum, fac*

*tum—a word, and a world.* The word of God, that is, his will and the good pleasure of it, is quick and powerful. Christ is the Word, the essential eternal Word, and by him the light was produced, for in him was light, and he is the true *Light, the Light of the world*, 1 John 9.—9. 5. The divine light which shines in sanctified souls is wrought by the power of God, the power of his word, and of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, opening the understanding, scattering the mists of ignorance and mistake, and giving the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, as, at first, *God commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, 2 Cor. 4. 6. Darkness had been perpetually upon the face of fallen man, if the Son of God had not come, and given us an understanding, 1 John 5. 20.

III. That the light which God willed, when it was produced, he approved of; *God saw the light that it was good.* It was exactly as he designed it, and it was fit to answer the end for which he designed it. It was useful and profitable; the world, which now is a palace, would have been a dungeon without it. It was amiable and pleasant; *truly light is sweet*, Eccles. 11. 7, *it rejoiceth the heart*, Prov. 15. 30. What God commands he will approve and graciously accept of, and be well pleased with the work of his own hands. That is good indeed, which is so in the sight of God, for he sees not as man sees. If the light be good, how good is he that is the Fountain of light, from which we receive it, and to whom we owe all praise for it, and all the services we do by it!

IV. That God *divided the light from the darkness*, so put them asunder, as that they could never be joined together or reconciled; for *what fellowship has light with darkness?* 2 Cor. 6. 14. And yet he divided time between them, the day for light, and the night for darkness, in a constant and regular succession to each other. Though the darkness was now scattered by the light, yet it was not condemned to a perpetual banishment, but takes its turn with the light, and has its place, because it has its use; for as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night, and draw the curtains about us, that we may sleep the better; See Job 7. 2. God has thus divided time between light and darkness, because he would daily remind us that this is a world of mixtures and changes. In heaven there is perfect and perpetual light, and no darkness at all; in hell, utter darkness, and no gleam of light. In that world, between these two there is a great gulf fixed; but in this world, they are counterchanged, and we pass daily from one to another; that we may learn to expect the like vicissitudes in the providence of God, peace and trouble, joy and sorrow, and may set the one over against the other, and accommodate ourselves to both, as we do to the light and darkness, bidding both welcome, and making the best of both.

V. That God divided them from each other by distinguishing names; *he called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.* He gave them names, as Lord of both; *for the day is his, the night also is his*, Ps. 74. 16. He is the Lord of time, and will be so, till day and night shall come to an end, and the stream of time be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. Let us acknowledge God in the constant succession of day and night, and consecrate both to his honour, by working for him every day, and resting in him every night, and meditating in his law day and night.

VI. That this was the first day's work, and a good day's work it was; *the evening and the morning were the first day.* The darkness of the evening was before the light of the morning, that it might serve for a foil to it, to set it off, and make it

shine the brighter. This was not only the first day of the world, but the first day of the week. I observe it, to the honour of that day, because the new world began on the first day of the week likewise, in the resurrection of Christ, as the Light of the world, early in the morning. In him, the day-spring from on high has visited the world; and happy are we, for ever happy, if that *Day-star arise in our hearts.*

6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 3. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

We have here an account of the *second* day's work, the creation of the firmament: in which observe,

I. The command of God concerning it; *Let there be a firmament*, and *expansion*, so the Hebrew word signifies, like a sheet spread, or a curtain drawn out. This includes all that is visible above the earth, between it, and the third heaven; the air, its higher, middle, and lower regions; the celestial globe, and all the spheres and orbs of light above it reaches as high as the place where the stars are fixed, for that is called here the *firmament of Heaven*, v. 14, 15, and as low as the place where the birds fly, for that also is called the *firmament of Heaven*, v. 20. When God had made the light, he appointed the air to be the receptacle and vehicle of its beams, and to be as a medium of communication between the invisible and the visible world; for though between heaven and earth there is an inconceivable distance, yet there is not an unpassable gulf, as there is between heaven and hell. This firmament is not a wall of partition, but a way of intercourse. See Job 26. 7.—37. 18. Ps. 104. 3. Amos 9. 6.

II. The creation of it. Lest it should seem as if God had only commanded it to be done, and some one else had done it, he adds, *And God made the firmament.* What God requires of us, he himself works in us, or it is not done. He that commands faith, holiness, and love, creates them by the power of his grace going along with his word, that he may have all the praise. *Lord, give what thou commandest, and then command what thou pleasest.* The firmament is said to be *the work of God's fingers*, Ps. 8. 3. Though the vastness of its extent declares it to be the work of his arm stretched out, yet the admirable fineness of its constitution shows that it is a curious piece of art, the work of his fingers.

III. The use and design of it; *to divide the waters from the waters*, that is, to distinguish between the waters that are wrapt up in the clouds, and those that cover the sea; the waters in the air, and those in the earth. See the difference between these two, carefully observed, Deut. 11. 10, 11, where Canaan is, upon this account, preferred to Egypt, that Egypt was moistened, and made fruitful, with the waters that are *under* the firmament; but Canaan with waters from *above*, out of the firmament; even the dew of heaven, which *tarieth not for the sons of men*, Mic. 5. 7. God has, in the firmament of his power, chambers, store-chambers, whence he *wa-tereth the earth*, Ps. 104. 13.—63. 9, 10. He has also *treasures, or magazines, of snow and hail,*



*which he hath reserved against the day of battle and war*, Job 38. 22, 23. O what a great God is he, who has thus provided for the comfort of all that serve him, and the confusion of all that hate him! It is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy.

IV. *The naming of it; He called the firmament Heaven.* 'It is the visible heaven, the pavement of the holy city; above the firmament God is said to have his throne, Ezek. 1. 26, for he has prepared it in the heavens; the heavens therefore are said to rule, Dan. 4. 26. *Is not God in the height of heaven?* Job 22. 12. Yes, he is, and we should be led by the contemplation of the heavens that are in our eye, to consider *Our Father which is in heaven*. The height of the heavens should remind us of God's supremacy, and the infinite distance that is between us and him; the brightness of the heavens and their purity should remind us of his glory and majesty, and perfect holiness; the vastness of the heavens, their encompassing of the earth, and the influence they have upon it, should remind us of his immensity and universal providence.

9. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. 10. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good. 11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. 12. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. 13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

The third day's work is related in these verses; the forming of the sea and the dry land, and the making of the earth fruitful. Hitherto the power of the Creator had been exerted and employed about the upper part of the visible world; the light of heaven was kindled, and the firmament of heaven fixed; but now he descends to this lower world, the earth, which was designed for the children of men, designed both for their habitation, and for their maintenance; and here we have an account of the fitting of it for both, the building of their house, and the spreading of their table. Observe,

I. How the earth was prepared to be a habitation for man; by the *gathering of the waters together*, and the making of the *dry land to appear*; thus, instead of that confusion which was, v. 2, when earth and water were mixed in one great mass, behold, now, there is order, by such a separation as rendered them both useful. God said, *Let it be so, and it was so*; no sooner said than done. 1. The waters which had covered the earth, were ordered to retire, and to *gather into one place*, namely, those hollows which were fitted and appointed for their reception and rest: the waters, thus cleared, thus collected, and thus lodged in their proper place, he called *Seas*; for though they are many, in distant regions, and washing several shores, yet either above ground, or under ground, they have communication with each other, and so they are one, and the common receptacle of waters, into which all

the rivers flow, Eccl. 1. 7. Waters and seas often, in scripture, signify troubles and afflictions, Ps. 69. 2, 14, 15.—42. 7. God's own people are not exempted from these in this world; but it is their comfort, that they are only waters *under the heaven*, (there is none *in heaven*;) and that they are all in the place that God has appointed them, and within the bounds that he has set them. How the waters were gathered together, at first, and how they are still bound and limited by the same Almighty Hand that first confined them, is elegantly described, Ps. 104. 6...9, and is there mentioned as matter of praise. *They that go down to the sea in ships*, ought to acknowledge daily the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, in making the great waters serviceable to man for trade and commerce; and *they that tarry at home*, must own themselves indebted to him that keeps the sea with bars and doors in its decreed place, and stays its proud waves, Job 38. 10, 11. 2. The dry land was made to appear, and emerge out of the waters, and was called *Earth*, and *given to the children of men*. The earth, it seems, was in being, before; but it was of no use, because it was under water: thus many of God's gifts are received in vain, because they are buried; make them to appear, and they become serviceable. We who, to this day, enjoy the benefit of the dry land, (though, since this, it was once deluged, and dried again,) must own ourselves tenants to, and dependents upon, that God whose *hands formed the dry land*, Ps. 95. 5. Jonah 1. 9.

II. How the earth was furnished for the maintenance and support of man, v. 11, 12. Present provision was now made, by the immediate products of the upstart earth, which in obedience to God's command, was no sooner made, than it became fruitful, and *brought forth grass* for the cattle, and *herb* for the service of man. Provision was likewise made for time to come, by the perpetuating of the several kinds of vegetables, which are numerous, various, and all curious, and every one *having its seed in itself after its kind*, that, during the continuance of man upon the earth, food might be fetched out of the earth, for his use and benefit. *Lord, what is man, that he is thus visited and regarded*—that such care should be taken, and such provision made, for the support and preservation of those guilty and obnoxious lives which have been, a thousand times, forfeited! Observe here, 1. That not only the earth is the Lord's, but the *fulness thereof*, and he is the rightful Owner and sovereign Disposer, not only of it, but of all its furniture. The earth was *emptiness*, v. 2. but now, by a word's speaking, it is become full of God's riches, and his they are still; *his corn and his wine, his wool and his flax*, Hos. 2. 9. Though the use of them is allowed to us, the property still remains in him, and to his service and honour they must be used. 2. That common providence is a continued creation, and in it, *our Father worketh hitherto*. The earth still remains, under the efficacy of this command, to bring forth grass, and herbs, and its annual products; though, being according to the common course of nature, they are not standing miracles, yet they are standing instances of the unwearied power, and unexhausted goodness, of the world's great Maker and Master. 3. That though God, ordinarily, makes use of the agency of second causes, according to their nature, yet he neither needs them, nor is tied to them; for though the *precious fruits of the earth* are usually brought forth by the influences of the *sun and moon*, Deut. 33. 14, yet here we find the earth bearing a great abundance of fruit, probably ripe fruit, before the sun and moon were made. 4. That it is good to provide things necessary, before we have occasion to use them: before the beasts and man were made, here were grass and herb pre-

pared for them. God thus dealt wisely and graciously with man; let not man then be foolish and unwise for himself. 5. That God must have the glory of all the benefit we receive from the products of the earth, either for food or physic. It is he that *hears the heavens, when they hear the earth*, Hos. 2. 21, 22. And if we have, through grace, an interest in him who is the Fountain, when the streams are dried up, and the *fig-tree doth not blossom*, we may rejoice in him.

14. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: 15. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made the stars also*. 17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth, 18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that *it was good*. 19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

This is the history of the *fourth* day's work, the creating of the sun, moon, and stars, which are here accounted for, not as they are in themselves, and in their own nature, to satisfy the curious, but as they are in relation to this earth, to which they serve as lights; and this is enough to furnish us with matter for praise and thanksgiving. Holy Job mentions this as an instance of the glorious power of God, that *by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens*; Job 26. 13; and here we have an account of that garniture, which is not only so much the beauty of the upper world, but so much the blessing of this lower; for though heaven is high, yet it hath respect to this earth, and therefore should have respect *from it*. Of the creation of the lights of heaven we have an account.

I. In *general*, v. 14, 15, where we have, 1. The command given concerning them; *Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven*. God had said, v. 3, *Let there be light*, and there was light: but that was, as it were, a chaos of light, scattered and confused; now it was collected and modelled, and made into several luminaries, and so rendered both more glorious, and more serviceable. God is the God of order, and not of confusion; and as he is Light, so he is the Father and Former of lights. Those lights were to be *in the firmament of heaven*, that vast expanse which encloses the earth, and is conspicuous to all; for no man, *when he hath lighted a candle*, puts it under a bushel, but on a *candlestick*; Luke 8. 16; and a stately golden candlestick the firmament of heaven is, from which these candles give light to *all that are in the house*. The firmament itself is spoken of as having a brightness of its own, Dan. xii. 3, but that was not sufficient to give light to the earth; and perhaps, for that reason, it is not expressly said of the *second* day's work, in which the firmament was made, that *it was good*, because, till it was adorned with these lights on the *fourth* day, it was not become serviceable to man. 2. The use they were intended to be of to this earth. (1.) They must be for the *distinction of times*, of day and night, summer and winter, which are interchanged by the motion of the sun; whose rising makes day, his setting night;

his approach towards our tropic makes summer, his recess to the other, winter: and thus, *under the sun*, there is a *season to every purpose*, Eccl. 3. 1. (2.) They must be for the *direction of actions*. They are for signs of the change of weather, that the husbandman may order his affairs with discretion, foreseeing by the face of the sky, when second causes have begun to work, whether it will be fair or foul, Matt. 16. 2, 3. They do also *give light upon the earth*, that we may *walk*, (John 11. 9,) and *work*, (John 9. 4,) according as the duty of every day requires. The lights of heaven do not shine for themselves, nor for the world of spirits above, they need them not; but they shine for us, and for our pleasure and advantage. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus regarded! Ps. 8. 3, 4. How ungrateful and inexcusable are we, if, when God has set up these lights for us to work by, we sleep, or play, or trifle away the time of business, and neglect the great work we were sent into the world about! The lights of heaven are made to serve us, and they do it faithfully, and shine, in their season, without fail: but we are set as lights in this world to serve God; and do we in like manner, answer the end of our creation? No, we do not; our light does not shine before God, as his lights shine before us, Matth. v. 14. We burn our Master's candles; but do not mind our Master's work.

II. In *particular*, v. 16... 18. The lights of heaven are, the sun, moon, and stars; and these are all the work of God's hands. 1. The sun is the greatest light of all, one hundred and sixty-six times greater than the earth, and the most glorious and useful of all the lamps of Heaven; a noble instance of the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness, and an invaluable blessing to the creatures of this lower world. Let us learn from Ps. 19. 1... 6. how to give unto God the glory due to his name, as the Maker of the sun. 2. The moon is a lesser light, and yet is here reckoned one of the greater lights, because, though, in regard of its magnitude and borrowed light, it is inferior to many of the stars, yet, by virtue of its office, as ruler of the night, and in respect of its usefulness to the earth, it is more excellent than they. Those are most valuable, that are most serviceable; and those are the greater lights, not that have the best gifts, but that humbly and faithfully do the most good with them. *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister*, Matt. 20. 26. 3. *He made the stars also*; which are here spoken of, as they appear to vulgar eyes, without distinguishing between the planets and the fixed stars, or accounting for their number, nature, place, magnitude, motions, or influences; for the scriptures were written, not to gratify our curiosity, and make us astronomers, but to lead us to God, and make us saints. Now these lights are said to *rule*, v. 16, 18, not that they have a supreme dominion, as God has, but they are deputy governors, rulers under him. Here the lesser light, the moon, is said to *rule the night*; but, Ps. 136. 9, the stars are mentioned as sharers in that government, *the moon and stars to rule by night*. No more is meant, than that they *give light*, Jer. 31. 35. The best and most honourable way of ruling, is, by giving light, and doing good: those command respect, that live a useful life, and so shine as lights.

Learn from all this, (1.) The sin and folly of that ancient idolatry, the worshipping of the sun, moon, and stars, which, some think, took rise, or countenance at least, from some broken traditions in the patriarchal age, concerning the rule and dominion of the lights of heaven. But the account here given of them plainly shows that they are both God's creatures, and man's servants; and therefore it is both a great affront to God, and a great reproach to ourselves, to make deities of them, and give them

divine honours; see Deut. 4. 19. (2.) The duty and wisdom of daily worshipping that God who made all these things, and made them to be that to us, which they are. The revolutions of the day and night oblige us to the solemn sacrifice of prayers and praises, every morning and evening.

20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. 22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. 23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

Each day, hitherto, has produced very noble and excellent beings, which we can never sufficiently admire; but we do not read of the creation of any living creature, till the *fifth* day, which these verses gives us an account of. The work of creation not only proceeded gradually from one thing to another, but rose and advanced gradually from that which was less excellent to that which was more so, teaching us to press toward perfection, and endeavour that our last works may be our best works. It was on the fifth day that the fish and fowl were created, and both out of the waters; though there is one kind of flesh, of fishes, and another, of birds, yet they were made together, and both out of the waters; for the power of the first Cause can produce very different effects from the same second causes.

I. The making of the fish and fowl, at first, v. 20, 21. God commanded them to be produced; he said, *Let the waters bring forth abundantly*; not as if the waters had any productive power of their own, but, "Let them be brought into being, the fish in the waters, and the fowl out of them." This command he himself executed; *God created great whales, &c.* Insects, which perhaps, are as various and as numerous as any species of animals, and their structure as curious, were part of this day's work, some of them being allied to the fish, and others to the fowl. Mr. Boyle (I remember) says, he admires the Creator's wisdom and power as much in an ant as in an elephant. Notice is here taken of the various sorts of fish and fowl, each after their kind; and of the great numbers of both that were produced, for the waters brought forth abundantly; and particular mention is made of *great whales*, the largest of fishes, whose bulk and strength, exceeding that of any other animal, are remarkable proofs of the power and greatness of the Creator. The express notice here taken of the whale, above all the rest, seems sufficient to determine what animal is meant by the Leviathan, Job 41. 1. The curious formation of the bodies of animals, their different sizes, shapes, and natures, with the admirable powers of the sensitive life with which they are endued, when duly considered, serve, not only to silence and shame the objections of atheists and infidels, but to raise high thoughts and high praises of God in pious and devout souls, Ps. 104. 25, &c.

II. The blessing of them, in order to their continuance. Life is a wasting thing; its strength is

not the strength of stones, it is a candle that will burn out, if it be not first blown out; and therefore the wise Creator not only made the individuals, but provided for the propagating of the several kinds, v. 22. *God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply.* God will bless his own works, and not forsake them; and *what he doeth it shall be for a perpetuity*, Eccl. 3. 14. The power of God's providence preserves all things, as, at first, his creating power produced them. Fruitfulness is the effect of God's blessing, and must be ascribed to it; the multiplying of the fish and fowl, from year to year, is still the fruit of this blessing. Well, let us give to God the glory of the continuance of these creatures to this day for the benefit of man. See Job 12. 7.. 9. It is pity that fishing and fowling, recreations innocent in themselves, should be ever abused to divert any from God and their duty, while they are capable of being improved to lead us to the contemplation of the wisdom, power, and godness of him that made all these things, and to engage us to stand in awe of him, as the fish and fowl do of us.

24. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. 25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

We have here the *first* part of the *sixth* day's work. The sea was, the day before, replenished with its fish, and the air with its fowl; and, this day, were made the beast of the earth, cattle, and the creeping things that pertain to the earth. Here, as before, 1. *The Lord gave the word*; he said, *Let the earth bring forth*, not as if the earth had any such prolific virtue as to produce these animals, or as if God resigned his creating power to it; but, "Let these creatures now come into being upon the earth, and out of it, in their respective kinds, conformable to the ideas of them in the divine counsels concerning their creation." 2. He also *did the work*; he made them all after their kind, not only of divers shapes, but of divers natures, manners, food, and fashions: some to be tame about the house, others to be wild in the fields: some living upon grass and herbs, others upon flesh; some harmless, and others ravenous; some bold, and others timorous; some for man's service, and not his sustenance, as the horse; others for his sustenance, and not his service, as the sheep; others for both, as the ox; and some for neither, as the wild beasts. In all which appears the manifold wisdom of the Creator.

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl

of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

We have here the *second* part of the *sixth* day's work, the creation of man, which we are, in a special manner, concerned to take notice of, that we may know ourselves. Observe,

I. That man was made last of all the creatures, that it might not be suspected that he had been, any way, a helper to God in the creation of the world: that question must be for ever humbling and mortifying to him, *Where wast thou, or any of thy kind, when I laid the foundations of the earth?* Job 38. 4. Yet it was both an honour and a favour to him, that he was made last; an honour, for the method of the creation was, to advance from that which was less perfect to that which was more so; and a favour, for it was not fit he should be lodged in the palace designed for him, till it was completely fitted up and furnished for his reception. Man, as soon as he was made, had the whole visible creation before him, both to contemplate, and to take the comfort of. Man was made the same day that the beasts were, because his body was made of the same earth with theirs; and while he is in the body, he inhabits the same earth with them: God forbid that by indulging the body and the desires of it, we should make ourselves like the beasts that perish!

II. That man's creation was a more signal and immediate act of divine wisdom and power than that of the other creatures. The narrative of it is introduced with something of solemnity, and a manifest distinction from the rest: hitherto, it had been said, *Let there be light, and Let there be a firmament*; or, "Let the earth, or waters, bring forth such a thing;" but now the word of command is turned into a word of consultation, "*Let us make man*, for whose sake the rest of the creatures were made: this is a work we must take into our own hands." In the former, he speaks as one having authority, in this as one having affection, for his *delights were with the sons of men*, Prov. 8. 31. It should seem as if this were the work which he longed to be at; as if he had said, "having at last settled the preliminaries, let us now apply ourselves to the business, *Let us make man*." Man was to be a creature different from all that had been hitherto made. Flesh and spirit, heaven and earth, must be put together in him, and he must be allied to both worlds. And therefore God himself not only undertakes to make, but is pleased so to express himself, as if he called a council to consider of the making of him; *Let us make man*. The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it, and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Into that Great Name we are, with good reason, baptised, for to that Great Name we owe our being. Let them rule man, who said, *Let us make man*.

III. That man was made in God's *image*, and after his *likeness*; two words to express the same thing, and making each other the more expressive; *image* and *likeness* denote the likeliest image, the nearest resemblance of any of the visible creatures. Man was not made in the likeness of any creature that went before him, but in the likeness of his Creator; yet still, between God and man there is an infinite distance. Christ only is the *express* image of God's person, as the Son of his Father, having the same nature. It is only *some* of God's honour, that is put upon man, who is God's image, only as the shadow in the glass, or the king's impress upon the coin. God's image upon man consists in these three things, 1. In his *nature and constitution*, not those of his body, (for God has not a body,) but those of his soul. This honour indeed God has

put upon the *body* of man, that the Word was made flesh, the Son of God was clothed with a body like unto our's, and will shortly clothe our's with a glory like unto his. And this we may safely say, That he by whom God made the *worlds*, not only the great world, but man the little world, formed the human body, at the first, according to the platform he designed for himself in the fulness of time. But it is the soul, the great soul, of man, that does especially bear God's image. The soul is a spirit, an intelligent, immortal spirit, an influencing active spirit, herein resembling God, the Father of Spirits, and the Soul of the world. *The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord*. The soul of man, considered in its three noble faculties, understanding, will, and active power, is perhaps the brightest clearest looking-glass in nature, wherein to see God. 2. In his *place and authority*. *Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion*. As he has the government of the inferior creatures, he is, as it were, God's representative, or viceroy, upon earth; they are not capable of fearing and serving God, therefore God has appointed them to fear and serve man. Yet his government of himself by the freedom of his will, has in it more of God's image than his government of the creatures. 3. In his *purity and rectitude*. God's image upon man consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24. Col. 3. 10. He was upright, Eccl. 7. 29. He had an habitual conformity of all his natural powers to the whole will of God. His understanding saw divine things clearly and truly, and there were no errors or mistakes in his knowledge: his will complied readily and universally with the will of God, without reluctance or resistance: his affections were all regular, and he had no inordinate appetites or passions: his thoughts were easily brought, and fixed, to the best subjects, and there was no vanity or ungovernableness in them. All the inferior powers were subject to the dictates and directions of the superior, without any mutiny or rebellion. Thus holy, thus happy, were our first parents, in having the image of God upon them. And this honour put upon man, at first, is a good reason why we should not *speak* ill one of another, Jam. 3. 9, nor do ill one to another, Gen. 9. 6, and a good reason why we should not debase ourselves to the service of sin, and why we should devote ourselves to God's service. But how art thou fallen, O son of the morning! How is this image of God upon man defaced! How small are the remains of it, and how great the ruins of it! The Lord renew it upon our souls by his sanctifying grace!

IV. That man was made *male and female*, and blessed with the blessing of fruitfulness and increase. God said, *Let us make man*, and immediately it follows, *So God created man*; he performed what he resolved. With us, saying and doing are two things; but they are not so with God. He created him male and female, Adam and Eve; Adam, first out of earth, and Eve out of his side. ch. 2. It should seem that of the rest of the creatures, God made many couples, but of man, *did not he make one?* (Mal. 2. 15.) though he had the residue of the Spirit: whence Christ gathers an argument against divorce, Matth. 19. 4, 5. Our first father, Adam, was confined to one wife; and if he had put her away, there was no other for him to marry, which plainly intimated that the bond of marriage was not to be dissolved at pleasure. Angels were not made male and female, for they were not to propagate their kind, (Luke 20. 34...36,) but man was made so, that the nature might be propagated, and the race continued. Fires and candles, the luminaries of this lower world, because they waste, and go out, have a power to light more; but it is not so with the lights of heaven, stars do not kindle stars. God

made but one male and one female, that all the nations of men might know themselves to be made of one blood, descendants from one common stock, and might thereby be induced to love one another. God, having made them capable of transmitting the nature they had received, said to them, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.* Here he gave them, 1. *A large inheritance; Replenish the earth;* that is it, that is bestowed upon the children of men. They were made to dwell upon the face of all the earth, Acts 17. 26. That is the place in which God has set man to be the servant of his providence, in the government of the inferior creatures, and, as it were, the intelligence of this orb; to be the receiver of God's bounty, which other creatures live upon, but do not know it: to be likewise the collector of his praises in this lower world, and to pay them into the exchequer above, Ps. 145. 10, and (lastly) to be a probationer for a better state. 2. *A numerous, lasting family,* to enjoy this inheritance; pronouncing a blessing upon them, in the virtue of which their posterity should extend to the utmost corners of the earth, and continue to the utmost period of time. Fruitfulness and increase depend upon the blessing of God: Obed-Edom had eight sons, for God blessed him, 1 Chron. 26. 5. It is owing to this blessing which God commanded at first, that the race of mankind is still in being, and that as one generation passeth away, another cometh.

V. That God gave to man, when he had made him, a dominion over the inferior creatures, *over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air:* though man provides for neither, he has power over both, much more over every living thing that moveth upon the earth, which are more under his care, and within his reach. God designed, hereby, to put an honour upon man, that he might find himself the more strongly obliged to bring honour to his Maker. This dominion is very much diminished and lost by the fall: yet God's providence continues so much of it to the children of men, as is necessary to the safety and support of their lives, and God's grace has given to the saints a new and better title to the creature than that which was forfeited by sin; for all is our's, if we are Christ's, 1 Cor. 3. 22.

29. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

We have here the third part of the sixth day's work which was, not any new creation, but a gracious provision of food for all flesh, Ps. 136. 25. He that made man and beast, thus took care to preserve both, Ps. 36. 6. Here is,

I. Food provided for man, v. 29. Herbs and fruits must be his meat, including corn, and all the products of the earth; these were allowed him, but (it should seem) not flesh, till after the flood, ch. 9. 3. And before the earth was deluged, much more, before it was cursed, for man's sake, its fruits, no doubt, were more pleasing to his taste, and more strengthening and nourishing to the body, than marrow and fatness, and all the portion of the king's meat, are now. See here, 1. That which should make us humble. As we are made out of the earth, so we are maintained out of it. Once indeed, man

did eat angels' food, bread from heaven; but they died, John 6. 49: it was to them but as food out of the earth, Ps. 104. 14. There is meat that endures to everlasting life; the Lord evermore give us that! 2. That which should make us thankful. The Lord is for the body; from him we receive all the supports and comforts of this life, and to him we must give thanks. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, not only for necessity, but plenty, dainties, and varieties, for ornament and delight. How much are we indebted! How careful should we be, as we live upon God's bounty, to live to his glory! 3. That which should make us temperate, and content with our lot. Though Adam had dominion given him over fish and fowl, yet God confined him, in his food, to herbs and fruits; and he never complained of it. Though afterwards he coveted forbidden fruit, for the sake of the wisdom and knowledge he promised himself from it, yet we never read that he coveted forbidden flesh. If God give us food for our lives, let us not, with murmuring Israel, ask food for our lusts, Ps. 78. 18. See Dan. 1. 15.

II. Food provided for the beasts, v. 30. Doth God take care for oxen? Yes, certainly; he provides food convenient for them, and not for oxen only, which were used in his sacrifices, and man's service, but even the young lions and the young ravens are the care of his providence, they ask and have their meat from God. Let us give to God the glory of his bounty to the inferior creatures, that are all fed, as it were, at his table, every day. He is a great Housekeeper, a very rich and bountiful one, that satisfies the desire of every living thing. Let this encourage God's people to cast their care upon him, and not to be solicitous respecting what they shall eat, and what they shall drink. He that provided for Adam without his care, and still provides for all the creatures without their care, will not let those that trust him, want any good thing, Matth. 6. 26. He that feeds his birds, will not starve his babes.

31. And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

We have, here, the approbation and conclusion of the whole work of creation. As for God, his work is perfect; and if he begin, he will also make an end, in providence and grace, as well as here in creation. Observe,

I. The review God took of his work; he saw every thing that he had made: so he does still; all the works of his hands are under his eye. He that made all, sees all; he that made us, sees us, Ps. 139. 1...16. Omniscience cannot be separated from Omnipotence. Known unto God are all his works, Acts 15. 18. But this was the Eternal Mind's solemn reflection upon the copies of its own wisdom, and the products of its own power. God has hereby set us an example of reviewing our works. Having given us a power of reflection, he expects we should use that power, see our way, Jer. 2. 23, and think of it, Ps. 119. 59. When we have finished a day's work, and are entering upon the rest of the night, we should commune with our own hearts about what we have been doing that day; so likewise, when we have finished a week's work, and are entering upon the sabbath rest, we should thus prepare to meet our God; and when we are finishing our life's work, and are entering upon our rest in the grave, that is a time to bring to remembrance, that we may die repenting, and so take leave of it.

II. The complacency God took in his work. When we come to review our works, we find, to our shame, that much has been very bad; but when

God reviewed *his*, all was very good. He did not pronounce it *good*, till he had seen it so; to teach us, not to answer a matter before we hear it. The work of creation was a very good work. All that God made, was well made, and there was no flaw or defect in it. 1. It was *good*. Good, for it is all agreeable to the mind of the Creator, just as he would have it to be; when the transcript came to be compared with the great original, it was found to be exact, no errata in it; not one misplaced stroke. Good, for it answers the end of its creation, and is fit for the purpose for which it was designed. Good, for it is serviceable to man, whom God had appointed lord of the visible creation. Good, for it is all for God's glory; there is that in the whole visible creation, which is a demonstration of God's being and perfections, and which tends to beget, in the soul of man, a religious regard to him, and veneration of him. 3. It was *very good*. Of each day's work, (except the second,) it was said that it was *good*, but now, it is *very good*. For, 1. Now, *man* was made, who was the chief of the ways of God, who was designed to be the visible image of the Creator's glory, and the mouth of the creation in his praises. 2. Now, *all* was made; every part was *good*, but altogether, *very good*. The glory and goodness, the beauty and harmony, of God's works, both of providence and grace, as this of creation, will best appear, when they are perfected. When the top stone is brought forth, we shall cry, *Grace, grace, unto it*, Zech. 4. 7. Therefore judge nothing before the time.

III. The time when this work was concluded. *The evening and the morning were the sixth day*. So that in six days God made the world. We are not to think but that God could have made the world in an instant. He that said, *Let there be light*, and *there was light*, could have said, "Let there be a world," and there would have been a world, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, as at the resurrection. 1 Cor. 15. 52. But he did it in six days, that he might show himself a free-agent, doing his own work, both in his own way, and in his own time; that his wisdom, power, and goodness, might appear to us, and be meditated upon by us, the more distinctly; and that he might set us an example of working, six days, and resting, the seventh; it is therefore made the reason of the fourth commandment. So much would the sabbath conduce to the keeping up of religion in the world, that God had an eye to it, in the timing of his creation. And now, as God reviewed his work, let us review our meditations upon it, and we shall find them very lame and defective, and our praises low and flat; let us therefore stir up ourselves, and all that is within us, to *worship him that made the heaven, earth, and sea, and the fountains of waters*, according to the tenor of the everlasting Gospel which is preached to every nation, Rev. 14. 6, 7. All his works, in all places of his dominion, do bless him; and therefore, *bless thou the Lord, O my soul*.

## CHAP. II.

This chapter is an appendix to the history of the creation, more particularly explaining, and enlarging upon, that part of the history, which relates immediately to man, the favourite of this lower world. We have in it, I. The institution and sanctification of the sabbath, which was made for man, to further his holiness and comfort, v. 1. 3. II. A more particular account of man's creation, as the centre and summary of the whole work, v. 4. 7. III. A description of the garden of Eden, and the placing of man in it under the obligations of a law and covenant, v. 8. 17. IV. The creation of the woman, her marriage to the man, and the institution of the ordinance of marriage, v. 18. 25.

1. **T**HUS the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

2. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.

We have here,

1. The settlement of the kingdom of nature, in God's resting from the work of creation, v. 1. 2. Where observe, 1. That the creatures, made both in heaven and earth, are the *hosts*, or *armies* of them, which denotes them to be numerous, but marshalled, disciplined, and under command. How great is the sum of them! And yet every one knows and keeps his place. God uses them as his hosts for the defence of his people, and the destruction of his enemies; for he is the Lord of hosts, of all these hosts, Dan. 4. 35. 2. That the heavens and the earth are finished pieces, and so are all the creatures in them. So perfect is God's work, that nothing can be added to it, or taken from it, Eccl. 3. 14. God that began to build, showed himself well-able to finish. 3. That after the end of the first six days, God ceased from all works of creation. He has so ended his work, as that though, in his providence, he worketh hitherto, (John 5. 17.) preserving and governing all the creatures, and particularly forming the spirit of man within him, yet he does not make any new species of creatures. In miracles, he has controlled and over-ruled nature, but never changed its settled course, or repealed, or added to, any of its establishments. 4. That the eternal God, though infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, yet took a satisfaction in the work of his own hands. He did not rest, as one weary, but as one well-pleased with the instances of his own goodness, and the manifestations of his own glory.

II. The commencement of the kingdom of grace, in the sanctification of the sabbath-day, v. 3. He rested on that day, and took a complacency in his creatures, and then sanctified it, and appointed us, on that day, to rest and take a complacency in the Creator; and his rest is, in the fourth commandment, made a reason for our's, after six days' labour. Observe, 1. That the solemn observation of one day in seven, as a day of holy rest, and holy work, to God's honour, is the indispensable duty of all those to whom God has revealed his holy sabbaths. 2. That the way of sabbath-sanctification, is the good old way, Jer. 6. 16. Sabbaths are as ancient as the world; and I see no reason to doubt that the sabbath, being now instituted in innocency, was religiously observed by the people of God throughout the patriarchal age. 3. That the sabbath of the Lord is truly *honourable*, and we have reason to honour it; honour it, for the sake of its antiquity, its great Author, the sanctification of the first sabbath by the holy God himself, and, in obedience to him, by our first parents in innocency. 4. That the sabbath-day is a *blessed* day, for God blessed it; and that which he blesses is blessed indeed. God has put an honour upon it, has appointed us, on that day, to bless him, and has promised, on that day, to meet us and bless us. 5. That the sabbath-day is a *holy* day, for God has sanctified it. He has separated and distinguished it from the rest of the days of the week, and he has consecrated it, and set it apart to himself and his own service and honour. Though it is commonly taken for granted, that the christian sabbath we observe, reckoning from the creation, is not the seventh but the first day of the week, yet being a seventh day, and we, in it, celebrating the rest of God the Son, and the finishing the work of our redemption, we may and ought to act faith upon this



original institution of the sabbath-day, and to commemorate the work of creation, to the honour of the great Creator, who is therefore worthy to receive, on that day, blessing, and honour, and praise, from all religious assemblies.

4. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. 5. And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and *there was not a man to till the ground.* 6. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. 7. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

In these verses,

I. Here is a name given to the Creator, which we have not yet met with, and that is *Jehovah*; the LORD in capital letters, which is constantly used, in our English translation, to intimate that in the original it is *Jehovah*. All along, in the first chapter, he was called *Elohim*, a God of power, but now *Jehovah Elohim*, a God of power and perfection, a finishing God. As we find him known by his name *Jehovah*, when he appeared to perform what he had promised, Exod. 6. 3, so now we have him known by that name, when he had perfected what he had begun. *Jehovah* is that great and incommunicable name of God, which denotes his having his being of himself, and his giving his being to all things; fitly therefore is he called by that name, now that heaven and earth are finished.

II. Further notice taken of the production of plants and herbs, because they were made and appointed to be food for man, v. 5, 6, where observe, 1. The earth did not bring forth its fruits of itself, by any innate virtue of its own, but purely by the almighty power of God, which formed every plant and every herb, before it grew in the earth. Thus grace in the soul, that plant of renown, grows not of itself in nature's soil, but is the work of God's own hands. 2. Rain also is the gift of God; it came not till the LORD God caused it to rain. If rain be wanted, it is God that withholds it; if rain come plentifully in its season, it is God that sends it; if it come in a distinguishing way, it is God that causeth it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, Amos 4. 7. 3. Though God, ordinarily, works by means, yet he is not tied to them, but when he pleases, he can do his own work without them. As the plants were produced before the sun was made, so they were before there was either rain to water the earth, or man to till it. Therefore, though we must not tempt God in the neglect of means, yet we must trust God in the want of means. 4. Some way or other, God will take care to water the plants that are of his own planting. Though, as yet, there was no rain, God made a mist equivalent to a shower, and with it watered the whole face of the ground. Thus he chose to fulfil his purpose by the weakest means, that the excellency of the power might be of God. Divine grace descends like a mist or silent dew, and waters the church without noise, Deut. 32. 2.

III. A more particular account of the creation of man, v. 7. Man is a little world, consisting of heaven and earth, soul and body; now here we have an account of the original of both, and the putting of both together: let us seriously consider it, and say,

to our Creator's praise, We are *fearfully and wonderfully made*, Ps. 139. 14. Elihu, in the patriarchal age, refers to this history, when he says, Job 33. 6, *I also am formed out of the clay*, and v. 4, *The breath of the Almighty hath given me life*, and ch. 32. 8, *There is a spirit in man*. Observe then,

1. The mean original, and yet the curious structure, of the body of man. (1.) The matter was despicable. He was made of the dust of the ground, a very unlikely thing to make a man of; but the same Infinite Power that made the world of nothing, made man, its master-piece, of next to nothing. He was made of the dust, the small dust, such as is upon the surface of the earth. Probably, not dry dust, but dust moistened with the mist that went up, v. 6. He was not made of gold-dust, powder of pearl, or diamond dust, but common dust, dust of the ground. Hence he is said to be of the earth, *χοινης*.—*dusty*, 1 Cor. 15. 47. And we also are of the earth, for we are of his offspring, and of the same mould. So near an affinity is there between the earth and our earthly parents, that our mother's womb, out of which we were born, is called the earth; (Ps. 139. 15.) and the earth, in which we must be buried, is called our mother's womb, Job 1. 21. Our foundation is in the earth, Job 4. 19. Our fabric is earthly, and the fashioning of it like that of an earthen vessel, Job 10. 9. Our food is out of the earth, Job 28. 5. Our familiarity is with the earth, Job 17. 14. Our fathers are in the earth, and our own final tendency is to it; and what have we to be proud of then? Isa. 51. 1. (2.) Yet the Maker was great, and the make fine. The LORD God, the great Fountain of being and power, formed man. Of the other creatures it is said, that they were *created and made*; but of man, that he was *formed*, which denotes a gradual process in the work with great accuracy and exactness. To express the creation of this new thing, he takes a new word; a word (some think) borrowed from the potter's forming his vessel upon the wheel, for we are the clay, and God the Potter, Isa. 64. 8. The body of man is curiously wrought, Ps. 139. 15, 16. *Materiam superabat opus*—*The workmanship exceeded the materials*. Let us present our bodies to God as *living sacrifices*, Rom. 12. 1; as *living temples*, 1 Cor. 6. 19; and then these vile bodies shall shortly be new-formed like Christ's glorious body, Phil. 3. 21.

2. The high original, and yet the admirable serviceableness, of the soul of man. (1.) It takes its rise from the breath of heaven, and is produced by it. It was not made of the earth, as the body was; it is pity then that it should cleave to the earth, and mind earthly things. It came immediately from God, he gave it to be put into the body, (Eccl. 12. 7.) as, afterward, he gave the tables of stone of his own writing to be put into the ark, and the *urim* of his own framing to be put into the breast-plate. Hence God is not only the Former, but the Father, of spirits. Let the soul which God has breathed into us, breathe after him; and let it be *for* him, since it is *from* him. Into his hands let us commit our spirits, for from his hands we had them. (2.) It takes its lodging in a house of clay, and is the life and support of it. It is by it, that man is a living soul, that is, a living man; for the soul is the man. The body would be a worthless, useless, loathsome carcase, if the soul did not animate it. To God that gave us these souls, we must shortly give an account of them, how we have employed them, used them, proportioned them, and disposed of them: and if then it be found that we have lost them, though it were to gain the world, we are undone for ever. Since the extraction of the soul is so noble, and its nature and faculties are so excellent, let us not be of those fools that despise their own souls, by preferring their bodies before them, Prov. 15. 32.

When our Lord Jesus anointed the blind man's eyes with clay, perhaps he intimated that it was he who first formed the man out of the clay; and when he *breathed on his disciples, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, he intimated that it was he who first breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. He that made the soul, is alone able to new-make it.

8. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. 11. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12. And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx-stone. 13. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. 14. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. 15. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

Man consisting of body and soul, a body made out of the earth, and a rational immortal soul the breath of heaven, we have, in these verses, the provision that was made for the happiness of both; he that made him, took care to make him happy, if he could but have kept himself so, and known when he was well off. That part of man by which he is allied to the world of sense, was made happy; for he was put in the paradise of God: that part by which he is allied to the world of spirits, was well provided for; for he was taken into covenant with God. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified? Man that is a worm! Here we have,

I. A description of the garden of Eden, which was intended for the mansion and demesne of this great lord, the palace of this prince. The inspired penman, in this history, writing for the Jews first, and calculating his narratives for the infant-state of the church, describes things by their outward sensible appearances, and leaves us, by further discoveries of the divine light, to be led into the divine understanding of the mysteries couched under them. Spiritual things were strong meat, which they could not yet bear; but he writes to them as unto carnal, 1 Cor. 3. 1. Therefore he does not so much insist upon the happiness of Adam's mind, as upon that of his outward estate. The Mosaic history, as well as the Mosaic law, has rather the patterns of heavenly things, than the heavenly things themselves, Heb. 9. 23. Observe,

1. The place appointed for Adam's residence was a garden; not an ivory house, or a palace overlaid with gold, but a garden furnished and adorned by nature, not by art. What little reason have men to be proud of stately and magnificent buildings, when it was the happiness of man in innocence, that he needed none! As clothes came in with sin, so did houses. The heaven was the roof of Adam's house; and never was any roof so curiously ceiled and paint-

ed: the earth was his floor; and never was any floor so richly inlaid: the shadow of the trees was his retirement, under them were his dining-rooms, his lodging-rooms; and never were any rooms so finely hung as these; Solomon's, in all their glory, were not arrayed like them. The better we can accommodate ourselves to plain things, and the less we indulge ourselves with those artificial delights which have been invented to gratify men's pride and luxury, the nearer we approach to a state of innocence. Nature is content with a little, and that which is most natural; grace with less; but lust with nothing.

2. The contrivance and furniture of this garden were the immediate work of God's wisdom and power. The Lord God planted this garden, that is, he *had* planted it—upon the third day, when the fruits of the earth were made. We may well suppose it to have been the most accomplished place for pleasure and delight that ever the sun saw; when the all-sufficient God himself designed it to be the present happiness of his beloved creature, man, in innocence, and a type and figure of the happiness of the chosen remnant in glory. No delights can be agreeable or satisfying to a soul, but those that God himself has provided and appointed for it; no true paradise, but of God's planting; the light of our own fires, and the sparks of our own kindling, will soon leave us in the dark, Isa. 50. 11. The whole earth was now a paradise, compared with what it is since the fall, and since the flood; the finest gardens in the world are a wilderness, compared with what the whole face of the ground was before it was cursed for man's sake: yet that was not enough; God planted a garden for Adam. God's chosen ones shall have distinguishing favours showed them.

3. The situation of this garden was extremely sweet; it was in *Eden*, which signifies *delight* and *pleasure*. The place is here particularly pointed out by such marks and bounds as were sufficient, (I suppose,) when Moses wrote, to specify the place to those who knew that country; but now, it seems, the curious cannot satisfy themselves concerning it. Let it be our care to make sure a place in the heavenly paradise, and then we need not perplex ourselves with a search after the place of the earthly paradise. It is certain, wherever it was, it had all desirable conveniences, and (which never any house or garden on earth was) without any inconvenience; beautiful for situation, the joy and glory of the whole earth was this garden: doubtless, it was earth in its highest perfection.

4. The trees with which this garden was planted.

(1.) It had all the best and choicest trees in common with the rest of the ground. It was beautified and adorned with every tree that, for its height or breadth, its make or colour, its leaf or flower, was pleasant to the sight, and charmed the eye; it was replenished and enriched with every tree that yielded fruit grateful to the taste, and useful to the body, and so, good for food. God, as a tender Father, consulted not only Adam's profit, but his pleasure; for there is a pleasure consistent with innocence, nay, there is a true and transcendent pleasure in innocence. God delights in the prosperity of his servants, and would have them easy; it is owing to themselves, if they be uneasy. When Providence puts us into an Eden of plenty and pleasure, we ought to *serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart*, in the abundance of the good things he gives us. But, (2.) It had two extraordinary trees peculiar to itself; on earth there were not their like. [1.] There was the *tree of life in the midst of the garden*, which was not so much a memorandum to him of the Fountain and Author of his life, nor perhaps any natural means to preserve or prolong life; but it was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam,

assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker, upon condition of his perseverance in this state of innocency and obedience. Of this he might eat and live. Christ is now to us the Tree of Life, Rev. 2. 7.—22. 2, and the *Bread of life*, John 6. 48. 53. [2.] There was the *Tree of the knowledge of good and evil*, so called, not because it had any virtue in it to beget or increase useful knowledge, surely then it would not have been forbidden; but, *First*, Because there was an express positive revelation of the will of God concerning this tree, so that by it he might know moral good and evil. What is good? It is good not to eat of this tree. What is evil? It is evil to eat of this tree. The distinction between all other moral good and evil was written in the heart of man by nature; but this which resulted from a positive law, was written upon this tree. *Secondly*, Because, in the event, it proved to give Adam an experimental knowledge of good by the loss of it, and of evil by the sense of it. As the covenant of grace has in it, not only, *Believe and be saved*, but also, *Believe not, and be damned*, Mark 16. 16, so the covenant of innocency had in it, not only “Do this and live,” which was sealed and confirmed by the tree of life; but, “Fail and die,” which man was assured of by this other tree; “Touch it at your peril!” so that, in these two trees, God set before Adam *good and evil, the blessing and the curse*, Deut. 30. 19. These two trees were as two sacraments.

5. The rivers with which this garden was watered, v. 10. . . 14. These four rivers (or one river branched into four streams) contributed much both to the pleasantness and the fruitfulness of this garden. The land of Sodom is said to be *well-watered every where as the garden of the Lord*, ch. 13. 10. Observe, That which God plants, he will take care to keep watered. The trees of righteousness are set by the rivers, Ps. 1. 3. In the heavenly paradise there is a river infinitely surpassing these; for it is a river of the water of life, not coming out of Eden, as this, but proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, Rev. 22. 1. a river that *makes glad the city of our God*, Ps. 46. 4. Hiddekel and Euphrates are rivers of Babylon, which we read of elsewhere; by these the captive Jews sat down and *wept, when they remembered Zion*, Ps. 137. 1. but methinks they had much more reason to weep, (and so have we,) at the remembrance of Eden; Adam’s paradise was their prison; such wretched work has sin made. Of the land of Havilah, it is said, v. 11, 12, *that the gold of that land was good, and that there was bdellium, and the onyx-stone*: surely this is mentioned, that the wealth which the land of Havilah boasted of, might be as a foil to that which was the glory of the land of Eden. Havilah had gold, and spices, and precious stones; but Eden had that which was infinitely better, the tree of life, and communion with God. So we may say of the Africans and Indians; “They have the gold, but we have the gospel. The gold of their land is good, but the riches of our’s are infinitely better.”

II. The placing of man in this paradise of delight, v. 13, where observe,

1. How God put him in possession of it. *The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden*; so v. 8, 15. Note here, (1.) That man was made *out of* paradise; for, after God had formed him, he put him into the garden: he was made of common clay, not of paradise-dust. He lived *out of* Eden before he lived in it, that he might see that all the comforts of his paradise-state were owing to God’s free grace. He could not plead a tenent right to the garden, for he was not born upon

the premises, nor had any thing but what he received; all boasting was hereby for ever excluded. (2.) The same God that was the Author of his being, was the Author of his bliss: the same hand that made him a living soul, planted the tree of life for him, and settled him by it; he that made us, is alone able to make us happy; he that is the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; he, and none but he, can effectually provide for the felicity of both. (3.) It adds much to the comfort of any condition, if we have plainly seen God going before us, and putting us into it. If we have not forced providence, but followed it, and taken the hints of direction it has given us, we may hope to find a paradise there, where otherwise we could not have expected it; see Ps. 47. 4.

2. How God appointed him business and employment; he put him there, not like Leviathan into the waters, to play therein, but to dress the garden, and to keep it. Paradise itself was not a place of exemption from work. Note here, (1.) That we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. He that made us these souls and bodies, has given us something to work *with*; and he that gave us this earth for our habitation, has made us something to work *on*. If either a high extraction, or a great estate, or a large dominion, or perfect innocency, or a genius for pure contemplation, or a small family, could have given a man a writ of ease, Adam had not been set to work; but he that gave us being, has given us business, to serve him and our generation, and to work out our salvation: if we do not mind our business, we are unworthy of our being and maintenance. (2.) That secular employments will very well consist with a state of innocency, and a life of communion with God. The sons and heirs of heaven, while they are here in this world, have something to do about this earth, which must have its share of their time and thoughts; and if they do it with an eye to God, they are as truly serving him in it, as when they are upon their knees. (3.) That the husbandman’s calling is an ancient and honourable calling; it was needful even in paradise. The garden of Eden, though it needed not to be weeded, (for thorns and thistles were not yet a nuisance,) yet it must be dressed and kept. Nature, even in its primitive state, left room for the improvements of art and industry. It was a calling fit for a state of innocency, making a provision for life, and not for lust; and giving man an opportunity of admiring the Creator, and acknowledging his providence; while his hands were about his trees, his heart might be with his God. (4.) There is a true pleasure in the business which God calls us to, and employs us in; Adam’s work was so far from being an alloy, that it was an addition, to the pleasures of paradise; he could not have been happy, if he had been idle: it is still a law, He that will not work, has no right to eat, 2 Thess. 3. 10. Prov. 27. 23.

III. The command which God gave to man in innocency, and the covenant he then took him into. Hitherto, we have seen God, man’s powerful Creator, and his bountiful Benefactor; now he appears as his Ruler and Lawgiver. God put him into the garden of Eden, not to live there as he might list, but to be under government. As we are not allowed to be idle in this world, and to do nothing, so we are not allowed to be wilful, and do what we please. When God had given man a dominion over the creatures, he would let him know that still he himself was under the government of his Creator.

16. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying. Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. 17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou

shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Observe here,

I. God's authority over man, as a creature that had reason and freedom of will. The Lord God commanded the man, who stood now as a public person, the father and representative of all mankind, to receive law, as he had lately received a nature, for himself, and all his. God commanded all the creatures, according to their capacity; the settled course of nature is a law, Ps. 148. 6.—104. 9. The brute-creatures have their respective instincts; but man was made capable of performing reasonable service, and therefore receives, not only the command of a Creator, but the command of a Prince and Master. Though Adam was a very great man, a very good man, and a very happy man, yet the Lord God commanded him; and the command was no disparagement to his greatness, no reproach to his goodness, nor any diminution at all to his happiness. Let us acknowledge God's right to rule us, and our own obligations to be ruled by him; and never allow any will of our own, in contradiction to, or competition with, the holy will of God.

II. The particular act of this authority, in prescribing to him what he should do, and upon what terms he should stand with his Creator. Here is,

1. A confirmation of his present happiness to him, in that grant, *Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat.* This was not only an allowance of liberty to him, in taking the delicious fruits of paradise, as a recompense for his care and pains in dressing and keeping it, (1 Cor. 9. 7, 10.) but it was, withal, an assurance of life to him, immortal life, upon his obedience. For the tree of life being put in the midst of the garden, v. 9, as the heart and soul of it, doubtless, God had an eye to that, especially in this grant; and therefore, when, upon his revolt, this grant is recalled, no notice is taken of any tree of the garden as prohibited to him, except the tree of life, ch. 3. 22, of which it is there said, he might have eaten and *lived for ever*, that is, never died, nor ever lost his happiness. "Continue holy as thou art, in conformity to thy Creator's will, and thou shalt continue happy as thou art, in the enjoyment of thy Creator's favour, either in this paradise, or in a better." Thus, upon condition of perfect personal and perpetual obedience, Adam was sure of paradise to himself and his heirs for ever.

2. A trial of his obedience, upon pain of the forfeiture of all his happiness; but of the other tree, which stood very near the tree of life, (for they are both said to be in the midst of the garden,) and which was called the tree of knowledge, in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; as if he had said, "Know, Adam, that thou art now upon thy good behaviour, thou art put into paradise upon trial; be observant, be obedient, and thou art made for ever; otherwise thou wilt be as miserable, as now thou art happy." Here, (1.) Adam is threatened with death, in case of disobedience; *dying thou shalt die*, denoting a sure and dreadful sentence, as, in the former part of this covenant, *eating thou shalt eat*, denotes a free and full grant. Observe, [1.] That even Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening; fear is one of the handles of the soul, by which it is taken hold of and held. If he then needed this hedge, much more do we now. [2.] The penalty threatened, is death, *Thou shalt die*, that is, "Thou shalt be debarr'd from the tree of life, and all the good that is signified by it, all the happiness thou hast, either in possession or prospect; and thou shalt become liable to death, and all the miseries that preface it and attend it." [3.] This was threatened as the immediate consequence

of sin, *In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die*, that is, "Thou shalt become mortal and capable of dying, the grant of immortality shall be recalled, and that defence shall depart from thee. Thou shalt become obnoxious to death, like a condemned malefactor that is dead in law;" (only because Adam was to be the root of mankind, he was reprieved;) "nay, the harbingers and forerunners of death shall immediately seize thee, and thy life, henceforward, shall be a dying life;" and this surely; it is a settled rule, *the soul that sinneth, it shall die.* (2.) Adam is tried with a positive law, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Now it was very proper to make trial of his obedience by such a command as this, [1.] Because the reason of it is fetched purely from the will of the Law-maker. Adam had in his nature an aversion to that which was evil in itself, and therefore he is tried in a thing which was evil, only because it was forbidden; and being in a small thing, it was the more fit to prove his obedience by. [2.] Because the restraint of it is laid upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, which, in the corrupt nature of man, are the two great fountains of sin. This prohibition checked both his appetite towards sensitive delights and his ambition of curious knowledge; that his body might be ruled by his soul, and his soul by his God.

Thus easy, thus happy, was man in his state of innocency, having all that heart could wish to make him so. How good was God to him! How many favours did he load him with! How easy were the laws he gave him! How kind the covenant he made with him! Yet man, being in honour, understood not his own interest, but soon became as the beast that perish.

18. And the Lord God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.* 19. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Here we have,

1. An instance of the Creator's care of man, and his fatherly concern for his comfort, v. 18. Though God had let him know that he was a subject, by giving him a command, v. 16, 17, yet here he lets him know also, for his encouragement in his obedience, that he was a friend, and a favourite, and one whose satisfaction he was tender of. Observe,

1. How God graciously pitied his solitude; *It is not good that man, this man, should be alone.* Though there was an upper world of angels, and a lower world of brutes, and he between them, yet there being none of the same nature and rank of beings with himself, none that he could converse familiarly with, he might be truly said to be alone. Now he that made him, knew both him, and what was good for him, better than he did himself, and he said, "It is not good that he should continue thus alone." (1.) It is not for his comfort; for man is a sociable creature, it is a pleasure to him to exchange knowledge and affection with those of his own kind, to inform and to be informed, to love and to be beloved. What God here says of the first man, Solomon says of all men, (Eccl. 4. 9, &c.) that *two are better than one, and woe to him that is alone.* If there were but one man in the world, what a melan-

choly man must he needs be! Perfect solitude would turn a paradise into a desert, and a palace into a dungeon. Those therefore are foolish who are selfish, and would be placed alone in the earth. (2.) It is not for the increase and continuance of his kind; God could have made a world of men, at first, to replenish the earth, as he replenished heaven with a world of angels: but the place would have been too straight for the designed number of men to live together at once; therefore God saw it fit to make up that number by a succession of generations, which, as God had formed man, must be from two, and those male and female; one will be ever one.

2. How God graciously resolved to provide society for him. The result of this reasoning concerning him, was, this kind resolution, *I will make a help meet for him; a help like him*, (so some read it,) one of the same nature, and the same rank of beings; a help *near* him, (so others,) one to cohabit with him, and to be always at hand; a help *before* him, (so others,) one that he should look upon with pleasure and delight. Note hence, (1.) That in our best state in this world, we have need of one another's help; for we are members one of another, and the eye cannot say to the hand, *I have no need of thee*, 1 Cor. 12. 21. We must therefore be glad to receive help from others, and give help to others, as there is occasion. (2.) That it is God only who perfectly knows our wants, and is perfectly able to supply them all, Phil. 4. 19. In him alone our help is, and from him are all our helpers. (3.) That a suitable wife is a help meet, and is from the Lord. The relation is then likely to be comfortable, when meetness directs and determines the choice, and mutual helpfulness is the constant care and endeavour, 1 Cor. 7. 33, 34. (4.) That family society, if that is agreeable, is a redress sufficient for the grievance of solitude. He that has a good God, a good heart, and a good wife, to converse with, and yet complains he wants conversation, would not have been easy and content in paradise; for Adam himself had no more: yet even before Eve was created, we do not find that he complained of being alone, knowing that he *was not alone, for the Father was with him*. Those that are most satisfied in God and his favour, are in the best way, and in the best frame, to receive the good things of this life, and shall be sure of them, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good.

II. An instance of the creatures' subjection to man, and his dominion over them, v. 19, 20. *Every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, God brought to Adam*; either by the ministry of angels, or by a special instinct, directing them to come to man as their master, teaching the ox betimes to know his owner. Thus God gave man livery and seisin of the fair estate he had granted him, and put him in possession of his dominion over the creatures. God brought them to him, that he might name them, and so might give, 1. A proof of his knowledge, as a creature endued with the faculties both of reason and speech, and so, *taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven*, Job. 35. 11. And 2. A proof of his power. It is an act of authority to impose names, (Dan. 1. 7.) and of subjection to receive them. The inferior creatures did now, as it were, do homage to their prince at his inauguration, and swear fealty and allegiance to him. If Adam had continued faithful to his God, we may suppose the creatures themselves would so well have known and remembered the names Adam now gave them, as to have come at his call, at any time, and answered to their names. God gave names to the day and night, to the firmament, to the earth, and sea; and he *calleth the stars by their names*, to show that he

is the supreme Lord of these; but he gave Adam leave to name the beasts and fowls, as their subordinate lord; for, having made him in his own image, he thus puts some of his honour upon him.

III. An instance of the creatures' insufficiency to be a happiness for man: but among them all, *for Adam there was not found a help meet for him*. Some make these to be the words of Adam himself; observing all the creatures come to him by couples to be named, he thus intimates his desire to his Maker. "Lord, these have all helps meet for them; but what shall I do? Never, never a one, for me." It is rather God's judgment upon the review. He brought them all together, to see if there were ever a suitable match for Adam in any of the numerous families of the inferior creatures; but there was none. Observe here, 1. The dignity and excellency of the human nature; on earth there was not its like, nor its peer to be found among all visible creatures; they were all looked over, but it could not be matched among them all. 2. The vanity of this world and the things of it; put them all together, and they will not make an help meet for man. They will not suit the nature of the soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its just desires, nor run parallel with its never-failing duration. God creates a new thing to be an help meet for man—not so much the woman, as the Seed of the woman.

21. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. 22. And the rib which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Here we have,

I. The making of the woman, to be an help meet for Adam. This was done upon the sixth day, as was also the placing of Adam in Paradise, though it is here mentioned after an account of the seventh day's rest; but what was said in general, (ch. 1. 27.) that God made man male and female, is more distinctly related here. Observe,

1. That Adam was first formed, then Eve, (1 Tim. 2. 13.) and she was made *of* the man, and *for* the man, (1 Cor. 11. 8, 9.) all which are urged there as reasons for the humility, modesty, silence, and submissiveness, of that sex in general, and particularly the subjection and reverence which wives owe to their own husbands. Yet man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made *after* Adam, and *out of* him, puts an honour upon that sex, as the glory of the man, 1 Cor. 11. 7. If man is the head, she is the crown; a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth.

2. That Adam slept while his wife was making, that no room might be left to imagine that he had herein directed the spirit of the Lord, or been his counsellor, Isa. 40. 13. He had been made sensible of his want of a help meet; but God having undertaken to provide him one, he does not afflict himself with



any care about it, but lies down and sleeps sweetly, as one that had cast all his care on God, with a cheerful resignation of himself and all his affairs, to his Maker's will and wisdom; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide when and whom he pleases. If we graciously rest in God, God will graciously work for us, and work all for good.

3. That God caused a sleep to fall on Adam, and made it a deep sleep, that so the opening of his side might be no grievance to him; while he knows no sin, God will take care he shall feel no pain. When God, by his providence, does that to his people, which is grievous to flesh and blood, he not only consults their happiness in the issue, but, by his grace, he can so quiet and compose their spirits, as to make them easy under the sharpest operations.

4. That the woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved. Adam lost a rib, and without any diminution to his strength or comeliness; for doubtless, the flesh was closed without a scar, but, in lieu thereof, he had a help meet for him, which abundantly made up his loss: what God takes away from his people, he will, one way or other, restore with advantage. In this, (as in many other things,) Adam was a figure of him that was to come; for out of the side of Christ the second Adam, his spouse the church was formed, when he slept the sleep, the deep sleep, of death upon the cross; in order to which, his side was opened, and there came out blood and water, blood to purchase his church, and water to purify it to himself. See Eph. 5. 25, 26.

II. The marriage of the woman to Adam. Marriage is honourable, but this surely was the most honourable marriage that ever was, in which God himself had all along an immediate hand. Marriages (they say) are made in Heaven: we are sure this was; for the man, the woman, the match, were all God's own work; he, by his power, made them both, and now, by his ordinance, made them one. This was a marriage made in perfect innocency, and so was never any marriage since.

1. God, as her Father, brought the woman to the man, as his second self, and an help meet for him; when he had made her, he did not leave her to her own disposal; no, she was his child, and she must not marry without his consent. Those are likely to settle to their comfort, who, by faith and prayer, and a humble dependence upon Providence, put themselves under a divine conduct. That wife that is of God's making by special grace, and of God's bringing by special providence, is likely to prove a help meet for a man.

2. From God, as his Father, Adam received her, v. 23. "This is now bone of my bone; Now I have what I wanted, and which all the creatures could not furnish me with, an help meet for me." God's gifts to us are to be received with a humble and thankful acknowledgment of his wisdom in suiting them to us, and his favour in bestowing them on us. Probably, it was revealed to Adam in a vision, when he was asleep, that this lovely creature, now presented to him, was a piece of himself, and was to be his companion, and the wife of his covenant. Hence some have fetched an argument to prove that glorified saints in the heavenly paradise shall know one another. Further, in token of his acceptance of her, he gave her a name, not peculiar to her, but common to her sex; she shall be called woman, *Isha*, a she-man, differing from man in sex only, not in nature; made of man, and joined to man.

III. The institution of the ordinance of marriage, and the settling of the law of it, v. 24. The Sabbath and marriage were two ordinances instituted

in innocency; the former for the preservation of the church, the latter, for the preservation of the world of mankind. It appears by Matth. 19. 4, 5, that it was God himself who said here, "A man must leave all his relations, to cleave to his wife;" but whether he spake it by Moses, the penman, or by Adam, who spake, v. 23. is uncertain; it should seem, they are the words of Adam, in God's name, laying down this law to all his posterity. 1. See here how great the virtue of a divine ordinance is; the bonds of it are stronger even than those of nature. To whom can we be more firmly bound than to the fathers that begat us, and the mothers that bare us? Yet the son must quit them, to be joined to his wife, and the daughter forget them, to cleave to her husband, Ps. 45. 10, 11. 2. See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage; and how unjust they are to their parents, as well as unprofitable, if they marry without it; for they rob them of their right to them, and interest in them, and alienate it to another, fraudulently and unnaturally. 3. See what need there is both of prudence and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting. That had need be well-done, which is to be done for life. 4. See how firm the bond of marriage is, not to be divided and weakened by having many wives, (Mal. 2. 15.) nor to be broken or cut off by divorce, for any cause, but fornication, or voluntary desertion. 5. See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife; such as there is to our own bodies, Eph. 5. 28. They two are one flesh; let them then be one soul.

IV. An evidence of the purity and innocency of that state wherein our first parents were created, v. 25. They were both naked: they needed no clothes for defence against cold or heat, for neither could be injurious to them; they needed none for ornament, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; nay, they needed none for decency, they were naked, and had no reason to be ashamed; *They knew not what shame was*, so the Chaldee reads it. Blushing is now the colour of virtue, but it was not then the colour of innocency. They that had no sin in their conscience, might well have no shame in their faces, though they had no clothes to their backs.

### CHAP. III.

The story of this chapter is perhaps as sad a story (all things considered) as any we have in all the Bible. In the foregoing chapters, we have had the pleasant view of the holiness and happiness of our first parents, the grace and favour of God, and the peace and beauty of the whole creation, all good, very good; but here the scene is altered. We have here an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of the creation disturbed, and its beauty stained and sullied, all bad, very bad. *How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed!* O that our hearts were deeply affected with this record! For we are all nearly concerned in it; let it not be to us as a tale that is told. The general contents of this chapter we have, Rom. 5. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* More particularly, we have here, I. The innocent tempted, v. 1. 5. II. The tempted transgressing, v. 6. 8. III. The transgressors arraigned, v. 9, 10. IV. Upon their arraignment, convicted, v. 11. 13. V. Upon their conviction, sentenced, v. 14. 19. VI. After sentence, reprieved, v. 20, 21. VII. Notwithstanding their reprieve, execution in part done, v. 22. 24. And were it not for the gracious intimations here given of redemption by the promised Seed, they, and all their degenerate guilty race had been left in endless despair.

1. NOW the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which



the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2. And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

We have here an account of the temptation with which Satan assaults our first parents, to draw them to sin, and which proved fatal to them. And here observe,

1. The tempter, and that was the Devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent.

1. It is certain it was the Devil that beguiled Eve, the Devil and Satan is the old serpent, Rev. 12. 9, a malignant spirit, by creation an angel of light, and an immediate attendant upon God's throne; but by sin become an apostate from his first state, and a rebel against God's crown and dignity. Multitudes of them fell; but this that attacked our first parents, was surely the prince of the devils, the ringleader in rebellion: no sooner was he a sinner than he was a Satan, no sooner a traitor than a tempter, as one enraged against God and his glory, and envious of man and his happiness. He knew he could not destroy man, but by debauching him. Balaam could not curse Israel, but he could tempt Israel, Rev. 2. 14. The game therefore which Satan had to play, was, to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and their God. Thus the Devil was, from the beginning, a murderer, and the great mischief-maker. The whole race of mankind had here, as it were, but one neck, and at that Satan struck. The adversary and enemy is that wicked one.

2. It was the Devil in the likeness of a serpent. Whether it was only the visible shape and appearance of a serpent, as some think these were of which we read, Exod. 7. 12, or whether it was a real living serpent, actuated and possessed by the Devil, is not certain; by God's permission it might be either. The Devil chose to act his part in a serpent, (1.) Because it is a *specious* creature, has a spotted dappled skin, and then went erect. Perhaps it was a flying serpent, which seemed to come from on high as a messenger from the upper world, one of the *Seraphim*; for the fiery serpents were flying, Isa. 14. 29. Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in gay fine colours that are but skin-deep, and seems to come from above; for Satan can seem an angel of light. And, (2.) Because it is a *subtle* creature; that is here taken notice of. Many instances are given of the subtlety of the serpent, both to do mischief, and to secure himself in it when it is done. We are bid to be wise as serpents. But this serpent, as actuated by the Devil, no doubt, was more subtle than any other; for the Devil, though he had lost the sanctity, retains the sagacity, of an angel, and is wise to do evil. He knew of more advantage by making use of the serpent, than we are aware of. Observe, There is not any thing by which the Devil serves himself and his own interest more than by unsanctified subtlety. What Eve thought of this serpent speaking to her, we are not likely to tell, when I believe she herself did not know what to think of it. At first, perhaps, she supposed it might be a good angel, and yet, afterward, might suspect

something amiss. It is remarkable that the Gentile idolaters did many of them worship the Devil in the shape and form of a serpent; thereby avowing their adherence to that apostate spirit, and wearing his colours.

II. The person tempted was *the woman*, now alone, and at a distance from her husband, but near the forbidden tree. It was the Devil's subtlety, 1. To assault the weaker vessel with his temptations; though perfect in her kind, yet we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge, and strength, and presence of mind. Some think Eve received the command, not immediately from God, but at second hand by her husband, and therefore might the more easily be persuaded to discredit it. 2. It was his policy to enter into discourse with her, when she was alone. Had she kept close to the side out of which she was lately taken, she had not been so much exposed. There are many temptations to which solitude gives great advantage; but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety. 3. He took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree, and, probably, gazing upon the fruit of it, only to satisfy her curiosity. They that would not eat the forbidden fruit, must not come near the forbidden tree. *Avoid it, pass not by it*, Prov. 4. 15. 4. Satan tempted Eve, that by her he might tempt Adam; so he tempted Job by his wife, and Christ by Peter. It is his policy to send temptations by unsuspected hands, and their's that have most interest in us and influence upon us.

III. The temptation itself, and the artificial management of it. We are often, in scripture, told of our danger by the temptations of Satan; his *devices*, 2 Cor. 2. 11; his *depths*, Rev. 2. 24; his *wiles*, Eph. 6. 11. The greatest instances we have of them, were in his tempting of the two Adams, here, and Matth. 4. In this, he prevailed; but in that, he was baffled. What he spake to them of whom he had no hold by any corruption in them, he speaks in us by our own deceitful hearts and their carnal reasonings, which make his assaults on us less discernible, but not less dangerous. That which the Devil aimed at, was to persuade Eve to eat forbidden fruit; and, to do this, he took the same method that he does still. 1. He questions whether it were a sin or no, v. 1. 2. He denies that there was any danger in it, v. 4. 3. He suggests much advantage by it, v. 5. And these are his common topics.

1. He questions whether it were a sin or no, to eat of this tree, and whether really the fruit of it were forbidden. *Yea; hath God said, Ye shall not eat?* The first word intimated something said before, introducing this, and with which it is connected; perhaps some discourse Eve had with herself, which Satan took hold of, and grafted this question upon. In the chain of thoughts, one thing strangely brings in another, and perhaps something bad at last. Observe here, (1.) He does not discover his design at first, but puts a question which seemed innocent; "I hear a piece of news, pray, is it true; has God forbidden you to eat of this tree?" Thus he would begin a discourse, and draw her into a parley. Those that would be safe, have need to be suspicious, and shy of talking with the tempter. (2.) He quotes the command fallaciously, as if it were a prohibition, not only of that tree, but of all; God had said, *Of every tree ye may eat, except one*. He, by aggravating the exception, endeavours to invalidate the concession; *Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree?* The divine law cannot be approached, unless it be first misrepresented. (3.) He seems to speak it tauntingly, upbraiding the woman with her shyness of meddling with that tree; as if he had said, "You are so nice and cautious, and so very precise, because God has said, Ye shall not eat." The Devil, as he is a liar, so he is a scoffer, from the begin-

ning; and the scoffers of the last days are his children. (4.) That which he aimed at in the first onset, was, to take off her sense of the obligation of the command. "Surely, you are mistaken, it cannot be that God should tie you out from this tree; he would not do so unreasonable a thing." See here, That it is the subtlety of Satan to blemish the reputation of the divine law, as uncertain, or unreasonable, and so to draw people to sin; and that it is therefore our wisdom to keep up a firm belief of, and a high respect for, the command of God. Has God said, "Ye shall not lie, nor take his name in vain, nor be drunk, &c.?" "Yes, I am sure he has, and it is well said, and by his grace I will abide by it, whatever the tempter suggests to the contrary."

Now, in answer to this question, the woman gives him a plain and full account of the law they were under, *v. 2, 3*. Where observe, [1.] It was her *weakness* to enter into discourse with the serpent: she might have perceived by his question, that he had no good design, and should therefore have started back with a *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me*. But her curiosity, and perhaps her surprise, to hear a serpent speak, led her into further talk with him. Note, It is a dangerous thing to treat with a temptation, which ought at first to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence. The garrison that sounds a parley, is not far from being surrendered. Those that would be kept from harm, must keep out of harm's way. See Prov. 14. 7.—19. 27. [2.] It was her *wisdom* to take notice of the liberty God had granted them, in answer to his sly insinuation, as if God had put them into paradise, only to tantalize them with the sight of fair but forbidden fruits. "Yea," says she, "we may eat of the fruit of the trees, thanks to our Maker, we have plenty and variety enough allowed us." Note, To prevent our being uneasy at the restraints of religion, it is good often to take a view of the liberties and comforts of it. [3.] It was an instance of her resolution, that she adhered to the command, and faithfully repeated it, as of unquestionable certainty, "God hath said, I am confident he hath said it, Ye shall not eat of the fruit of this tree;" and that which she adds, *Neither shall ye touch it*, seems to have been with a good intention, not (as some think) tacitly to reflect upon the command as too strict, (*Touch not, taste not, handle not,*) but to make a fence about it: "We must not eat, therefore we will not touch. It is forbidden in the highest degree, and the authority of the prohibition is sacred to us." [4.] She seems a little to waver about the threatening, and is not so particular and faithful in the repetition of that as of the precept. God had said, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; all she makes of that is, *Lest ye die*. Note, Wavering faith, and wavering resolutions give great advantage to the tempter.

2. He denies that there was any danger in it; though it might be the transgressing of a precept, yet it would not be the incurring of a penalty, *v. 4*. *Ye shall not surely die*. "Ye shall not dying die," so the word is, in direct contradiction to what God had said. Either, (1.) "It is not certain that ye shall die," so some. "It is not so sure as ye are made to believe it is." Thus Satan endeavours to shake that which he cannot overthrow, and invalidates the force of divine threatenings by questioning the certainty of them; and when once it is supposed possible that there may be falsehood or fallacy in any word of God, a door is then opened to downright infidelity. Satan teaches men first to doubt, and then to deny; he makes sceptics first, and so by degrees makes them atheists. Or, (2.) "It is certain ye shall not die," so others. He avers his contradiction with the same phrase of assurance that God

hath used in ratifying the threatening. He began to call the precept in question, *v. 1*, but finding that the woman adhered to that, he quitted that battery, and made his second onset upon the threatening, where he perceived her to waver; for he is quick to spy all advantages, and to attack the wall where it is weakest, *Ye shall not surely die*. This was a lie, a downright lie; for, [1.] It was contrary to the word of God, which we are sure is true; see 1 John 2. 21, 27. It was such a lie as gave the lie to God himself. [2.] It was contrary to his own knowledge; when he told them there was no danger in disobedience and rebellion, he said that which he knew, by woeful experience, to be false. He had broken the law of his creation, and had found, to his cost, that he could not prosper in it; and yet he tells our first parents they shall not die. He conceals his own misery, that he might draw them into the like: thus he still deceives sinners into their own ruin. He tells them, though they sin they shall not die; and gains credit rather than God, who tells them, *The wages of sin is death*. Now hope of impunity is a great support to all iniquity, and impenitency in it: *I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart*, Deut. 29. 19.

3. He promises them advantage by it, *v. 5*. Here he follows his blow, and it was a blow at the root, a fatal blow to the tree we are branches of. He not only would undertake they should be no losers by it, thus binding himself to save them from harm; but (if they would be such fools as to venture upon the security of one that was himself become a bankrupt) he undertakes they shall be gainers by it, unspeakable gainers. He could not have persuaded them to run the hazard of ruining themselves, if he had not suggested to them a great probability of mending themselves.

(1.) He insinuates to them the great improvements they would make by eating of this fruit. And he suits the temptation to the pure state they were now in, proposing to them, not any carnal pleasures or gratifications, but intellectual delights and satisfactions. These were the baits with which he covered his hook. [1.] "*Your eyes shall be opened*; you shall have much more of the power and pleasure of contemplation than now you have; you shall fetch a larger compass in your intellectual views, and see further into things than now you do." He speaks as if now they were but dim-sighted, and short-sighted, in comparison of what they would be then. [2.] "*You shall be as gods, as Elohim, mighty grds*; not only omniscient, but omnipotent too;" or, "You shall be as God himself, equal to him, rivals with him; you shall be sovereigns, and no longer subjects; self-sufficient, and no longer depending." A most absurd suggestion! As if it were possible for creatures of yesterday to be like their Creator that was from eternity. [3.] "*You shall know good and evil*, that is, every thing that is desirable to be known." To support this part of the temptation, he abuses the name given to this tree: it was intended to teach the *practical* knowledge of good and evil, that is, of duty and disobedience; and it would prove the *experimental* knowledge of good and evil, that is, of happiness and misery. In these senses, the name of the tree was a warning to them not to eat of it; but he perverts the sense of it, and wrests it to their destruction, as if this tree would give them a speculative notional knowledge of the natures, kinds, and originals, of good and evil. And, [4.] All this *presently*; "*In the day ye eat thereof, you will find a sudden and immediate change for the better*." Now in all these insinuations, he aims to beguile in them. *First*, Discontent with their present state, as if it were not so good as it might be, and should be. Note, No condition will of itself bring contentment, unless the mind be brought to it. Adam was not

eat; no not in paradise, nor the angels in their first state, Jude 6. *Secondly*, Ambition of prefeerment, as if they were fit to be gods. Satan had ruined himself by desiring to be like the Most High, Isa. 14. 12., 14, and therefore seek to infect our first parents with the same desire, that he might ruin them too.

(2.) He insinuates to them that God had no good design upon them, in forbidding them this fruit. "*For God doth know* how much it will advance you; and therefore, in envy and ill-will to you, he hath forbidden it:" as if he durst not let them eat of that tree, because then they would know their own strength, and would not continue in an inferior state, but be able to cope with him; or as if he begrudged them the honour and happiness which their eating of that tree would prefer them to. Now, [1.] This was a great affront to God, and the highest indignity that could be done him; a reproach to his power, as if he feared his creatures; and much more a reproach to his goodness, as if he hated the work of his own hands, and would not have those whom he has made, to be made happy. Shall the best of men think it strange to be misrepresented and evil spoken of, when God himself is so? Satan, as he is the accuser of the brethren before God, so he accuses God before the brethren; thus he sows discord, and is the father of them that do so. [2.] It was a most dangerous snare to our first parents, as it tended to alienate their affections from God, and so to withdraw them from their allegiance to him. Thus still the Devil draws people into his interest by suggesting to them hard thoughts of God, and false hopes of benefit and advantage by sin. Let us therefore, in opposition to him, always think well of God as the best good, and think ill of sin as the worst of evils: thus let us resist the Devil, and he will flee from us.

6. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. 7. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons." 8. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Here we see what Eve's parley with the tempter ended in; Satan, at length, gains his point, and the strong hold is taken by his wiles. God tried the obedience of our first parents by forbidding them the tree of knowledge, and Satan does, as it were, join issue with God, and in that very thing undertakes to seduce them into a transgression; and here we find how he prevailed, God permitting it for wise and holy ends.

I. We have here the inducements that moved them to transgress. The woman being deceived by the tempter's artful management, was ringleader in the transgression, 1 Tim. 2. 14. She was first in the fault; and it was the result of her consideration, or rather, her inconsideration.

1. She saw no harm in this tree, more than in any of the rest. It was said of all the rest of the fruit trees with which the garden of Eden was planted, that they were *pleasant to the sight, and*

*good for food*, ch. 2. 9. Now, in her eye, this was like all the rest; it seemed as good for food as any of them, and she saw nothing in the colour of its fruit, that threatened death or danger; it was as pleasant to the sight as any of them, and therefore, "What hurt could it do to them? Why should this be forbidden them rather than any of the rest?" Note, When there is thought to be no more harm in forbidden fruit than in other fruit, sin lies at the door, and Satan soon carries the day. Nay, perhaps, it seemed to her to be better for food, more grateful to the taste, and more nourishing to the body, than any of the rest, and to her eye it was more pleasant than any. We are often betrayed into snares by an inordinate desire to have our senses gratified. Or, if it had nothing in it more inviting than the rest, yet it was the more coveted, because it was prohibited. Whether it were so in *her* or not, we find that in *us*, that is, in our flesh, in our corrupt nature, there dwells a strange spirit of contradiction, *Nitimur in vetitum—We desire what is prohibited*.

2. She imagined more virtue in this tree than in any of the rest; that it was a tree not only not to be dreaded, but to be desired to make *one* wise, and therein excelling all the rest of the trees. This she *saw*, that is, she perceived and understood it by what the Devil had said to her; and some think that she saw the serpent eat of that tree, and that he told her he thereby had gained the faculties of speech and reason, whence she inferred its power to make one wise, and was persuaded to think, "If it made a brute creature rational, why might it not make a rational creature divine?" See here how the desire of unnecessary knowledge, under the mistaken notion of wisdom, proves hurtful and destructive to many. Our first parents, who knew so much, did not know this, that they knew enough Christ is a Tree to be desired to make one wise, (Col. 2. 3. 1 Cor. 1. 30.) Let us, by faith, feed upon him, that we may be wise to salvation. In the heavenly paradise, the tree of knowledge will not be a forbidden tree; for there, we shall know as we are known; let us therefore long to be there, and, in the mean time, not exercise ourselves in things too high, or too deep for us, nor covet to be wise above what is written.

II. The steps of the transgression; no steps upward, but downward toward the pit—steps that took hold on hell.

1. *She saw*; she should have turned away her eyes from beholding vanity; but she enters into temptation, by looking with pleasure on the forbidden fruit. Observe, A great deal of sin comes in at the eye. At those windows Satan throws in these fiery darts which pierce and poison the heart. The eye affects the heart with guilt as well as grief. Let us therefore, with holy Job, make a covenant with our eyes, not to look on that which we are in danger of lusting after, Prov. 23. 31. Matth. 5. 28. Let the fear of God be always to us for a covering of the eyes, ch. 20. 16.

2. *She took*; it was her own act and deed. The Devil did not take it, and put it into her mouth, whether she would or no; but she herself took it. Satan may tempt, but he cannot force; may persuade us to cast ourselves down, but he cannot cast us down, Matth. 4. 6. Eve's taking was stealing, like Achan's taking the accursed thing, taking that which she had no right to. Surely, she took it with a trembling hand.

3. *She did eat*; when she looked, perhaps she did not intend to take, or when she took, not to eat; but it ended in that. Note, The way of sin is downhill; a man cannot stop himself when he will: the beginning of it is as the breaking forth of water, to which it is hard to say, "Hitherto thou shalt come

and no further." Therefore it is our wisdom to suppress the first motions of sin, and to leave it off, before it be meddled with. *Obsta principiis—Nihil mischief in the bud.*

4. *She gave also to her husband with her:* it is probable that he was not with her when she was tempted; surely if he had, he would have interposed to prevent the sin; but he came to her when she had eaten, and was prevailed with by her to eat likewise; for it is easier to learn that which is bad, than to teach that which is good. She gave it to him, persuading him with the same arguments that the serpent had used with her, adding this to all the rest, that she herself had eaten of it, and found it so far from being deadly, that it was extremely pleasant and grateful: *stolen waters are sweet.* She gave it to him, under colour of kindness; she would not eat these delicious morsels alone; but really it was the greatest unkindness she could do him. Or perhaps she gave it to him, that if it should prove hurtful, he might share with her in the misery; which indeed looks strangely unkind, and yet may, without difficulty, be supposed to enter into the heart of one that had eaten forbidden fruit. Note, Those that have themselves done ill, are commonly willing to draw in others to do the same. As was the Devil, so was Eve, no sooner a sinner than a tempter.

4. *He did eat,* overcome by his wife's importunity. It is needless to ask, "What would have been the consequence, if Eve only had transgressed?" The wisdom of God, we are sure, would have decided the difficulty according to equity; but, alas, the case was not so; Adam also did eat. "And what great harm if he did?" say the corrupt and carnal reasonings of a vain mind. What harm? Why, there was in it disbelief of God's word, together with confidence in the Devil's; discontent with his present state; pride in his own merits; an ambition of the honour which comes not from God; envy at God's perfections; and indulgence of the appetites of the body. In neglecting the tree of life which he was allowed to eat of, and eating of the tree of knowledge which was forbidden, he plainly showed a contempt of the favours which God had bestowed on him, and a preference given to those God did not see fit for him. He would be both his own carver, and his own master; would have what he pleased, and do what he pleased: his sin was, in one word, *disobedience*, Rom. 5. 19; disobedience to a plain, easy, and express command, which, probably, he knew to be a command of trial. He sins against great knowledge, against many mercies, against light and love, the clearest light, and the dearest love, that ever sinner sinned against. He had no corrupt nature within him to betray him; but had a freedom of will, not enslaved, and was in his full strength, not weakened or impaired. He turned aside quickly. Some think he fell the very day on which he was made: though I see not how to reconcile that with God's promising all *very good*, in the close of that day: others suppose he fell on the sabbath-day; the better day, the worse deed: however, it is certain that he kept his integrity but a very little while; being in honour, he continued not. But the greatest aggravation of his sin, was, that he involved all his posterity in sin and ruin by it. God having told him that his race should replenish the earth, surely he could not but know that he stood as a public person, and that his disobedience would be fatal to all his seed; and if so, it was certainly the greatest treachery, as well as the greatest cruelty, that ever was. The human nature being lodged entirely in our first parents, from henceforward it could not but be transmitted from them under an attainder of guilt, a stain of dishonour, and an hereditary disease of sin and corruption. And can we

say, then, that Adam's sin had but little harm in it?

III. The immediate consequences of the transgression. Shame and fear seized the criminals, *ipso facto—in the fact itself*; these came into the world along with sin, and still attend it.

1. *Shame* seized them unseen, v. 7, where observe,

(1.) The strong convictions they fell under, in their own bosoms; *The eyes of them both were opened.* It is not meant of the eyes of the body; those were opened before, as appears by this, that the sin came in at them; Jonathan's eyes were enlightened by eating forbidden fruit, 1 Sam. 14. 27, that is, he was refreshed and revived by it; but their's were not so. Nor is it meant of any advances made hereby in true knowledge; but the eyes of their consciences were opened, their hearts smote them for what they had done. Now, when it was too late, they saw the folly of eating forbidden fruit. They saw the happiness they had fallen from, and the misery they were fallen into. They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited, his likeness and image lost, dominion over the creature's gone. They saw their natures corrupted and depraved, and felt a disorder in their own spirits which they had never before been conscious of. They saw a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, and captivating them both to sin and wrath. They saw, as Balaam, when *his eyes were opened*, (Numb. 22. 31.) the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and perhaps they saw the serpent that had abused them, insulting over them. The text tells us, they saw *that they were naked*, that is, [1.] That they were stripped, deprived of all the honours and joys of their paradise state, and exposed to all the miseries that might justly be expected from an angry God; they were disarmed, their defence was departed from them. [2.] That they were shamed, for ever shamed, before God and angels; they saw themselves disrobed of all their ornaments and ensigns of honour, degraded from their dignity, and disgraced in the highest degree, laid open to the contempt and reproach of heaven, and earth, and their own consciences. Now, see here, *First*, what a dishonour and disquietment sin is; it makes mischief wherever it is admitted, sets men against themselves, disturbs their peace, and destroys all their comforts: sooner or later, it will have shame, either the shame of true repentance which ends in glory, or that shame and everlasting contempt, to which the wicked shall rise at the great day: sin is a reproach to any people. *Secondly*, What a deceiver Satan is; he told our first parents, when he tempted them, that their *eyes should be opened*; and so they were, but not as they understood it; they were opened, to their shame and grief, not to their honour or advantage. Therefore, when he speaks fair, believe him not. The most malicious mischievous liars often excuse themselves with this, that they are only equivocations; but God will not so excuse them.

(2.) The sorry shift they made, to palliate these convictions, and to arm themselves against them; *they sewed, or platted fig-leaves together*; and, to cover, at least, part of their shame from one another, they *made themselves aprons*. See here what is commonly the folly of those that have sinned. [1.] That they are more solicitous to save their credit before men, than to obtain their pardon from God; they are backward to confess their sin, and very desirous to conceal it, as much as may be; *I have sinned, yet honour me.* [2.] That the excuses men make, to cover and extenuate their sins, are vain and frivolous; like the aprons of fig-leaves, they make the matter never the better, but the worse; the shame, thus hid, becomes the more

blameful: yet thus we are all apt to *cover our transgressions as Adam*, Job 31. 33.

2. Fear seized them immediately upon their eating the forbidden fruit, *v. 8*. Observe here,

(1.) What was the *cause and occasion* of their fear; they heard the *voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day*. It was the approach of the Judge, that put them into a fright: and yet he came in such a manner, as made it formidable only to guilty consciences. It is supposed that he came in a human shape, and that he who judged the world now, was the same that shall judge the world at the last day, even *that man whom God has ordained*: he appeared to them now, (it should seem,) in no other similitude than that in which they had seen him when he put them into paradise; for he came to convince and humble them, not to amaze and terrify them. He came into the garden, not descending immediately from Heaven in their view, as afterward on mount Sinai, (making either thick darkness his pavilion, or the flaming fire his chariot,) but he came into the garden, as one that was still willing to be familiar with them. He came walking, not running, not riding upon the wings of the wind, but walking deliberately, as one slow to anger; teaching us, when we are ever so much provoked, not to be hot or hasty, but to speak and act considerably, and not rashly. He came in the cool of the day, not in the night, when all fears are doubly fearful, nor in the heat of the day, for he came not in the heat of his anger; *Fury is not in him*, Isa. 27. 4. Nor did he come suddenly upon them; but they heard his voice at some distance, giving them notice of his coming, and, probably, it was a still small voice, like that in which he came to inquire after Elijah. Some think they heard him discoursing with himself concerning the sin of Adam, and the judgment now to be passed upon him; perhaps, as he did concerning Israel, Hos. 11. 8, 9. *How shall I give thee up?* Or rather, they heard him calling for them, and coming toward them.

(2.) What was the *effect and evidence* of their fear; they *hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God*: a sad change! Before they had sinned, if they had heard the voice of the Lord God coming toward them, they would have run to meet him, and with a humble joy welcomed his gracious visits; but now that it was otherwise, God was become a terror to them, and then, no marvel that they were become a terror to themselves, and full of confusion; their own consciences accused them, and set their sin before them in its colours; their fig-leaves failed them, and would do them no service; God was come forth against them as an enemy, and the whole creation was at war with them; and as yet, they knew not of any mediator between them and an angry God, so that nothing remained but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. In this fright, they hid themselves among the bushes; having offended, they fled for the same. Knowing themselves guilty, they durst not stand a trial, but absconded, and fled from justice. See here,

[1.] The falseness of the tempter, and the frauds and the fallacies of his temptations: he promised them they should be safe, but now they cannot so much as *think* themselves so; he said they should not die, and yet now they are forced to fly for their lives; he promised them they should be advanced, but they see themselves abased, never did they seem so little as now; he promised them they should be knowing, but they see themselves at a loss, and know not so much as where to hide themselves; he promised them they should be as gods, great, and bold, and daring, but they are as criminals discovered, trembling, pale, and anxious to escape: they would not be subjects, and so they are prisoners.

[2.] The folly of sinners, to think it either possible, or desirable, to hide themselves from God: can they conceal themselves from the Father of lights? Ps. 139. 7, &c. Jer. 23. 24. Will they withdraw themselves from the Fountain of life, who alone can give help and happiness? Jon. 2. 8. [3.] The fears that attend sin; all that amazing fear of God's appearances, the accusations of conscience, the approaches of trouble, the assaults of inferior creatures, and the arrests of death which is common among men, all these are the effect of sin. Adam and Eve, who were partners in the sin, were sharers in the shame and fear that attended it; and though hand joined in hand, (hands so lately joined in marriage,) yet could they not animate or fortify one another: miserable comforters they were become to each other!

9. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? 10. And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I *was* afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

We have here the arraignment of these deserters before the righteous judge of heaven and earth, who, though he is not tied to observe formalities, yet proceeds against them with all possible fairness, that he may be justified when he speaks. Observe here,

1. The startling question with which God pursued Adam, and arrested him, *Where art thou?* Not as if God did not know where he was; but thus he would enter the process against him. "Come, where is this foolish man?" Some make it a bemoaning question, "Poor Adam, what is become of thee?" "*Alas for thee!*" (so some read it), "*How art thou fallen, Lucifer, son of the morning!*" Thou that wast my friend and favourite, whom I have done so much for, and would have done so much more for; hast thou now forsaken me, and ruined thyself? Is it come to this?" It is rather an upbraiding question, in order to his conviction and humiliation. *Where art thou?* Not, In what place, but, In what condition? "Is this all thou hast gotten by eating forbidden fruit? Thou that wouldst vie with me, dost thou now fly from me?" Note, (1.) Those who by sin have gone astray from God, should seriously consider where they are; they are afar off from all good, in the midst of their enemies, in bondage to Satan, and in the high road to utter ruin. This inquiry after Adam may be looked upon as a gracious pursuit in kindness to him, and in order to his recovery. If God had not called to him, to reclaim him, his condition had been as desperate as that of fallen angels; this lost sheep had wandered endlessly, if the good shepherd had not sought after him, to bring him back, and in order to that, reminded him where he was, where he should not be, and where he could not be, either happy or easy. Note, (2.) If sinners will but consider where they are, they will not rest till they return to God.

2. The trembling answer which Adam gave to this question, *v. 10*, *I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid*: he does not own his guilt, and yet in effect confesses it, by owning his shame and fear; but it is the common fault and folly of these that have done an ill thing, when they are questioned about it, to acknowledge no more than what is so manifest that they cannot deny it. Adam was afraid, because he was naked; not only unarmed, and therefore afraid to contend with God, but unclothed, and therefore afraid so much as to appear before him. We have reason to be afraid of approaching to God, if we be not clothed and fenced with the righteousness of Christ; for n thing but that, will be armour of proof, and cover the shame



of our nakedness. Let us therefore *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and then draw near with humble boldness.

11. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? 12. And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. 13. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is *this* that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

We have here the offenders found guilty by their own confession, and yet endeavouring to excuse and extenuate their fault; they could not confess and justify what they had done, but they confess and palliate it. Observe,

I. How their confession was extorted from them: God put it to the man, *v. 11, Who told thee that thou wast naked?* "How camest thou to be sensible of thy nakedness as thy shame?" *Hast thou eaten of the forbidden tree?* Note, Though God knows all our sins, yet he will know them from us, and requires from us an ingenuous confession of them; not that he may be informed, but that we may be humbled. In this examination, God reminds him of the command he had given him: "I commanded thee not to eat of it, I thy Maker, I thy Master, I thy Benefactor; I commanded thee to the contrary." Sin appears most plain, and most sinful, in the glass of the commandment, therefore God here sets it before Adam; and in it we should see our faces. The question put to the woman, was, *v. 13, What is this that thou hast done?* "Wilt thou also own thy fault, and make confession of it? And wilt thou see what an evil thing it was?" Note, It concerns those who have eaten forbidden fruit themselves, and especially those who have enticed others to it likewise, seriously to consider what they have done. In eating forbidden fruit, we have offended a great and gracious God, broken a just and righteous law, violated a sacred and most solemn covenant, and wronged our own precious souls by forfeiting God's favour, and exposing ourselves to his wrath and curse: in enticing others to it, we do the Devil's work, make ourselves guilty of other men's sins, and accessory to their ruin. *What is this that we have done?*

II. How their crime was extenuated by them in their confession. It was to no purpose to plead *not guilty*; the show of their countenances testified against them, therefore they become their own accusers. *I did eat*, says the man, "And so did I," says the woman: for when God judges, he will overcome: but these do not look like penitent confessions; for instead of aggravating the sin, and taking shame to themselves, they excuse the sin, and lay the shame and blame on others.

1. Adam lays all the blame upon his wife. "She gave me of the tree, and pressed me to eat it, which I did, only to oblige her;" a frivolous excuse. He ought to have taught her, not to have been taught by her; and it was no hard matter to determine which of the two he must be ruled by, his God or his wife. Learn hence, never to be brought to sin by that which will not bring us off in the judgment: let not that bear us up in the commission, which will not bear us out in the trial: let us therefore never be overcome by importunity to act against our consciences, nor ever displease God, to please the best friend we have in the world. But this is not the worst of it; he not only lays the blame upon

his wife, but expresses it so as tacitly to reflect on God himself: "It is the woman which thou gavest me, and gavest to be with me as my companion, my guide, and my acquaintance; she gave me of the tree, else I had not eaten of it." Thus he insinuates that God was accessory to his sin: he gave him the woman, and she gave him the fruit; so that he seemed to have it but at one remove from God's own hand. Note, There is a strange proneness in those that are tempted, to say they are tempted of God; as if our abusing of God's gifts would excuse our violation of God's laws. God gives us riches, honours, and relations, that we may serve him cheerfully in the enjoyment of them; but if we take occasion from them to sin against him, instead of blaming Providence for putting us into such a condition, we must blame ourselves for perverting the gracious designs of Providence therein.

2. Eve lays all the blame upon the serpent; *The serpent beguiled me*. Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; a sign that it is a scandalous thing. Those that are willing enough to take the pleasure and profit of sin, are backward enough to take the blame and shame of it. "The serpent, that subtle creature of thy making, which thou didst permit to come into paradise to us, he beguiled me," or, *made me to err*; for our sins are our errors. Learn hence, (1.) That Satan's temptations are all beguilings, his arguments are all fallacies, his allurements are all cheats; when he speaks fair, believe him not. Sin deceives us, and, by deceiving, cheats us. It is by the *deceitfulness of sin*, that the *heart is hardened*; see Rom. 7. 11. Heb. 3. 13. (2.) That though Satan's subtlety drew us into sin, yet it will not justify us in sin: though *he* is the tempter, *we* are the sinners; and indeed it is *our own lust* that draws us aside and entices us, Jam. 1. 14. Let it not therefore lessen our sorrow and humiliation for sin, that we are beguiled into it; but rather let it increase our self-indignation, that we should suffer ourselves to be beguiled by a known cheat and a sworn enemy. Well, this is all the prisoners at the bar have to say, why sentence should not be passed, and execution awarded, according to law; and this all is next to nothing, in some respects, worse than nothing.

14. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life. 15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The prisoners being found guilty by their own confession, beside the personal and infallible knowledge of the Judge, and nothing material being offered in arrest of judgment, God immediately proceeds to pass sentence; and, in these verses, he begins (where the sin began) with the serpent. God did not examine the serpent, nor ask him what he had done, or why he did it; but immediately sentenced him, 1. Because he was already convicted of rebellion against God, and his malice and wickedness were notorious, not found by secret search, but openly avowed and declared as Sodom's. 2. Because he was to be for ever excluded from all hope of pardon; and why should any thing be said to convince and humble him, who was to find no place for repentance? His wound was not searched, because it was not to be cured. Some think the condition of the fallen angels was



not declared desperate and helpless, until now that they had seduced man into the rebellion.

The sentence passed upon the tempter may be considered,

I. As lighting upon the serpent, the brute-creature which Satan made use of, which was, as the rest, made for the service of man, but was now abused to his hurt; therefore, to testify a displeasure against sin, and a jealousy for the injured honour of Adam and Eve, God fastens a curse and reproach upon the serpent, and makes it to *groan, being birthed*, 2 Cor. 5. 4. The Devil's instruments must share in the Devil's punishments; thus the bodies of the wicked, though only instruments of unrighteousness, shall partake of everlasting torments with the soul, the principal agent. Even the ox that killed a man, must be stoned, Exod. 21. 28, 29. See here, how God hates sin, and especially how much displeased he is with those that entice others into sin: it is a perpetual brand upon Jerobam's name, that *he made Israel to sin*. Now,

1. The serpent is here laid under the curse of God; *Thou art cursed above all cattle*; even the creeping things, when God made them, were blessed of him, ch. 1. 22, but sin turned the blessing into a curse. The serpent was *more subtle than any beast of the field*, v. 1, and here, *cursed above every beast in the field*: unsanctified subtlety often proves a great curse to a man; and the more crafty men are to do evil, the more mischief they do, and, consequently, they shall receive the greater damnation. Subtle tempters are the most accursed creatures under the sun.

2. He is here laid under man's reproach and enmity. (1.) He is to be for ever looked upon as a vile and despicable creature, and a proper object of scorn and contempt; "*Upon thy belly thou shalt go, no longer upon feet, or half erect, but thou shalt crawl along, thy belly cleaving to the earth*;" an expression of a very abject miserable condition, Ps. 44. 25; "and thou shalt not avoid eating dust with thy meat." His crime was, that he tempted Eve to eat that which she should not; his punishment was, that he was necessitated to eat that which he would not. *Dust thou shalt eat*; denoting not only a base and despicable condition, but a mean and pitiful spirit: it is said of those whose courage is departed from them, that they *lick the dust like a serpent*, Mic. 7. 17. How sad it is, that the serpent's curse should be the covetous worldling's choice, whose character it is, that they *pant after the dust of the earth*! Amos 2. 7. These choose their own delusions, and so shall their doom be. (2.) He is to be for ever looked upon as a venomous noxious creature, and a proper object of hatred and detestation: *I will put enmity between thee and the woman*. The inferior creatures being made for man, it was a curse upon any of them, to be turned against man, and man against them; and this is part of the serpent's curse. The serpent is hurtful to man, and often bruises his heel, because it can reach no higher; nay notice is taken of his biting the horses' heels, ch. 49. 17. But man is victorious over the serpent, and bruises his head, that is, gives him a mortal wound, aiming to destroy the whole generation of vipers. It is the effect of this curse upon the serpent, that though that creature is subtle and very dangerous, yet it prevails not, (as it would if God gave it commission,) to the destruction of mankind; but this fear of serpents is much reduced by that promise of God to his people, Ps. 91. 13, *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder*; and that of Christ to his disciples, Mark 16. 18, *They shall take up serpents*; witness Paul, who was unhurt by the viper that fastened upon his hand. Observe here, that the serpent and the woman had just now been very familiar and friendly in discourse

about the forbidden fruit, and a wonderful agreement there was between them; but here they are irreconcilably set at variance. Note, Sinful friendships justly end in mortal feuds: those that unite in wickedness, will not unite long.

II. This sentence may be considered as levelled at the Devil, who only made use of the serpent, as his vehicle in this appearance, but was himself the principal agent. He that spoke through the serpent's mouth, is here struck at through the serpent's side, and is principally intended in the sentence, which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a dark side toward the Devil, and a bright side toward our first parents and their seed. Great things are contained in these words.

1. A perpetual reproach is here fastened upon that great enemy both to God and man. Under the cover of the serpent, he is here sentenced to be, (1.) *Degraded and accursed of God*. It is supposed that pride was the sin that turned angels into devils, which is here justly punished by a great variety of mortifications couched under the mean circumstances of a serpent crawling on his belly, and licking the dust. *How art thou fallen, O Lucifer!* He that would be above God, and would head a rebellion against him, is justly exposed here to contempt, and lies to be trodden on; a man's pride will bring him low, and God will humble those that will not humble themselves. (2.) *Detested and abhorred of all mankind*; even those that are really seduced into his interest, yet profess a hatred and abhorrence of him; and all that are born of God, make it their constant care to keep themselves, that that wicked one touch them not, 1 John 5. 18. He is here condemned to a state of war and irreconcilable enmity. (3.) *Destroyed and ruined, at last, by the great Redeemer*, signified by the breaking of his head; his subtle politics shall be all baffled, his usurped power shall be entirely crushed, and he shall be for ever a captive to the injured honour of the divine sovereignty: by being told of this now, he was tormented before the time.

2. A perpetual quarrel is here commenced between the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of the Devil among men; war is proclaimed between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. That war in Heaven between Michael and the Dragon began now, Rev. 12. 7. It is the fruit of this enmity, (1.) That there is a continual conflict between grace and corruption in the hearts of God's people: Satan, by their corruptions, assaults them, buffets them, sifts them, and seeks to devour them; they, by the exercise of their graces, resist him, wrestle with him, quench his fiery darts, force him to flee from them. Heaven and hell can never be reconciled, nor light and darkness; no more can Satan and a sanctified soul, for these are contrary the one to the other. (2.) That there is likewise a continual struggle between the wicked and the godly in this world. They that love God, account those their enemies, that hate him, Ps. 139. 21, 22. And all the rage and malice of persecutors against the people of God, are the fruit of this enmity, which will continue while there is a godly man on this side heaven, and a wicked man on this side hell; *Marvel not therefore, if the world hate you*, 1 John 3. 13.

3. A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the Deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan; though it was expressed to the serpent, yet it was expressed in the hearing of our first parents, who, doubtless, took the hints of grace here given them, and saw a door of hope opened to them; else, the following sentence upon themselves would have overwhelmed them. Here was the dawning of the gospel-day: no sooner was the wound given, than the remedy was provided and revealed; here, *in the head of the book*, as the word is, (Heb. 10. 7.)

in the beginning of the Bible, it is written of Christ, that he should *do the will of God*. By faith in this promise, we have reason to think, our first parents, and the patriarchs before the flood, were justified and saved; and to this promise, and the benefit of it, instantly serving God day and night, they hoped to come. Notice is here given them of three things concerning Christ.

(1.) His incarnation; that he should be the *Seed of the woman*, the Seed of that woman; therefore his genealogy, Luke 3, goes so high as to show him to be the son of Adam, but God does the woman the honour to call him rather *her seed*, because she it was whom the Devil had beguiled, and on whom Adam had laid the blame; herein God magnifies his grace, in that though the woman was first in the transgression, yet she shall be saved by child-bearing, (as some read it,) that is, by the promised Seed which shall descend from her, 1 Tim. 2. 15. He was likewise to be the seed of a woman only, a virgin; that he might not be tainted with the corruption of our nature; he was sent forth, *made of a woman*, Gal. 4. 4, that this promise might be fulfilled. It speaks great encouragement to sinners, that their Saviour is the *Seed of the woman*, *bone of our bone*, Heb. 2. 11. 14. Man is therefore sinful and unclean, because he is *born of a woman*, (Job 25. 4.) and therefore *his days are full of trouble*, Job 14. 1. But the Seed of the woman was made sin and a curse for us, so saving us from both.

(2.) His sufferings and death; pointed at in Satan's *bruising his heel*, that is, his human nature. Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, to draw him into sin; and some think it was Satan that terrified Christ in his agony, to have driven him to despair. It was the Devil that put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, of Peter to deny him, of the chief priests to prosecute him, of the false witnesses to accuse him, and of Pilate to condemn him; aiming in all this, by destroying the Saviour, to ruin the salvation; but, on the contrary, it was by death that Christ *destroyed him that had the power of death*, Heb. 2. 14. Christ's heel was bruised, when his feet were pierced and nailed to the cross, and Christ's sufferings are continued in the sufferings of the saints for his name. The Devil tempts them, casts them into prison, persecutes and slays them; and so bruises the heel of Christ, who is afflicted in their afflictions. But while the heel is bruised on earth, it is well that the Head is safe in heaven.

(3.) His victory over Satan thereby. Satan had now trampled upon the woman, and insulted over her; but the Seed of the woman should be raised up in the fulness of time to avenge her quarrel, and to trample upon him, to spoil him, to lead him captive, and to triumph over him, Col. 2. 15. *He shall bruise his head*, that is, he shall destroy all his politics and his powers, and give a total overthrow to his kingdom and interest. Christ baffled Satan's temptations, rescued souls out of his hands, cast him out of the bodies of people, dispossessed the strong man armed, and divided the spoil; by his death, he gave a fatal and incurable blow to the Devil's kingdom, a wound to the head of this beast, that can never be healed. As his gospel gets ground, *Satan falls*, Luke 10. 18, and is bound, Rev. 20. 2. By his grace, he treads Satan under his people's feet, Rom. 16. 20, and will shortly cast him into the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 10. And the Devil's perpetual overthrow will be the complete and everlasting joy and glory of the chosen remnant.

16. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth

children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

We have here the sentence passed upon the woman for her sin: two things she is condemned to, a state of sorrow, and a state of subjection; proper punishments of a sin in which she had gratified her pleasure and her pride.

1. She is here put into a state of *sorrow*; one particular of which only is specified, that, in bringing forth children; but it includes all those impressions of grief and fear which the mind of that tender sex is most apt to receive, and all the common calamities which they are liable to. Note, Sin brought sorrow into the world; that was it that made the world a vale of tears, brought showers of trouble upon our heads, and opened springs of sorrows in our hearts, and so deluged the world: had we known no guilt, we should have known no grief. The pains of child-bearing, which are great to a proverb, a scripture-proverb, are the effect of sin; every pang and every groan of the travelling woman, speak aloud the fatal consequences of sin: this comes of eating forbidden fruit. Observe, 1. The sorrows are here said to be *multiplied, greatly multiplied*; all the sorrows of this present time are so; many are the calamities which human life is liable to, of various kinds, and often repeated, the clouds returning after the rain; no marvel that our sorrows are multiplied, when our sins are; both are innumerable evils. The sorrows of child-bearing are multiplied; for they include, not only the travelling throes, but the indispositions before, (it is sorrow from the conception,) and the nursing toils and vexations after; and after all, if the children prove wicked and foolish, they are, more than ever, the heaviness of her that bare them. Thus are the sorrows multiplied; as one grief is over, another succeeds in this world. 2. It is God that multiplies our sorrows; *I will do it*. God, as a righteous Judge, does it, which ought to silence us under all our sorrows; as many as they are, we have deserved them all, and more; nay, God, as a tender Father, does it for our necessary correction, that we may be humbled for sin, and weaned from the world by all our sorrows; and the good we get by them, with the comfort we have under them, will abundantly balance all our sorrows, how greatly severe they are multiplied.

II. She is here put into a state of *subjection*; the whole sex, which, by creation, was equal with man, is, for sin, made inferior, and forbidden to *usurp authority*, 1 Tim. 2. 11, 12. The wife particularly is hereby put under the dominion of her husband, and is not *sui juris*—at her own disposal; of which see an instance in that law, Numb. 30. 6.. 8, where the husband is empowered, if he please, to disannul the vows made by the wife. This sentence amounts only to that command, *Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands*; but the entrance of sin has made that duty a punishment, which otherwise it would not have been. If man had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love; and if the woman had not sinned, she would always have obeyed with humility and meekness, and then the dominion had been no grievance; but our own sin and folly make our yoke heavy. If Eve had not eaten forbidden fruit herself, and tempted her husband to it, she had never complained of her subjection; therefore it ought never to be complained of, though harsh; but sin must be complained of, that made it so. These wives, who not only despise and disobey their husbands, but domineer over them, do not consider that they not only violate a divine law, but thwart a divine sentence.

Lastly, Observe here, how mercy is mixed with

wrath in this sentence; the woman shall have sorrow, but it shall be in bringing forth children, and the sorrow shall be *forgotten for joy that a child is born*, John 16. 21. She shall be subject, but it shall be to her own husband that loves her, not to a stranger, or an enemy: the sentence was not a curse, to bring her to ruin, but a chastisement, to bring her to repentance. It was well that enmity was not put between the man and the woman, as there was between the serpent and the woman.

17. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. 18. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. 19. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

We have here the sentence passed upon Adam, which is prefaced with a recital of his crime, *v. 17, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife*. He excused the fault, by laying it on his wife, *She gave it me*; but God does not admit the excuse; she could but tempt him, she could not force him; though it was *her* fault to persuade him to eat it, it was *his* fault to hearken to her. Thus men's frivolous pleas will, in the day of God's judgment, not only be over-ruled, but turned against them, and made the grounds of their sentence, *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee*. God put marks of his displeasure on Adam in three instances.

I. His habitation is, by this sentence, cursed; *Cursed is the ground for thy sake*; and the effect of that curse is, *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*. It is here intimated that his habitation should be changed; he should no longer dwell in a distinguished, blessed, paradise, but should be removed to common ground, and that, cursed. The ground, or earth, is here put for the whole visible creation, which, by the sin of man, is made subject to vanity, the several parts of it being not so serviceable to man's comfort and happiness, as they were designed to be when they were made, and would have been if he had not sinned. God gave the earth to the children of men, designing it to be a comfortable dwelling to them; but sin has altered the property of it, it is now cursed for man's sin; that is, it is a dishonourable habitation, it bespeaks man mean, that his foundation is in the dust; it is a dry and barren habitation, its spontaneous productions are now weeds and briars, something nauseous or noxious; what good fruits it produces, must be extorted from it by the ingenuity and industry of man. Fruitfulness was its blessing, for man's service, *ch. 1. 11. 29*; and now barrenness was its curse, for man's punishment. It is not what it was in the day it was created. Sin turned a fruitful land into barrenness; and man, being become as the wild ass's colt, has the wild ass's lot, *Job 39. 6; the wilderness for his habitation, and the barren land his dwelling*, Ps. 68. 6. Had not this curse been, in part, removed, for aught I know, the earth had been for ever barren, and had never produced any thing but thorns and thistles. The ground is *cursed*, that is, doomed to destruction, at the end of time, when the earth, and *all the works that are therein, shall be burnt-up* for the sin of man,

the measure of whose iniquity will then be full, 2 Pet. 3. 7, 10. But observe a mixture of mercy in this sentence; 1. Adam is not himself cursed, as the serpent was, *v. 14*, but only the ground for his sake. God had blessings in him, even the holy seed; *Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it*, Isa. 65. 8. And he had blessings in store for him; therefore he is not directly and immediately cursed, but, as it were, at second hand. 2. He is yet above ground; the earth does not open, and swallow him up, only it is not what it was: as he continues alive, notwithstanding his degeneracy from his primitive purity and rectitude, so the earth continues to be his habitation, notwithstanding its degeneracy from its primitive beauty and fruitfulness. 3. This curse upon the earth, which cut off all expectations of a happiness in things below, might direct and quicken him to look for bliss and satisfaction only in things above.

II. His employments and enjoyments are all embittered to him.

1. His business shall from henceforth become a toil to him, and he shall go on with it *in the sweat of his face*, *v. 19*. His business, before he sinned, was a constant pleasure to him: the garden was then dressed without any uneasy labour, and kept without any uneasy care; but now, his labour shall be a weariness, and shall waste his body; his care shall be a torment, and shall afflict his mind. The curse upon the ground, which made it barren, and produce thorns and thistles, made his employment about it much more difficult and toilsome. If Adam had not sinned, he had not sweat. Observe here, (1.) That labour is our duty, which we must faithfully perform: we are bound to work, not as creatures only, but as criminals; it is part of our sentence, which idleness daringly defies. (2.) That uneasiness and weariness with labour are our just punishment, which we must patiently submit to, and not complain of, since they are less than our iniquity deserves. Let not us, by inordinate care and labour, make our punishment heavier than God has made it; but rather, study to lighten our burden, and wipe off our sweat, by observing Providence in all, and expecting rest shortly.

2. His food shall from henceforth become (in comparison with what it had been) unpleasant to him. (1.) The matter of his food is changed: he must now *eat the herb of the field*, and must no longer be feasted with the delicacies of the garden of Eden: having by sin made himself like the beasts that perish, he is justly turned to be a fellow-commoner with them, and to *eat grass as oxen, till he know that the heavens do rule*. (2.) There is a change in the manner of his eating it; *in sorrow*, (*v. 17*.) and *in the sweat of his face*, (*v. 19*.) he must eat of it. Adam could not but eat in sorrow all the days of his life, remembering the forbidden fruit he had eaten, and the guilt and shame he had contracted by it. Observe [1.] That human life is exposed to many miseries and calamities, which very much embitter the poor remains of its pleasure and delights: some never eat with pleasure, (*Job 21. 25*.) through sickness or melancholy; all, even the best, have cause to eat with sorrow for sin; and all, even the happiest in this world, have some allays to their joy: troops of diseases, disasters, and deaths, in various shapes, entered the world with sin, and still ravage it. [2.] That the righteousness of God is to be acknowledged in all the sad consequences of sin; *Wherefore then should a living man complain?* Yet, in this part of the sentence, there is also a mixture of mercy; he shall sweat, but his toil shall make his rest the more welcome when he returns to his earth, as to his bed; he shall grieve, but he shall not starve; he shall have sorrow, but in that sorrow he shall eat bread, which

shall strengthen his heart under his sorrows. He is not sentenced to eat dust as the serpent, only to eat the herb of the field.

3. His life also is but short; considering how full of trouble his days are, it is in favour to him, that they are few; yet death being dreadful to nature, (yea, though life be unpleasant,) *that concludes the sentence.* "Thou shalt return to the ground out of which thou wast taken; thy body, that part of thee which was taken out of the ground, shall return to it again: for dust thou art." That points to, (1.) The first original of his body; it was made of the dust, nay, it was made dust, and was still so; so that there needed no more than to recall the grant of immortality, and to withdraw the power which was put forth to support it, and then he would, of course, return to dust. Or, (2.) To the present corruption and degeneracy of his mind; *Dust thou art*, that is, "Thy precious soul is now lost and buried in the dust of the body, and the mire of the flesh; it was made spiritual and heavenly, but it is become carnal and earthy." His doom is therefore read; "To dust thou shalt return." Thy body shall be forsaken by thy soul, and become itself a lump of dust; and then it shall be lodged in the grave, the proper place for it, and mingle itself with the dust of the earth," *our dust*, Ps. 104. 29, *Earth to earth, dust to dust.* Observe here, [1.] That man is a mean frail creature, little as dust, the small dust of the balance; *light* as dust, altogether lighter than vanity; *weak* as dust, and of no consistency, our strength not the strength of stones; he that made us, considers it, and remembers that we are dust, Ps. 103. 14. Man is indeed the *chief part of the dust of the world*, Prov. 8. 26, but still he is dust. [2.] That he is a mortal dying creature, and hastening to the grave. Dust may be raised, for a time, into a little cloud, and may seem considerable while it is held up by the wind that raised it; but when the force of that is spent, it falls again, and returns to the earth out of which it was raised; such a thing is man; a great man is but a great mass of dust, and must return to his earth. [3.] That sin brought death into the world; if Adam had not sinned, he had not died, Rom. 5. 12. God intrusted Adam with a spark of immortality, which he, by a patient continuance in well-doing, might have blown up into an everlasting flame; but he foolishly blew it out by wilful sin: and now death is *the wages of sin, and sin the sting of death.*

We must not go off from this sentence upon our first parents, which we are all so nearly concerned in, and feel from, to this day, till we have considered two things.

*First*, How fitly the sad consequences of sin upon the soul of Adam and his sensual race, were represented and figured out by this sentence, and perhaps were more intended in it than we are aware of. Though that misery only is mentioned, which affected the *body*, yet that was a pattern of spiritual miseries, the curse that entered into the *soul*. 1. The pains of a woman in travail represent the terrors and pangs of a guilty conscience, awakened to a sense of sin; from the conception of lust, these sorrows are greatly multiplied, and sooner or later, will come upon the sinner like pain upon a woman in travail, which cannot be avoided. 2. The state of subjection which the woman was reduced to, represents that loss of spiritual liberty and freedom of will, which is the effect of sin. The dominion of sin in the soul is compared to that of a husband, Rom. 7. 1. 5; the sinner's desire is towards it, for he is fond of his slavery, and it rules over him. 3. The curse of barrenness which was brought upon the earth, and its produce of briars and thorns, are a fit representation of the barrenness of a corrupt and sinful soul in that which is good, and its fruit-

fulness in evil. It is all grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face of it; and therefore it is *nigh unto cursing*, Heb. 6. 8. 4. The toil and sweat bespeak the difficulty which, through the infirmity of the flesh, man labours under, in the service of God, and the work of religion; so hard is it now become to *enter into the kingdom of heaven*. 5. The imbittering of his food to him bespeaks the soul's want of the comfort of God's favour, which is life, and the bread of life. 6. The soul, like the body, returns to the dust of this world, its tendency is that way; it has an earthy taint, John 3. 31.

*Secondly*, How admirably the satisfaction our Lord Jesus made by his death and sufferings, answered to the sentence here passed upon our first parents! 1. Did travelling pains come in with sin? We read of the *travail of Christ's soul*, Isa. 53. 11, and the pains of death he was held by, are called *Sins*, Acts, 2. 24, *the pains of a woman in travail*. 2. Did subjection come in with sin? Christ was made under the law, Gal. 4. 4. 3. Did the curse come in with sin? Christ was made a curse for us, died a cursed death, Gal. 3. 13. 4. Did thorns come in with sin? He was crowned with thorns for us. 5. Did sweat come in with sin? He sweat for us, as it had been great drops of blood. 6. Did sorrow come in with sin? He was a man of sorrows, his soul was, in his agony, exceeding sorrowful. 7. Did death come in with sin? He became obedient unto death. Thus is the plaster as wide as the wound; blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

20. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

God having named the man, and called him *Adam*, which signifies *red earth*; Adam, in further token of dominion, named the woman, and called her *Eve*, that is, *life*. Adam bears the name of the dying body, Eve of the living soul. The reason of the name is here given, some think, by Moses the historian, others, by Adam himself, because she *was*, that is, was to be, *the mother of all living*. He had before called her *Ishah, woman*, as a wife: here he calls her *Eveah, life*, as a mother. Now, 1. If this was done by divine direction, it was an instance of God's favour, and, like the new naming of Abraham and Sarah, it was a seal of the covenant, and an assurance to them, that, notwithstanding their sin and his displeasure against them for it, he had not reversed that blessing wherewith he had blessed them, *Be fruitful and multiply*; it was likewise a confirmation of the promise now made, that the Seed of the woman, of this woman, should break the serpent's head. 2. If Adam did it of himself, it was an instance of his faith in the word of God: doubtless it was not done, as some have suspected, in contempt or defiance of the curse, but rather in a humble confidence and dependence upon the blessing; (1.) The blessing of a reprieve, admiring the patience of God, and that he should spare such sinners to be the parents of all living, and that he did not immediately shut up those fountains of the human life and nature, because they could send forth no other than polluted, poisoned, streams; (2.) The blessing of a Redeemer, the promised Seed, to whom Adam had an eye, in calling his wife *Eve, life*; for he should be the life of all the living, and in him all the families of the earth should be blessed, in hope of which he thus triumphs.

21. Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

We have here a further instance of God's care concerning our first parents, notwithstanding the

sin. Though he correct his disobedient children, and put them under the marks of his displeasure, yet he does not disinherit them, but, like a tender father, provides the herb of the field for their food, and *coats of skins* for their clothing; thus the father provided for the returning prodigal, Luke 15. 22, 23. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have done this for them. Observe, 1. That clothes came in with sin; we had had no occasion for them, either for defence or decency, if sin had not made us naked, to our shame. Little reason therefore we have to be proud of our clothes, which are but the badges of our poverty and infamy. 2. That when God made clothes for our first parents, he made them warm and strong, but coarse and very plain, not robes of scarlet, but coats of skin. Their clothes were made, not of silk and satin, but plain skins, not trimmed, nor embroidered, none of the ornaments which the daughters of Zion afterwards invented, and prided themselves in. Let the poor that are meanly clad, learn hence not to complain; having food and a covering, let them be content; they are as well done to, as Adam and Eve were: and let the rich that are finely clad, learn hence not to make the putting on of apparel their *adorning*, 1 Pet. 3. 3. 3. That God is to be acknowledged with thankfulness, not only in giving us food, but in giving us clothes also, *ch.* 28. 20. The *wool* and the *flax* are his, as well as the *corn* and the *wine*, Hos. 2. 9. 4. Those coats of skin had a significancy. The beasts whose skins they were, must be slain before their eyes, to show them what death is, and (as it is Eccl. 3. 18.) that they may see that they themselves are beasts, mortal, and dying. It is supposed that they were slain, not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the Great Sacrifice, which in the latter end of the world, should be offered once for all: thus the first thing that died, was a sacrifice, or Christ in a figure, who is therefore said to be the *Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. These sacrifices were divided between God and man, in token of reconciliation; the flesh was offered to God, a whole burnt-offering, the skins were given to man for clothing; signifying that Jesus Christ having offered himself to God a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, we are to clothe ourselves with his righteousness as with a garment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear. Adam and Eve made for themselves aprons of fig-leaves, a covering too narrow for them to *wrap themselves in*, Is. 28. 20. Such are all the rags of our own righteousness. But God made them coats of skins, large, and strong, and durable, and fit for them; such is the righteousness of Christ, therefore *put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*.

22. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23. Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Sentence being passed upon the offenders, we have here execution, in part, done upon them immediately. Observe here,

I. How they were justly disgraced and shamed before God and the holy angels, by that ironical

upbraiding of them with the issue of their enterprise, "*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil*. A goodly god he makes! Does he not? See what he has got, what preferences, what advantages, by eating forbidden fruit!" This was said, to awaken and humble them, and to bring them to a sense of their sin and folly, and to repentance for it, that seeing themselves thus wretchedly deceived by following the Devil's counsel, they might henceforth pursue the happiness God should offer, in the way he should prescribe. God thus *fills their faces with shame, that they may seek his name*, Ps. 83. 16. He puts them to this confusion, in order to their conversion. True penitents will thus upbraid themselves, "What fruit have I now by sin? Rom. 6. 21. Have I gained what I foolishly promised myself in a sinful way? No, no, it never proved what it pretended to, but the contrary."

II. How they were justly discarded, and shut out of paradise, which was a part of the sentence implied in that, *Thou shalt eat the herb of the field*. Here we have,

1. The reason God gave why he shut him out of paradise; not only because he had put forth his hand, and taken of the tree of knowledge, which was his sin; but lest he should again put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, (which is now forbidden him by the law,) and should dare to eat of that tree, and so profane a divine sacrament, and defy a divine sentence, and yet flatter himself with a conceit that thereby he should live for ever. Observe, (1.) There is a foolish proneness in those that have rendered themselves unworthy of the substance of christian privileges, to catch at the signs and shadows of them. Many that like not the terms of the covenant, yet, for their reputation's sake, are fond of the seals of it. (2.) It is not only justice, but kindness, to such, to be denied them; for by usurping that which they have no title to, they affront God, and make their sin the more heinous; and by building their hopes upon a wrong foundation, they render their conversion the more difficult, and their ruin the more deplorable.

2. The method God took, in giving him this bill of divorce, and expelling and excluding him from this garden of pleasure. He turned him out, and kept him out.

(1.) He *turned him out*, from the garden to the common. This is twice mentioned, *v.* 23, *he sent him forth*, and then, *v.* 24, *he drove him out*. God bade him go out; told him that that was no place for him, he should no longer occupy and enjoy that garden: but he liked the place too well to be willing to part with it, and therefore God *drove him out*, made him go out, whether he would or no. This signified the exclusion of him, and all his guilty race, from that communion with God, which was the bliss and glory of paradise; the token of God's favour to him, and his delight in the sons of men which he had in his innocent estate, were now suspended; the communications of his grace were withheld, and Adam became weak, and like other men, as Samson when the *Spirit of the Lord was departed from him*; his acquaintance with God was lessened and lost, and that correspondence which had been settled between man and his Maker, was interrupted and broken off. He was driven out, as one unworthy of this honour, and incapable of this service. Thus he and all mankind, by the fall, forfeited and lost communion with God.

But whither did he send him, when he turned him out of Eden? He might justly have chased him out of the world, Job 18. 18, but he only chased him out of the garden. He might justly have cast him down to hell, as the angels that sinned were, when they were shut out from the heavenly para-

dise, 2 Pet. 2. 4. But man was only sent to till the ground, out of which he was taken. He was sent to a place of toil, not to a place of torment. He was sent to the ground, not to the grave; to the work-house, not to the dungeon, not to the prison-house; to hold the plough, not to drag the chain. His tilling of the ground would be recompensed by his eating of its fruits; and his converse with the earth whence he was taken, was unimpeachable to good purposes, to keep him humble, and to remind him of his latter end. Observe then, that though our first parents were excluded from the privileges of their state of innocency, yet they were not abandoned to despair; God's thoughts of love designing them for a second state of probation upon new terms.

(2.) He kept him out, and forbade him all hopes of a re-entry; for he placed at the east of the garden of Eden a detachment of cherubims. God's hosts, armed with a dreadful and irresistible power, represented by flaming swords which turned every way, on that side the garden which lay next to the place whither Adam was sent, to keep the way that led to the tree of life, so that he could not either steal or force an entry; for who can make a pass against an angel on his guard, or gain a pass made good by such a force? Now this intimated to Adam, [1.] That God was displeased with him; though he had mercy in store for him, yet, at present, he was angry with him, was turned to be his enemy, and fought against him, for here was a sword drawn, Num. 22, 23, and he was to him a consuming fire, for it was a flaming sword. [2.] That the angels were at war with him; no peace with the heavenly hosts, while he was in rebellion against their Lord and our's. [3.] That the way to the tree of life was shut up, namely, that way which, at first, he was put into, the way of spotless innocency. It is not said that the cherubims were set to keep him and his for ever from the tree of life: (thanks be to God, there is a paradise set before us, and a tree of life in the midst of it, which we rejoice in the hopes of); but they were set to keep that way of the tree of life, which hitherto they had been in, that is, it was henceforward in vain for him and his to expect righteousness, life, and happiness, by virtue of the first covenant, for it was irreparably broken, and could never be pleaded, nor any benefit taken by it. The command of that covenant being broken, the curse of it is in full force; it leaves no room for repentance, but we are all undone, if we be judged by that covenant. God revealed this to Adam, not to drive him to despair, but to do him a service by quickening him to look for life and happiness in the promised Seed, by whom the flaming sword is removed. God and his angels are reconciled to us, and a new and living way into the holiest is consecrated and laid open for us.

#### CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have both the world and the church in a family, in a little family, in Adam's family; and a specimen given of the character and state of both in after-ages, nay, in all ages to the end of time. As all mankind were represented in Adam, so that great distinction of mankind into saints and sinners, godly and wicked, the children of God and the children of the wicked one, was here represented in Cain and Abel; and an early instance is given of the enmity which was lately put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. We have here, I. The birth, names, and callings, of Cain and Abel, v. 1, 2. II. Their religion, and different success in it, v. 3, 4. and part of v. 5. III. Cain's anger at God, and the reproof of him for that anger, v. 5, 7. IV. Cain's murder of his brother, and the process against him for that murder. The murder committed, v. 8. The proceedings against him. 1. His arraignment, v. 9, former part. 2. His plea, v. 9, latter part. 3. His conviction, v. 10. 4. The sentence passed upon him, v. 11, 12. 5. His complaint against the sen-

tence, v. 13, 14. 6. The ratification of the sentence, v. 15. 7. The execution of the sentence, v. 15, 16. V. The family and posterity of Cain, v. 17, 24. VI. The birth of another son and grandson of Adam, v. 25, 26.

1. **AND** Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2. And she again bare his brother Abel: and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters, ch. 5. 4. But Cain and Abel seem to have been the two eldest; and some think they were twins, as Esau and Jacob, the elder hated, and the younger loved. Though God had cast them out of paradise, he did not write them childless; but to show that he had other blessings in store for them, he preserved to them the benefit of that first blessing of increase. Though they were sinners, nay, though they felt the humiliation and sorrow of penitents, they did not write themselves comfortless, having the promise of a Saviour to support themselves with. We have here,

1. The names of their two sons. 1. *Cain* signifies possession; for Eve, when she bare him, said, with joy and thankfulness, and great expectation, *I have gotten a man from the LORD*. Observe, Children are God's gifts, and he must be acknowledged in the building up of our families. It doubles and sanctifies our comfort in them, when we see them coming to us from the hand of God, who will not forsake the works and gifts of his own hand. Though Eve bare him with the sorrows that were the consequence of sin, yet she did not lose the sense of the mercy in her pains. Comforts, though allayed, are more than we deserve; and therefore our complaints must not drown our thanksgivings. Many suppose that Eve had a conceit that this son was the promised Seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him; it may indeed be read, *I have gotten a man, the LORD; God-man*. If so, she was wretchedly mistaken, as Samuel, when he said, *Surely the LORD's anointed is before me*, 1 Sam. 16. 6. When children are born, who can foresee what they will prove? He that was thought to be a man, the LORD, or, at least, a man from the LORD, and for his service as priest of the family, became an enemy to the LORD. The less we expect from creatures, the more tolerable will disappointments be. 2. *Abel* signifies vanity; when she thought she had obtained the promised Seed in Cain, she was so taken up with that possession, that another son was as vanity to her. To those who have an interest in Christ, and make him their all, other things are as nothing at all. It intimates likewise, that the longer we live in this world, the more we may see of the vanity of it; what, at first, we are fond of, as a possession, afterward we see cause to be dead to, as a trifle. The name given to this son is put upon the whole race, Ps. 39. 5. *Every man is at his best estate, Abel, vanity*. Let us labour to see both ourselves and others so. *Childhood and youth are vanity*.

II. The employments of Cain and Abel. Observe, 1. They both had a calling. Though they were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble, and their possessions large; yet they were not brought up in idleness. God gave their father a calling, even in innocency, and he gave them one. Note, It is the will of God that we should every one of us have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to business: *Give them a Bible, and a calling*; (said good Mr. Dodd;) and God be with them. 2. Their employments were differ-



ent, that they might trade and exchange with one another, as there was occasion. The members of the body politic have need one of another; and mutual love is helped by mutual commerce. 3. Their employments belonged to the husbandman's calling, their father's profession; a *needful* calling, for *the king himself is served of the field*, but a *laborious* calling, which required constant care and attendance: it is now looked upon as a *mean* calling, the *poor of the land* serve for *vine-dressers, and husbandmen*, Jer. 52. 16. But the calling was far from being a dishonour to them; rather, they might have been an honour to it. 4. It should seem, by the order of the story, that Abel, though the younger brother, yet entered first into his calling, and, probably, his example drew in Cain. 5. Abel chose that employment which most befriended contemplation and devotion, for, to these a pastoral life has been looked upon as being peculiarly favourable. Moses and David kept sheep, and in their solitudes conversed with God. Note, That calling and that condition of life are best for us, and to be chosen by us, which are best for our souls; that which least exposes us to sin, and gives us most opportunity of serving and enjoying God.

3. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. 4. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

Here is,

1. The devotion of Cain and Abel. *In process of time*, when they had made some improvement in their respective callings, Heb. *At the end of days*, either at the end of the year, when they kept their feasts of in-gathering, or, perhaps, an annual fast in remembrance of the fall; or, at the end of the days of the week, the seventh day, which was the sabbath—at some set time, Cain and Abel brought to Adam, as the priest of the family, each of them *an offering to the Lord*; for the doing of which we have reason to think there was a divine appointment given to Adam, as a token of God's favour to him, and his thoughts of love toward him and his, notwithstanding their apostasy. God would thus try Adam's faith in the promise, and his obedience to the remedial law; he would thus settle a correspondence again between heaven and earth, and give *shadows of good things to come*. Observe here, 1. That the religious worship of God is no novel invention, but an ancient institution. It is that which was *from the beginning*, (1 John 1. 1.) it is *the good old way*, Jer. 6. 16. The city of our God is indeed that *joyous city whose antiquity is of ancient days*, Isa. 23. 7. Truth got the start of error, and piety of profaneness. 2. That it is a good thing for children to be well-taught when they are young, and trained up betimes in religious services, that when they become to be capable of acting for themselves, they may, of their own accord, *bring an offering to God*. In this *nurture of the Lord* parents must bring up their children, Eph. 6. 4. *ch.* 18. 19. 3. That we should every one of us honour God with what we have, according as he has prospered us. According as their employments and possessions were, so they brought their offering. See 1 Cor. 16. 1, 2. *Our merchandise and our hire*, whatever it is, must be *holiness to the Lord*, Isa. 23. 18. He must have his dues of it in works of piety and charity, the support

of religion and the relief of the poor; thus we must now *bring our offering* with an upright heart; and *with such sacrifices God is well-pleased*. 4. That hypocrites and evil doers may be found going as far as the best of God's people in the external services of religion. Cain brought an offering with Abel; nay, Cain's offering is mentioned first, as if he were the more forward of the two. A hypocrite may, possibly, hear as many sermons, say as many prayers, and give as much alms, as a good christian; and yet, for want of sincerity, come short of acceptance with God. The *Pharisee and Publican went to the temple to pray*, Luke 18. 10.

II. The different success of their devotions. That which is to be aimed at in all acts of religion, is, God's acceptance; we speed well if we attain that, but in vain do we worship if we miss of that, 2 Cor. 5. 9. Perhaps to a stander-by, the sacrifices of Cain and Abel would have seemed both alike good. Adam accepted them both, but God did not, *who sees not as man sees*. God had *respect to Abel and to his offering*, and showed his acceptance of it, probably, by fire from heaven; but to *Cain and to his offering he had not respect*. We are sure there was a good reason for this difference; the Governor of the world, though an absolute sovereign, does not act arbitrarily in dispensing his smiles and frowns.

1. There was a difference in the characters of the persons offering. Cain was a wicked man, led a bad life, under the reigning power of the world and the flesh; and therefore his sacrifice was an *abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 15. 8, *a vain oblation*, Isa. 1. 13. God had no respect to Cain himself, and therefore no respect to his offering, as the manner of the expression intimates. But Abel was a righteous man, he is called *righteous Abel*, Matth. 23. 35, his heart was upright, and his life was pious; he was one of those whom *God's countenance, beholds*, Ps. 11. 7. and whose *prayer* is therefore *his delight*, Prov. 15. 8. God had respect to him as a holy man, and therefore to his offering as a holy offering. The tree must be good, else the fruit cannot be pleasing to the heart-searching God.

2. There was a difference in the offerings they brought. It is expressly said, Heb. 11. 4, Abel's was a *more excellent sacrifice than Cain's*: either, (1.) In the nature of it. Cain's was only a *sacrifice of acknowledgement* offered to the Creator; the meat-offerings of the *fruit of the ground* were no more, and, for aught I know, might have been offered in innocency: but Abel brought a *sacrifice of atonement*, the blood whereof was shed in order to remission; thereby owning himself a sinner, deprecating God's wrath, and imploring his favour in a Mediator; or, (2.) In the qualities of the offering. Cain brought of *the fruit of the ground*, any thing that came next to hand, what he had not occasion for himself, or what was not marketable; but Abel was curious in the choice of his offering; not the lame, or the lean, or the refuse, but *the firstlings of the flock*, the best he had, *and the fat thereof*, the best of those best. Hence the Hebrew doctors give it for a general rule, that every thing that is for the name of the good God, must be the goodliest and best. It is fit that he who is the first and best should have the first and best of our time, strength, and service.

3. The great difference was this, that Abel offered *in faith*, and Cain did not. There was a difference in the principle upon which they went. Abel offered with an eye to God's will as his rule, and God's glory as his end, and in dependence upon the promise of a Redeemer: but Cain did what he did, only for company's sake, or to save his credit, not in faith, and so it turned into sin to him. Abel was a penitent believer, like the Publican that went away justified: Cain was unhumiliated; his confidence was

within himself; he was like the Pharisee who glorified himself, but was not so much as justified before God.

III. Cain's displeasure at the difference God made between his sacrifice and Abel's. Cain was very wroth, which presently appeared in his very looks, for his countenance fell; which bespeaks, not so much his grief and discontent, as his malice and rage. His sullen churlish countenance, and a down-look, betrayed his passionate resentments: he carried ill-nature in his face, and *the show of his countenance witnessed against him*. This anger bespeaks, 1. His enmity to God, and the indignation he had conceived against him for making such a difference between his offering and his brother's. He should have been angry at himself for his own infidelity and hypocrisy, by which he had forfeited God's acceptance; and his countenance should have fallen in repentance and holy shame, as the Publican's, who *would not lift up so much as their eyes to heaven*, Luke 18. 13. But instead of that, he flies out against God, as if he were partial and unfair in distributing his smiles and frowns, and as if he had done him a deal of wrong. Note, It is a certain sign of an unhumiliated heart, to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our own sin, brought upon ourselves. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way*, and then, to make bad worse, *his heart fretteth against the Lord*, Prov. 19. 3. 2. His envy of his brother who had the honour to be publicly owned. Though his brother had no thought of having any slur put upon him, nor did now insult over him to provoke him, yet he conceived a hatred of him as an enemy, or, which is equivalent, a rival. Note, (1.) It is common for those who have rendered themselves unworthy of God's favour by their presumptuous sins, to have indignation against those who are dignified and distinguished by it. The Pharisees walked in this way of Cain, when they *neither entered into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffered those that were entering, to go in*, Luke 11. 52. Their eye is evil, because their master's eye, and the eye of their fellow-servants, are good. (2.) Envy is a sin that commonly carries with it, both its own discovery in the paleness of the looks, and its own punishment in the rottenness of the bones.

6. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? 7. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

God is here reasoning with Cain, to convince him of the sin and folly of his anger and discontent, and to bring him into a good temper again, that further mischief might be prevented. It is an instance of God's patience and condescending goodness, that he would deal thus tenderly with so bad a man, in so bad an affair. *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. Thus the father of the prodigal argued the case with the elder son, Luke 15. 28, &c. And God with those Israelites, who said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, Ezek. 18. 25. God puts Cain himself upon inquiring into the cause of his discontent, and considering whether it were indeed a just cause, *Why is thy countenance fallen?* Observe,

I. That God takes notice of all our sinful passions and discontents. There is not an angry look, an envious look, or a fretful look, that escapes his observance.

II. That most of our sinful heats and disquietudes would soon vanish before a strict and impartial in-

quiry into the cause of them. "*Why am I wroth?* Is there a real cause, a just cause, a proportionable cause for it? Why am I so soon angry? Why so very angry, and so implacable?" To reduce Cain to his right mind again, it is here made evident to him,

1. That he had no reason to be angry at God, for that he had proceeded according to the settled and invariable rules of government, suited to a state of probation. He sets before men life and death, the blessing and the curse; and then *renders to them according to their works*, and differences them according as they difference themselves—so shall their doom be. The rules are just, and therefore his ways, according to these rules, must needs be equal, and he will be justified when he speaks.

(1.) God sets before Cain life and a blessing. "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?*" No doubt, thou shalt, nay, thou knowest thou shalt;" either, [1.] "*If thou hadst done well, as thy brother did, thou shouldst have been accepted, as he was.*" *God is no respecter of persons*, hates nothing that he has made, denies his favour to none but those who have forfeited it, and is an enemy to none but those who, by sin, have made him their enemy: so that if we come short of acceptance with him, we must thank ourselves, the fault is wholly our own; if we had done our duty, we had not missed of his mercy. This will justify God in the destruction of sinners, and will aggravate their ruin; there is not a damned sinner in hell, but, if he had done well, as he might have done, had been a glorified saint in heaven. Every mouth will shortly be stopped with this. Or, [2.] "*If now thou do well, if thou repent of thy sin, reform thy heart and life, and bring thy sacrifice in a better manner, if thou not only do that which is good, but do it well; thou shalt yet be accepted, thy sin shall be pardoned, thy comfort and honour restored, and all shall be well.*" See here the effect of a Mediator's interposal between God and man; we do not stand upon the footing of the first covenant, which left no room for repentance, but God is come upon new terms with us. Though we have offended, if we repent and return, we shall find mercy. See how early the gospel was preached, and the benefit of it here offered even to one of the chief of sinners.

(2.) He sets before him death and a curse. "*But if not well,*" that is, "*Seeing thou didst not do well, not offer in faith, and in a right manner; sin lieth at the door,*" that is, "*sin was imputed to thee, and thou wast frowned upon and rejected as a sinner.* So high a charge had not been laid at thy door, if thou hadst not brought it upon thyself, by not doing well." Or, as it is commonly taken, "*If now thou dost not do well, if thou persist in this wrath, and, instead of humbling thyself before God, harden thyself against him; sin lieth at the door,*" that is, [1.] *Further sin*. "*Now that anger is in thy heart, murder is at the door.*" The way of sin is downhill, and men go from bad to worse. They who do not sacrifice well, but are careless and remiss in their devotion to God, expose themselves to the worst temptations; and perhaps the most scandalous sin lieth at the door. They who do not keep God's ordinances, are in danger of committing all abominations, Lev. 18. 30. Or, [2.] *The punishment of sin*. So near akin are sin and punishment, that the same word in Hebrew signifies both. If sin be harboured in the house, the curse waits at the door, like a bailiff, ready to arrest the sinner when ever he looks out. It lies as if it slept, but it lies at the door where it will soon be awaked, and then it will appear that the damnation slumbers not. Sin will *find thee out*, Numb. 32. 23. Yet some choose to understand this also as an intimation of mercy. "*If thou doest not well, sin, that is, the sin-offering, lieth at the door, and thou mayest take the benefit*"

of it." The same word signifies *sin*, and a *sacrifice for sin*. "Though thou hast not done well, yet do not despair; the remedy is at hand; the proposition is not to seek; lay hold on it, and the iniquity of the holy things shall be forgiven thee." Christ, the great sin-offering, is said to *stand at the door*, Rev. 3. 20. And those well deserve to perish in their sins, that will not go to the door for an interest in the sin-offering. All this considered, Cain had no reason to be angry at God, but at himself only.

2. He shows him that he had no reason to be angry at his brother; "*Unto thee shall be his desire*, he shall continue his respect to thee as an elder brother, and thou, as the first-born, shalt rule over him as much as ever." God's acceptance of Abel's offering did not transfer the birthright to him, (which Cain was jealous of,) nor put upon him that excellency of dignity and excellency of power which are said to belong to it, *ch.* 49. 3. God did not so intend it; Abel did not so interpret it; there was no danger of its being improved to Cain's prejudice; why then should he be so much exasperated? Observe here, (1.) That the difference which God's grace makes, does not alter the distinctions which God's providence makes, but preserves them, and obliges us to do the duty which results from them: believing servants must be obedient to unbelieving masters. Dominion is not founded in grace, nor will religion warrant disloyalty or disrespect in any relation. (2.) That the jealousies which civil powers have sometimes conceived of the true worshippers of God as dangerous to their government, enemies to Caesar, and hurtful to kings and provinces, (on which suspicion persecutors have grounded their rage against them,) are very unjust and unreasonable. Whatever may be the case with some who call themselves christians, it is certain that *christians indeed* are the best subjects, and the quiet in the land; their desire is toward their governors, and they shall rule over them.

8. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

We have here the progress of Cain's anger, and the issue of it in Abel's murder; which may be considered two ways.

1. As *Cain's sin*; and a scarlet, crimson sin it was, a sin of the first magnitude, a sin against the light and law of nature, and which the consciences even of bad men have started at. See in it, 1. The sad effects of sin's entrance into the world, and into the hearts of men. See what a root of bitterness the corrupt nature is, which bears this gall and wormwood. Adam's eating forbidden fruit seemed but a little sin, but it opened the door to the greatest. 2. A fruit of the enmity which is in the *seed of the serpent* against the *seed of the woman*. As Abel leads the van in the *noble army of martyrs*, Matth. 23. 35, so Cain stands in the front of the *ignoble army of persecutors*, Jude 11. So early did he that was *after the flesh*, persecute him that was *after the spirit*; and so it is now, more or less, Gal. 4. 29, and so it will be, till the war shall end in eternal salvation of all the saints, and the eternal perdition of all that hate them. 3. See also what comes of *envy*, *hatred*, *malice*, and all *uncharitableness*; if they be indulged and cherished in the soul, they are in danger of involving men in the horrid guilt of murder itself. Rash anger is heart-murder, Matth. 5. 21, 22. Much more is malice so; he that hates his brother, is already a murderer before God; and if God leave him to himself, he wants nothing but an opportunity of being a murderer before the world.

Many were the aggravations of Cain's sin. (1.) It

was his brother, his own brother, that he murdered; his own mother's son, Ps. 50. 20, whom he ought to have loved; his younger brother, whom he ought to have protected. (2.) He was a good brother; one who had never done him any wrong, nor given him the least provocation, in word or deed, but one whose desire had been always toward him, and who had been, in all instances, dutiful and respectful to him. (3.) He had fair warning given him, before, of this; God himself had told him what would come of it, yet he persisted in his barbarous design. (4.) It should seem that he covered it with a show of friendship and kindness. *He talked with Abel his brother*, freely and familiarly, lest he should suspect danger, and keep out of his reach. Thus Joab kissed Abner, and then killed him. According to the Septuagint,\* he said to Abel, *Let us go into the field*; if so, we are sure Abel did not understand it (according to the modern sense) as a challenge, else he would not have accepted it, but as a brotherly invitation to go together to their work. The Chaldee-Paraphrast adds, that Cain, when they were in discourse in the field, maintained that there was no judgment to come, no future state, no rewards and punishments in the other world; and that when Abel spake in defence of the truth, Cain took that occasion to fall upon him. However, (5.) That which the scripture tells us was the reason for which he slew him, was a sufficient aggravation of the murder; it was *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*, so that herein he showed himself to be of that *wicked one*, 1 John 3. 12, a *child of the devil*, as being an *enemy to all righteousness*, even in his own brother; and, in this, employed immediately by the destroyer. Nay, (6.) In killing his brother, he directly struck at God himself; for God accepting of Abel was the provocation pretended; and for that very reason he hated Abel, because God loved him. (7.) The murder of Abel was the more inhuman, because there were now so few men in the world to replenish it. The life of a man is precious at any time; but it was in a special manner precious now, and could ill be spared.

II. As *Abel's suffering*. Death reigned ever since Adam sinned, but we read not of any taken captive by him till now; and now, 1. The first that dies, is a saint, one that was accepted and beloved of God; to show that though the promised Seed was so far to destroy him that had the power of death, as to save believers from its sting, yet that still they should be exposed to its stroke. The first that went to the grave went to heaven; God would secure to himself the first fruits, the first-born to the dead, that first opened the womb into another world. Let this take off the terror of death, that it was betimes the lot of God's chosen, which alters the property of it. Nay, 2. The first that dies, is a martyr, and dies for his religion; and of such it may more truly be said than of soldiers, that they die in the field of honour. Abel's death has not only no curse in it, but it has a crown in it; so admirably well is the property of death altered, that it is not only become innocent and inoffensive to those that die in Christ, but honourable and glorious to those that die for him. Let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, nor shrink if we be called to resist unto blood; for we know there is a crown of life for all that are faithful unto death.

9. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know

\* It may be proper to state, for the information of some readers, that the LXX, or Septuagint, is the name of a Greek version of the Old Testament, supposed to be the work of seventy-two Jews who were usually called in a round number, the *Seventy*, and who made this version, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about 200 years before Christ.—Christ and his Apostles usually quote from this version. Ed

not : *Am I my brother's keeper?* 10. And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11. And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. 12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

We have here a full account of the trial and condemnation of the first murderer; civil courts of judicature not being yet erected for this purpose, as they were afterward, *ch.* 9. 6. God himself sits Judge; for he is the God to whom vengeance belongs, and who will be sure to make inquisition for blood, especially the blood of saints.

Observe,

I. The arraignment of Cain; *The Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?* Some think Cain was thus examined, the next sabbath after the murder was committed, when the *sons of God came*, as usual, *to present themselves before the Lord*, in a religious assembly, and Abel was missing, whose place did not use to be empty; for the God of heaven takes notice who is present at, and who is absent from, public ordinances. Cain is asked, not only because there was just cause to suspect him, he having discovered a malice against Abel, and having been last with him, but because God knew him to be guilty; yet he asks him, that he might draw from him a confession of the crime; for those who would be justified before God, must accuse themselves; and the penitent will do so.

II. Cain's *plea*; he pleads *not guilty*, and adds rebellion to his sin. For, 1. He endeavours to cover a deliberate murder with a deliberate lie; *I know not*. He knew well enough what was become of Abel, and yet had the impudence to deny it. Thus, in Cain, the Devil was both a murderer, and a liar, from the beginning. See how sinners' minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: those are strangely blind, that think it possible to conceal their sins from a God that sees all; and those are strangely hard, that think it desirable to conceal them from a God who pardons those only that confess. 2. He impudently charges his Judge with folly and injustice, in putting this question to him. *Am I my brother's keeper?* He should have humbled himself, and have said, *Am not I my brother's murderer?* But he lies in the face of God himself, as if he had asked him an impertinent question, which he was no way obliged to give an answer to, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" Surely he is old enough to take care of himself, nor did I ever take any charge of him." Some think he reflects on God and his providence, as if he had said, "*Art not thou his keeper?*" If he be missing, on thee be the blame, and not on me, who never undertook to keep him." Note, a charitable concern for our brethren, as their keepers, is a great duty, which is strictly required of us, but is generally neglected by us. They who are unconcerned in the affairs of their brethren, and take no care, when they have opportunity, to prevent their hurt in their bodies, goods, or good name, especially in their souls, do, in effect, speak Cain's language. See Lev. 19. 17. Phil. 2. 4.

III. The conviction of Cain, *v.* 10. God gave no direct answer to his question, but rejected his plea as false and frivolous; "*What hast thou done?*" Thou makest a light matter of it; but hast thou considered what an evil thing it is; how deep the stain, how heavy the burthen, of this guilt is? Thou

thinkest to conceal it; but it is to no purpose, the evidence against thee is clear and incontestable, *the voice of thy brother's blood cries.*" He speaks as if the blood itself were both witness and prosecutor; because God's own knowledge testified against him, and God's own justice demanded satisfaction. Observe here, 1. Murder is a crying sin, none more so. Blood calls for blood, the blood of the murdered for the blood of the murderer; it cries, in the dying words of Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24. 22. *The Lord look upon it, and require it*; or in those of the souls under the altar, Rev. 6. 10, *How long, Lord, holy and true?* The patient sufferers cried for pardon. *Father, forgive them*; but their blood cries for vengeance. Though they hold their peace, their blood has a loud and constant cry, which the ear of the righteous God is always open to. 2. The blood is said to cry from the ground, the earth, which is said, *v.* 11, *to open her mouth to receive his brother's blood from his hand*. The earth did, as it were, blush to see her own face stained with such blood, and, therefore, opened her mouth to hide that which she could not hinder. When the heaven revealed his iniquity, the earth also rose up against him, (Job 20. 27.) and groaned for being thus made *subject to vanity*, Rom. 8. 20, 22. Cain, it is likely, buried the blood and the body, to conceal his crime; but murder will out. He did not bury them so deep but the cry of them reached heaven. 3. In the original, the word is plural, thy brother's *bloods*, not only his blood, but the blood of all those that might have descended from him. Or, the blood of all the seed of the woman, who should, in like manner, seal the truth with their blood: Christ puts all on one score, Matth. 23. 35. Or, because account was kept of every drop of blood shed. How well is it for us, that the blood of Christ speaks better things than that of Abel! Heb. 12. 24. Abel's blood cried for vengeance, Christ's blood cries for pardon.

IV. The sentence passed upon Cain, *And now art thou cursed from the earth, v.* 11. Observe here,

1. He is *cursed*, separated to all evil, laid under the wrath of God, as it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18. Who knows the extent and weight of a divine curse, how far it reaches, how deep it pierces? God's pronouncing a man cursed makes him so; for those whom he curses, are cursed indeed. The curse for Adam's disobedience terminated on the ground, *Cursed is the ground for thy sake*; but that for Cain's rebellion fell immediately upon himself, *Thou art cursed*; for God had mercy in store for Adam, but none for Cain. We have all deserved this curse, and it is only in Christ that believers are saved from it, and inherit the blessing, Gal. 3. 10, 13.

2. He is cursed from the earth. Thence the cry came up to God, thence the curse came upon Cain. God could have taken vengeance by an immediate stroke from heaven, by the sword of an angel, or by a thunderbolt; but he chose to make the earth the avenger of blood; to continue him upon the earth, and not immediately to cut him off, and yet to make even that his curse. The earth is always near us, we cannot fly from it; so that if that be the executioner of divine wrath, it is unavoidable; it is sin, that is, the punishment of sin, lying at the door. Cain found his punishment there, where he chose his portion, and set his heart.

Two things we expect from the earth; and by this curse both are denied to Cain, and taken from him, *sustenance and settlement*. (1.) Sustenance out of the earth is here withheld from him. It is a curse upon him in his enjoyments, and particularly in his calling; *When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength*. Note, Every creature is to us what God makes it; a com-

fort or a cross; a blessing or a curse. If the earth yield not her strength to us, we must therein acknowledge God's righteousness; for we have not yielded our strength to him. The ground was cursed before, to Adam, but it was now doubly cursed to Cain. That part of it which fell to his share, and which he had the occupation of, was made unfruitful and uncomfortable to him by the blood of Abel. Note, The wickedness of the wicked brings a curse upon all they do, and all they have, Deut. 28. 15, &c. and that curse imbitters all they have, and disappoints them in all they do. (2.) Settlement on the earth is here denied him. *A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.* By this he was condemned. [1.] To perpetual disgrace and reproach among men. It should be ever looked upon as a scandalous thing to harbour him, converse with him, or show him any countenance. And justly was a man that had divested himself of all humanity, abhorred and abandoned by all mankind, and made infamous. [2.] To perpetual disquietude and horror in his own mind. His own guilty conscience should haunt him wherever he went, and make him *Magor-missabib, a terror round about.* What rest can those find, what settlement, that carry their own disturbance with them in their bosoms wherever they go? they must needs be fugitives, that are thus tossed. There is not a more restless fugitive upon earth, than he that is continually pursued by his own guilt, nor a viler vagabond than he that is at the beck of his own lusts.

This was the sentence passed upon Cain; and even in this there was mercy mixed, inasmuch, as he was not immediately cut off, but had space given him to repent; for God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

13. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me, shall slay me. 15. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

We have here a further account of the proceedings against Cain.

I. Here is Cain's complaint of the sentence passed upon him, as hard and severe. Some make him to speak the language of despair; and read it, *My iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven;* and so what he says, is a reproach and affront to the mercy of God, which those only shall have the benefit of, that hope in it. There is forgiveness with the God of pardons for the greatest sins and sinners; but they forfeit it, who despair of it. Just before, Cain made nothing of his sin; but now, he is in the other extreme: Satan drives his vassals from presumption to despair. We cannot think too ill of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable. But Cain seems rather to speak the language of indignation; *My punishment is greater than I can bear;* and so, what he says, is a reproach and affront to the justice of God, and a complaint, not of the greatness of his sin, but of the extremity of his punishment, as if that were disproportionable to his merits. Instead of justifying God in the sentence, he condemns him; not accepting the punishment of his iniquity, but quarrelling with it. Note, Impenitent unhumble hearts are therefore not reclaimed

by God's rebukes, because they think themselves wronged by them; and it is an evidence of great hardness to be more concerned about our sufferings than about our sins. Pharaoh's care was concerning this death only, not this sin, Exod. 10. 17; so was Cain's here. He is a living man, and yet complains of the punishment of his sin, Lam. 3. 39. He thinks himself rigorously dealt with, when really he is favourably treated; and he cries out of wrong, when he has more reason to wonder that he is out of hell. Woe unto him that thus strives with his Maker, and enters into judgment with his judge!

Now, to justify this complaint, observe his descendants upon the sentence. 1. He sees himself excluded by it from the favour of God; and concludes that, being cursed, he was hid from God's face; which is indeed the true nature of God's curse; damned sinners find it so, to whom it is said, *Depart from me, ye cursed.* Those are cursed indeed, that are for ever shut out from God's love and care, and from all hopes of his grace. 2. He sees himself expelled from all the comforts of this life; and concludes that, being a fugitive, he was, in effect, *driven out this day from the face of the earth.* As good have no place on earth, as not have a settled place. Better rest in the grave, than not rest at all. 3. He sees himself excommunicated by it, and cut off from the church, and forbidden to attend on public ordinances. His hands being full of blood, he must bring no more vain oblations, Isa. 1. 13, 15. Perhaps this he means, when he complains that he was *driven out from the face of the earth*, for, being shut out of the church, which none had yet deserted, he was *hid from God's face*, being not admitted to come with the sons of God to present himself before the Lord. 4. He sees himself exposed by it to the hatred and ill-will of all mankind. *It shall come to pass, that every one that finds me, shall slay me.* Wherever he wanders, he goes in peril of his life, at least he thinks so; and like a man in debt, thinks every one he meets, a bailiff. There were none alive but his near relations; yet even of them he is justly afraid, who had himself been so barbarous to his brother. Some read it, *Whosoever finds me, shall slay me;* not only, Whosoever among men, but Whosoever among all the creatures: seeing himself thrown out of God's protection, he sees the whole creation armed against him. Note, Unpardoned guilt fills men with continual terrors, Prov. 28. 1. Job 15. 20, 21. Ps. 53. 5. It is better to fear and not sin, than to sin and then fear. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this word of Cain should be read as a wish: *Now, therefore, let it be that any that finds me, may kill me.* Being bitter in his soul, he longs for death, but it comes not, Job 3. 20 ... 22. as those under spiritual torments do, Rev. 9. 5, 6.

II. Here is God's confirmation of the sentence; for when he judges, he will overcome, v. 15. Observe, 1. How Cain is *protected* in wrath by this declaration, notified, we may suppose, to all that little world which was then in being, *Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold;* because thereby the sentence he was under (that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond) would be defeated. Condemned prisoners are under the special protection of the law; they that are appointed sacrifices to public justice, must not be sacrificed to private revenge. God having said, in Cain's case, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay,* it had been a daring usurpation for any man to take the sword out of God's hand, a contempt put upon an express declaration of God's mind, and therefore, avenged seven-fold. Note, God has wise and holy ends in protecting and prolonging the lives even of very wicked men. God deals with some, according to that prayer, Ps. 59. 11, *Slay them not, lest my*

people forget; scatter them by thy power. Had Cain been slain immediately, he had been forgotten, Eccl. 8. 10; but now he lives, a more fearful and lasting monument of God's justice, hanged in chains, as it were. 2. How he is marked in wrath; *The Lord set a mark upon Cain*, to distinguish him from the rest of mankind, and to notify that he was the man that murdered his brother, whom nobody must hurt, but every body must hoot at. God stigmatized him, (as some malefactors are burnt in the cheek,) and put upon him such a visible and indelible mark of infamy and disgrace, as would make all wise people shun him, so that he could not be otherwise than a fugitive and a vagabond, and the offscouring of all things.

16. And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. 17. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. 18. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech.

We have here a further account of Cain, and what became of him after he was rejected of God.

I. He tamely submitted to that part of his sentence, by which he was hid from God's face. For, (v. 16.) *he went out from the presence of the Lord*, that is, he willingly renounced God and religion, and was content to forego the privileges, so that he might not be under its precepts. He forsook Adam's family and altar, and cast off all pretensions to the fear of God, and never came among good people, nor attended on God's ordinances, any more. Note, Hypocritical professors, that have dissembled and trifled with God Almighty, are justly left to themselves, to do something that is grossly scandalous, and so throw off that form of godliness which they have been a reproach to, and under colour of which they have denied the power of it. Cain went out now from the presence of the Lord, and we never find that he came into it again, to his comfort. Hell is *destruction from the presence of the Lord*, 2 Thes. 1. 9. It is a perpetual banishment from the fountain of all good. This is the choice of sinners; and so shall their doom be, to their eternal confusion.

II. He endeavoured to confront that part of the sentence by which he was made a fugitive and a vagabond, for,

1. He chose his land. He went and dwelt on the east of Eden, somewhere distant from the place where Adam and his religious family resided, distinguishing himself and his accursed generation from the holy seed, his camp from the camp of the saints and the beloved city, Rev. 20. 9. On the east of Eden, the cherubim were, with the flaming sword; ch. 3. 24. there he chose his lot, as if to defy the terrors of the Lord. But his attempt to settle was in vain; for the land he dwelt in, was to him the land of Nod, that is, *shaking*, or *trembling*, because of the continual restlessness and uneasiness of his own spirit. Note, Those that depart from God, cannot find rest any where else. When Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, he never rested after. Those that shut themselves out of Heaven, abandon themselves to a perpetual trembling; "Return therefore to thy rest, O my soul, to thy rest in God; else thou art for ever restless."

2. He builded him a city for a habitation, v. 17. *He was building a city*, so some read it, ever build-

ing it, but, a curse being upon him and the work of his hands, he could not finish it. Or, as we read it, he *builded a city*, in token of a fixed separation from the church of God, to which he had no thoughts of ever returning. This city was to be the head quarters of the apostasy. Observe here, (1.) Cain's defiance of the divine sentence. God said he should be a *fugitive and a vagabond*; had he repented and humbled himself, that curse might have turned into a blessing, as that of the tribe of Levi was, that they should be *divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel*; but his impenitent unhumiliated heart walking contrary to God, and resolving to fix, in spite of heaven, that which might have been a blessing, turned into a curse. (2.) See what was Cain's choice, after he had forsaken God; he pitched upon a settlement in this world, as his rest for ever. They who looked for the heavenly city, on earth, chose to dwell in tabernacles; but Cain, as one that minded not *that* city, built him one on earth. They that are cursed of God, are apt to seek their settlement and satisfaction here below, Ps. 17. 14. (3.) See what method Cain took to defend himself against the terrors with which he was perpetually haunted. He undertook this building, to divert his thoughts from the consideration of his own misery, and to drown the clamours of a guilty conscience with the noise of axes and hammers. Thus many baffle their convictions, by thrusting themselves into a hurry of worldly business. (4.) See how wicked people often get the start of God's people, and out-go them in outward prosperity. Cain and his cursed race dwell in a city, while Adam and his blessed family dwell in tents; we cannot judge of *love or hatred by all that is before us*, Eccl. 9. 1, 2.

3. His family was also built up. Here is an account of his posterity, at least, the heirs of his family, for seven generations. His son was *Enoch*; of the same name, but not of the same character; with that holy man that *walked with God*, ch. 5. 22. Good men and bad may bear the same names; but God can distinguish between Judas Iscariot, and Judas not Iscariot, John 14. 22. The names of more of his posterity are mentioned, and but just mentioned; as not those of the holy seed, ch. 5, where we have three verses concerning each, whereas here we have three or four in one verse. They are numbered in haste, as not valued or delighted in, in comparison with God's chosen.

19. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. 20. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. 21. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. 22. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.

We have here some particulars concerning Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain. Observe,

1. His marrying of two wives. It was one of the degenerate race of Cain, who first transgressed that original law of marriage, that two only should be one flesh. Hitherto, one man had but one wife at a time; but Lamech took two. *From the beginning it was not so*, Mal. 2. 15. Matth. 19. 5. See here, 1. That these who desert God's church and ordinances, lay themselves open to all manner of temptation. 2. That when a bad custom is begun by bad men, sometimes men of better characters are,



through unweariness, drawn in to follow them. Jacob, David, and many others, who were otherwise good men, were afterward insnared in this sin which Lamech had begun.

II. His happiness in his children, notwithstanding this. Though he sinned, in marrying two wives, yet he was blessed with children by both, and those, such as lived to be famous in their generation; not for their piety, no mention is made of that, (for aught that appears, they were the heathen of that age,) but for their ingenuity. They were not only themselves men of business, but men that were serviceable to the world, and eminent for the invention, or, at least, the improvement, of some useful art.

1. *Jubal* was a famous shepherd; he delighted himself much in keeping cattle, and was so happy in devising methods of doing it to the best advantage, and instructing others in them, that the shepherds of those times, nay, the shepherds of after-times, called him *father*; or, perhaps, his children after him being brought up to the same employment, the family was a family of shepherds.

2. *Jubal* was a famous musician, and particularly an organist, and the first that gave rules for that noble art or science of music. When *Jubal* had set them in a way to be rich, *Jubal* put them in a way to be merry. Those who spend their days in wealth, will not be without the timbrel and harp, Job 21. 12, 13. From his name, *Jubal*, probably, the jubilee-trumpet was so called; for the best music was that which proclaimed liberty and redemption. *Jubal* was their Pan, and *Jubal* their Apollo.

3. *Tubal-Cain* was a famous smith, who greatly improved the art of working in brass and iron, for the service both of war and husbandry. He was their *Fulcan*. See here,

(1.) That worldly things are the only things that carnal wicked people set their hearts upon, and are most ingenious and industrious about. So it was with this impious race of cursed Cain. Here was a father of shepherds, and a father of musicians, but not a father of the faithful: here is one to teach in brass and iron, but none to teach the good knowledge of the Lord: here are devices how to be rich, and how to be mighty, and how to be merry: but nothing of God, or of his fear and service among them. Present things fill the hearts of most people.

(2.) That even those who are destitute of the knowledge and grace of God, may be endued with many excellent useful accomplishments, which may make them famous and serviceable in their generation. Common gifts are given to bad men, while God chooses to himself the foolish things of the world.

23. And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt: 24. If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold.

By this speech of Lamech, which is here recorded, and, probably, was much talked of in those times, he further appears to have been a bad man, as Cain's accursed race generally were.

Observe,

I. How haughtily and imperiously he speaks to his wives, as one that expected a mighty regard and observance. *Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech.* No marvel that he who had broken one law of marriage, by taking two wives, broke another, which obliged him to be kind and tender to those he had taken, and to give honour to the wife as to

the weaker vessel. Those are not always the most careful to do their own duty, that are highest in their demands of respect from others, and most frequent in calling upon their relations to know their place, and do their duty.

II. How bloody and barbarous he was to all about him. *I have slain*, or, (as it is in the margin,) *I would slay a man in my own wound, and a young man in my hurt.* He owns himself a man of a fierce and cruel disposition, that would lay about him with-out mercy, and kill all that stood in his way; be it a man, or a young man, nay, though he himself were in danger to be wounded and hurt in the conflict. So me think, because (v. 24.) he compares himself with Cain, that he had murdered some of the holy seed, the true worshippers of God, and that he acknowledges this to be the wounding of his conscience, and the hurt of his soul; and yet that like Cain, he continued impenitent, trembling and yet unhumbled. Or, his wives, knowing what manner of spirit he was of, how apt both to give and to resent provocation, were afraid lest somebody or other would be the death of him. "Never fear," says he, "I defy any man to set upon me; I will slay him, be he a man, or a young man." Note, It is a common thing for fierce and bloody men to *glory in their shame*, (Philip. 3. 19.) as if it were both their safety and their honour, that they care not how many lives are sacrificed to their angry resentments, nor how much they are hated, provided they may be feared. *Oderint, dum metuant—Let them hate, provided they fear.*

III. How impudently he presumes even upon God's protection in his wicked way, v. 24. He had heard that *Cain should be avenged seven-fold*, v. 15; that is, that if any man should dare to kill Cain, he should be severely reckoned with, and punished, for so doing, though Cain deserved to die a thousand deaths for the murder of his brother; and hence he infers, that if any one should kill him for the murders he had committed, God would much more avenge his death. As if the special care God took to prolong and secure the life of Cain, for special reasons peculiar to his case, and indeed for his sorer punishment, as the beings of the damned are continued—as if this care were designed for a protection to all murderers. Thus Lamech perversely argues, "If God provided for the safety of Cain, much more for mine; who, though I have slain many, yet never slew my own brother, and upon no provocation, as he did." Note, The reprieve of some sinners, and the patience God exercised toward them, are often abused to the hardening of others in the like sinful ways, Eccl. 8. 11. But though justice strike some *slowly*, others cannot therefore be sure but that they may be taken away with a *swift* destruction. Or, if God should bear long with these who thus presume upon his forbearance, they do but hereby treasure up unto themselves *wrath against the day of wrath*. Now this is all we have upon record in scripture concerning the family and posterity of cursed Cain, till we find them all cut off and perishing in the universal deluge.

25. And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, *said she*, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. 26. And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos; then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.

This is the first mention of Adam in the story of this chapter. No question, the murder of Abel,

and the impenitence and apostasy of Cain, were a very great grief to him and Eve; and the more, because their own wickedness did now correct them, and their backslidings did reprove them. Their folly had given sin and death entrance into the world; and now they smarted by it, being, by means thereof, *deprived of both their sons in one day, ch. 27. 45.* When parents are grieved by their children's wickedness, they should take occasion thence to lament that corruption of nature which was derived from them, and which is the root of bitterness. But here we have that which was a relief to our first parents in their affliction.

I. God gave them to see the rebuilding of their family, which was sorely shaken and weakened by that sad event. For, 1. They saw their seed, *another seed instead of Abel, v. 25.* Observe God's kindness and tenderness toward his people, in his providential dealings with them; when he takes away one comfort from them, he gives them another instead of it, which may prove a greater blessing to them than that was, in which they thought their lives were bound up. This other seed was he in whom the church was to be built up and perpetuated; and he comes instead of Abel; for the succession of professors is the revival of the martyrs, and as it were the resurrection of God's slain witnesses. Thus we are *baptized for the dead, 1 Cor. 15. 29;* that is, we are, by baptism, admitted into the church, *for or instead of* those who, by death, especially by martyrdom, are removed out of it; and we fill up their room. They who slay God's servants, hope thus to wear out the saints of the Most High; but they will be deceived. Christ shall still see his seed; God can out of stones raise up children for him, and make the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church, whose lands, we are sure, shall never be lost for want of heirs. This son, by a prophetic spirit, they called *Seth*, that is, *set, settled, or placed;* because, in his seed, mankind should continue to the end of time, and from him the Messiah should descend. While Cain, the head of the apostasy, is made a wanderer, Seth, from whom the true church was to come, is one fixed. In Christ and his church is the only true settlement. 2. They saw their *seed's seed, v. 26.* *To Seth was born a son called Enos*, that general name for all men, which bespeaks the weakness, frailty, and misery, of man's state. The best men are most sensible of these, both in themselves and their children. We are never so settled, but we must remind ourselves that we are frail.

II. God gave them to see the reviving of religion in their family, *v. 26.* *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.* It is small comfort to a good man to see his children's children, if he do not, withal, see peace upon Israel, and these that come of him walking in the truth. Doubtless, God's name was called upon before, but now, 1. The worshippers of God began to stir up themselves to do more in religion than they had done; perhaps not more than had been done at first, but more than had been done of late, since the defection of Cain. Now, men began to worship God, not only in their closets and families, but in public and solemn assemblies. Or, now, there was so great a reformation in religion, that it was as it were, a new beginning of it. *Then* may refer, not to the birth of Enos, but to the whole foregoing story; *then*, when men saw in Cain and Lamech the sad effects of sin, by the workings of natural conscience; *then*, they were so much the more lively and resolute in religion. The worse others are, the better we should be, and the more zealous. 2. The worshippers of God began to *distinguish themselves*; the margin reads it, *Then began men to be called by the name of the Lord*, or, to call themselves by it.

Now, that Cain and those who had deserted religion, had built a city, and begun to declare for impiety and irreligion, and called themselves the *Sons of men*; those that adhered to God, began to declare for him and his worship, and called themselves the *Sons of God*. Now began the distinction between professors and profane, which has been kept up ever since, and will be while the world stands.

## CHAP. V.

This chapter is the only authentic history extant of the first age of the world, from the creation to the flood, containing (according to the verity of the Hebrew text) 1656 years, as may easily be computed by the ages of the Patriarchs, before they begat that son, through whom the line went down to Noah. This is none of those which the apostle calls *endless genealogies*, 1 Tim. 1. 4, for Christ who was the end of the Old Testament law, was also the end of the Old Testament genealogies: toward him they looked, and in him they centred. The genealogy here recorded, is inserted briefly in the pedigree of our Saviour, *Luke 3. 36. 38*, and is of great use, to show that Christ was the *Seed of the woman*, that was promised. We have here an account, I. Concerning Adam, *v. 1. 5.* II. Seth, *v. 6. 8.* III. Enos, *v. 9. 11.* IV. Cainan, *v. 12. 14.* V. Mahalalel, *v. 15. 17.* VI. Jared, *v. 18. 20.* VII. Enoch, *v. 21. 24.* VIII. Methuselah, *v. 25. 27.* IX. Lamech and his son Noah, *v. 28. 32.* All scripture, being given by inspiration of God, is profitable, though not all *alike* profitable.

I. **T**HIS is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him: 2. Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created: 3. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: 4. And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: 5. And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

The first words of the chapter are the title or argument of the whole chapter; it is the *book of the generations of Adam*, it is the list or catalogue of the posterity of Adam; not of all, but only of the *holy seed which were the substance thereof*, *Isa. 6. 13*, and of *whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came*, *Rom. 9. 5*, the names, ages, and deaths, of these that were the successors of the first Adam in the custody of the promise, and the ancestors of the second Adam. The genealogy begins with Adam himself.

Here is,

I. His creation, *v. 1. 2.* Where we have a brief rehearsal of what was before at large related concerning the creation of man. This is what we have need frequently to hear of, and carefully to acquaint ourselves with. Observe here, 1. That *God created man*. Man is not his own maker, therefore he must not be his own master; but the Author of his being must be the Director of his motions and the centre of them. 2. That there was a day in which God created man; he was not from eternity, but of yesterday; he was not the first-born, but the junior of the creation. 3. That God made him *in his own likeness*, righteous and holy, and therefore, undoubtedly, happy; man's nature resembled the divine nature more than that of any of the creatures of this lower world. 4. That God created them male and female, (*v. 2.*) for their mutual comfort as well as for the preservation and increase of their

kind. Adam and Eve were both made immediately by the hand of God, both made in God's like-ness; and therefore between the sexes there is not that great distance and inequality which some imagine. 5. That God blessed them. It is usual for parents to bless their children; so God, the common Father, blessed his: but earthly parents can only *beg* a blessing, it is God's prerogative to *command* it. It refers chiefly to the blessing of increase, not excluding other blessings. 6. That he *called their name Adam*. Adam signifies *earth, red earth*. Now, (1.) God gave him this name. Adam had himself named the rest of the creatures, but he must not choose his own name, lest he should assume some glorious pompous title. But God gave him a name which would be a continual memorandum to him of the meanness of his original, and oblige him to *look unto the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged*, Isa. 51. 1. Those have little reason to be proud, who are so near akin to dust. (2.) He gave this name both to the man and to the woman. Being, at first, one by nature, and afterward, one by marriage, it was fit they should both have the same name, in token of their union. The woman is *of the earth, earthy*, as well as the man.

II. The birth of his son *Seth*, v. 3. He was born in the hundred and thirtieth year of Adam's life; and, probably, the murder of Abel was not long before. Many other sons and daughters were born to Adam, besides Cain and Abel, before this; but no notice is taken of them, because an honourable mention must be made of *his* name only, in whose loins Christ and the church were. But that which is most observable here concerning Seth, is, that Adam begat him *in his own likeness, after his image*. Adam was made in the image of God; but when he was fallen and corrupt, he begat a son in his own image, sinful and defiled, frail, mortal, and miserable, like himself; not only a *man* like himself, consisting of body and soul, but a *sinner* like himself, guilty and obnoxious, degenerate and corrupt. Even the man after God's own heart owns himself *conceived and born in sin*, Ps. 51. 5. This was Adam's own likeness, the reverse of that divine likeness in which Adam was made; but, having lost it himself, he could not convey it to his seed. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, but corruption does. A sinner begets a sinner, but a saint does not beget a saint.

III. His age and death. He lived, in all, nine hundred and thirty years; and then he died, according to the sentence passed upon him, *To dust thou shalt return*. Though he did not die in the day he ate the forbidden fruit, yet in that very day he became mortal; then he began to die: his whole life after was but a reprieve, a forfeited, condemned, life; nay it was a wasting, dying, life: he was not only like a criminal sentenced, but as one already crucified, that dies slowly, and by degrees.

6. And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos: 7. And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters: 8. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died. 9. And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan: 10. And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters: 11. And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died. 12. And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel:

13. And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters: 14. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died. 15. And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared: 16. And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters: 17. And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died. 18. And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch: 19. And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 20. And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

We have here all that the Holy Ghost thought fit to leave upon record concerning five of the patriarchs before the flood, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared. There is nothing observable concerning any of these particularly, though we have reason to think they were men of eminence, both for prudence and piety, in their day: but, in general,

I. Observe how largely and expressly their generations are recorded. This matter, one would think, might have been delivered in fewer words; but it is certain that there is not one idle word in God's books, whatever there is in men's. It is thus plainly set down, 1. To make it easy and intelligible to the meanest capacity: when we are informed how old they were when they begat such a son, and how many years they lived after, a very little skill in arithmetic will enable a man to tell how long they lived in all; yet the Holy Ghost sets down the sum total, for the sake of those that have not even so much skill as that. 2. To show the pleasure God takes in the names of his people: we found Cain's generation numbered in haste, ch. 4. 18, but this account of the holy seed is enlarged upon, and given in words at length, and not in figures: we are told how long they lived, that lived in God's fear, and when they died, that died in his favour; but as for others, it is no matter. *The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*.

II. Their life is reckoned by *days*, v. 8, *all the days of Seth*, and so of the rest; which intimates the shortness of the life of man, when it is at the longest, and the quick revolution of our times on earth. If they reckon by days, surely we must reckon by hours, or, rather make that our frequent prayer, (Ps. 90. 12.) *Teach us to number our days*.

III. Concerning each of them, except Enoch, it is said, *and he died*. It is implied in the numbering of the years of their life, that their life, when these years were numbered and finished, came to an end; and yet it is still repeated, *and he died*: to show that death passed upon all men without exception, and that it is good for us particularly to observe and improve the deaths of others for our own edification. Such a one was a strong healthful man, but he died; such a one was a great and rich man, but he died; such a one was a wise politic man, but he died; such a one was a very good man, perhaps a very useful man, but he died, &c.

IV. That which is especially observable, is, that they all lived very long; not one of them died till he had seen the revolutions of almost eight hundred years, and some of them lived much longer; a great while for an immortal soul to be imprisoned in a house of clay. The present life surely was not to

them such a burthen as, commonly, it is now, else they would have been weary of it; nor was the future life so clearly revealed then as it is now under the gospel, else they would have been impatient to remove to it: long life to the pious patriarchs was a blessing, and made them blessings. 1. Some natural causes may be assigned for their long life in those first ages of the world. It is very probable that the earth was more fruitful, the productions of it more strengthening, the air more healthful, and the influences of the heavenly bodies more benign, before the flood than they were after. Though man was driven out of paradise, yet the earth itself was then paradisiacal; a garden, in comparison with its present wilderness state: and some think that their great knowledge of the creatures, and of their usefulness both for food and medicine, together with their sobriety and temperance, contributed much to it; yet we do not find that those who were intemperate, as many were, Luke 17. 27, were as short-lived as intemperate men generally are now. 2. It must chiefly be resolved into the power and providence of God; he prolonged their lives, both for the more speedy replenishing of the earth, and for the more effectual preservation of the knowledge of God and religion, then, when there was no written word, but tradition was the channel of its conveyance. All the patriarchs here, except Noah, were born before Adam died; so that from him they might receive a full and satisfactory account of the creation, paradise, the fall, the promise, and those divine precepts which concerned religious worship and a religious life: and if any mistake arose, they might have recourse to him while he lived, as to an oracle, for the rectifying of it, and, after his death, to Methuselah, and others, that had conversed with him: so great was the care of Almighty God to preserve in his church the knowledge of his will, and the purity of his worship.

21. And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: 22. And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 23. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years: 24. And Enoch walked with God: and he *was* not: for God took him.

The accounts here run on for several generations without any thing remarkable, or any variation but of the names and numbers; but, at length, there comes in one that must not be passed over so, of whom special notice must be taken, and that is *Enoch*, the seventh from Adam: the rest, we may suppose, did virtuously, but he excelled them all, and was the brightest star of the patriarchal age. It is but little that is recorded concerning him; but that little is enough to make his name great, greater than the name of the other Enoch, who had a city called by his name. Here are two things concerning him:

I. His gracious conversation in *this* world, which is twice spoken of, *v. 22, Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah*; and again *v. 24, Enoch walked with God*. Observe,

1. The *nature* of his religion, and the scope and tenor of his conversation; he *walked with God*, which denotes, (1.) *True* religion; what is godliness, but walking with God? The ungodly and profane are without God in the world, they walk contrary to him; but the godly walk with God, which presupposes reconciliation to God, for two cannot *walk together, except they be agreed*, Amos 3. 3, and includes all the parts and instances of a godly, righteous, and sober, life: to walk with God, is to

set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under his eye. It is to live a life of communion with God, both in ordinances and providences; it is to make God's word our rule, and his glory our end, in all our actions; it is to make it our constant care and endeavour in every thing to please God, and in nothing to offend him; it is to comply with his will, to concur with his designs, and to be workers together with him: it is to be *followers of him as dear children*. (2.) *Eminent* religion. He was entirely dead to this world, and did not only walk *after* God, as all good men do, but he walked *with* God, as if he were in heaven already: he lived above the rate, not only of other *men*, but of other *saints*; not only good in bad times, but the best in good times. (3.) *Activity* in promoting religion among others: executing the priest's office is called *walking before God*, 1 Sam. 2. 30, 35, and see Zech. 3. 7. Enoch, it should seem, was a priest of the most high God, and, as Noah, who is likewise said to walk with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming, Jude 14, *Behold, the Lord cometh with his holy myriads*. Now the Holy Spirit instead of saying, *Enoch lived*, says, *Enoch walked with God*; for it is the life of a good man to walk with God. This was, [1.] The *business* of Enoch's life, his constant care and work; while others lived to themselves and the world, he lived to God. [2.] It was the *joy and support* of his life; communion with God was to him better than life itself; *To me to live is Christ*, Phil. 1. 21.

2. The *date* of his religion. It is said, *v. 21, he lived sixty-five years, and begat Methuselah*; but, *v. 22, he walked with God after he begat Methuselah*; which intimates that he did not begin to be eminent for piety, till about that time; at first he walked but as other men. Great saints arrive at their eminence by degrees.

3. The *continuance* of his religion; he walked with God *three hundred years*, as long as he continued in this world: the hypocrite will not pray always; but the real saint that acts from a principle, and makes religion his choice, will persevere to the end, and walk with God while he lives, as one that hopes to live for ever with him, Ps. 104. 33.

II. His glorious removal to a *better* world: as he did not *live* like the rest, so he did not *die* like the rest, *v. 24, he was not, for God took him*; that is, as it is explained, Heb. 11. 3, *He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him*. Observe,

1. When he was thus translated. (1.) What time of his *life* it was; when he had lived but three hundred and sixty-five years, (a year of years,) which, as men's ages went then, was in the midst of his days; for there was none of the patriarchs, before the flood, that did not mere than double that age: but why did God take him so soon? Surely, because the world, which was now grown corrupt, was not worthy of him; or, because he was so much above the world, and so weary of it, as to desire a speedy removal out of it; or, because his work was done, and done the sooner for his minding it so closely. Note, God often takes *them* soonest whom he loves best; and the time they lose on earth is gained in heaven, to their unspeakable advantage. (2.) What time of the *world*; it was when all the patriarchs, mentioned in this chapter, were living, except Adam, who died 57 years before, and Noah, who was born 69 years after; they two had sensible confirmations to their faith other ways, but to all the rest, who were, or might have been witnesses of Enoch's translation, that was a sensible encouragement to their faith and hope concerning a future state.

2. How his removal is expressed. *He was not*

for God took him. (1.) He was not any longer in this world; it was not the period of his being, but of his being *here*; he was *not found*, so the apostle explains it from the LXX, not found by his friends, who sought him, as the *sons of the prophets sought Elijah*, 2 Kings 2. 17; not found by his enemies, who, some think, were in quest of him, to put him to death in their rage against him for his eminent piety: it appears by his prophecy, that there were then many ungodly sinners, who spake hard speeches, and, probably did hard things too, against God's people, Jude 15, but God hid Enoch from them, not *under* heaven, but *in* heaven. (2.) God took him body and soul to himself in the heavenly paradise, by the ministry of angels, as, afterward, he took Elijah. He was changed, as those saints shall be, that will be found alive at Christ's second coming. Whenever a good man dies, God takes him, fetches him hence, and receives him to himself. The apostle adds concerning Enoch, *that before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God*, and this was the good report he obtained. Note,

[1.] Walking with God, pleases God. [2.] We cannot walk with God, so as to please him, but by faith. [3.] God himself will put an honour upon those that by faith walk with him so as to please him. He will own them now, and witness for them before angels and men at the great day: they that have not this testimony before the translation, yet shall have it after. [4.] Those whose conversation in the world is truly holy, shall find their removal out of it truly happy. Enoch's translation was not only an evidence to faith of the reality of a future state, and of the possibility of the body's existing in glory in that state; but it was an encouragement to the hope of all that walk with God, that they shall be for ever with him: signal piety shall be crowned with signal honours.

25. And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech: 26. And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters: 27. And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.

Concerning *Methuselah* observe, 1. The signification of his name, which some think, was prophetic, his father Enoch being a prophet; *Methuselah* signifies, *he dies, there is a dart, or, a sending forth*, namely, of the deluge, which came the very year that Methuselah died. If indeed his name was so intended, and so explained, it was fair warning to a careless world, a long time before the judgment came. However, this is observable, that the longest liver that ever was, carried death in his name, that he might be reminded of its coming surely, though it came slowly. 2. His age: he lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, the longest we read of, that ever any man lived to, on earth; and yet he died: the longest liver must die at last. Neither youth nor age will discharge from that war, for that is the end of all men: none can challenge life by long prescription, nor make that a plea against the arrests of death. It is commonly supposed that Methuselah died a little before the flood; the Jewish writers say, "seven days before," referring to ch. 7. 10, and that he was taken away from the evil to come; which goes upon this presumption which is generally received, that all these patriarchs in this chapter were holy good men. I am loath to offer any surmise to the contrary; and yet I see not that that can be any more inferred from their enrolment here among the ancestors of Christ, than that all those kings of Judah were so, whose names are recorded in his genealogy, many of whom, we are

sure, were much otherwise: and if this be questioned, it may be suggested as probable, that Methuselah was himself drowned with the rest of the world; for it is certain that he died that year.

28. And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: 29. And he called his name Noah, saying, *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed*: 30. And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters: 31. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years: and he died: 32. And Noah was five hundred years old: and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Here we have the first mention of Noah, of whom we shall read much in the following chapters. Here is,

I. His name, with the reason of it: *Noah* signifies *rest*; his parents gave him that name, with the prospect of his being a more than ordinary blessing to his generation. *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed*. Here is, 1. His complaint of the calamitous state of human life; by the entrance of sin, and the entail of the curse for sin, it is become very miserable: our whole life is spent in labour, and our time filled up with continual toil. God having cursed the ground, it is as much as some can do, with the utmost care and pains, to fetch a hard livelihood out of it. He speaks as one fatigued with the business of this life, and grudging that so many of our thoughts and precious minutes, which otherwise might have been much better employed, are unavoidably spent for the support of the body. 2. His comfortable hopes of some relief by the birth of this son: *This same shall comfort us*; which denotes not only the desire and expectation which parents generally have concerning their children, that when they grow up, they will be comforts to them, and helpers in their business, though they often prove otherwise; but it denotes also an apprehension and prospect of something more: very probably, there were some prophecies that went before him, as a person that should be wonderfully serviceable to his generation, which they so understood as to conclude that he was the promised Seed, the Messiah that should come: and then intimates that a covenant-interest in Christ as our's, and the believing expectation of his coming, furnish us with the best and surest comforts, both in reference to the wrath and curse of God which we have deserved, and to the toils and troubles of this present time which we are often complaining of. "Is Christ our's? Is heaven our's? *This same shall comfort us*."

II. His children, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These Noah begat, (the eldest of these,) when he was 500 years old. It should seem that Japheth was the eldest, ch. 10. 21; but Shem is put first, because on him the covenant was entailed, as appears ch. 9. 26, where God is called the *Lord God of Shem*; to him, it is probable, the birth-right was given, and from him, it is certain, both Christ the Head, and the church the body, were to descend; therefore he is called *Shem*, which signifies a name, because in his posterity the name of God should always remain, till he should come out of his loins, whose name is above every name; so that in putting Shem first, Christ was in effect put first, who in all things must have the pre-eminence.

## CHAP. VI.

The most remarkable thing we have upon record concerning the old world, is, the destruction of it by the universal deluge, which this chapter begins the story of; wherein we have, I. The abounding iniquity of that wicked world, v. 1..5. and v. 11, 12. II. The righteous God's just resentment of that abounding iniquity, and his holy resolution to punish it, v. 6, 7. III. The special favour of God to his servant Noah. 1. In the character given of him, v. 8..10. 2. In the communication of God's purpose to him, v. 13, 17. 3. In the directions he gave him to make an ark for his own safety, v. 14..16. 4. In the employing of him for the preservation of the rest of the creatures, v. 18..21. *Lastly*, Noah's obedience to the instructions given him, v. 22. And this concerning the *old world* is written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the *new world* are come.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them: 2. That the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair: and they took them wives of all which they chose.

For the glory of God's justice, and for warning to a wicked world, before the history of the ruin of the old world, we have a full account of its degeneracy, its apostasy from God and rebellion against him. The destroying of it was an act, not of absolute sovereignty, but of necessary justice for the maintaining of the honour of God's government. Now here we have an account of two things which occasioned the wickedness of the old world.

1. The increase of mankind. *Men began to multiply upon the face of the earth.* This was the effect of the blessing, *ch. 1. 23*, and yet man's corruption so abused and perverted this blessing, that it turned into a curse. Thus sin takes occasion by the mercies of God to be the more exceeding sinful. *Prov. 29. 16, When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth.* The more sinners, the more sin; and the multitude of offenders embolden men: infectious diseases are more destructive in populous cities; and sin is a spreading leprosy. Thus in the New Testament church, *when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring*, *Acts 6. 1*, and we read of a nation that was multiplied, not to the *increase of their joy*, *Isa. 9. 3*. Numerous families need to be well governed, lest they should become wicked families.

2. Mixed marriages, v. 2. *The sons of God*, that is, the professors of religion, who were called by the name of the Lord, and called upon that name, *married the daughters of men*, that is, those that were profane, and strangers to God and godliness. The posterity of Seth did not keep by themselves, as they ought to have done, both for the preservation of their own purity, and in detestation of the apostasy; they intermingled themselves with the excommunicated race of Cain; *they took them wives of all that they chose.* But what was amiss in these marriages? (1.) They chose only by the eye; *they saw that they were fair*, which was all they looked at. (2.) They followed the choice which their own corrupt affections made; they took *all that they chose*, without advice and consideration. But, (3.) That which proved of such bad consequence to them, was, that they *married strange wives, were unequally yoked with unbelievers*, 2 Cor. 6. 14. This was forbidden to Israel, *Deut. 7. 3, 4*. It was the unhappy occasion of Solomon's apostasy, 1 Kings 11. 1..4. and was of bad consequence to the Jews after their return out of Babylon, *Ezra 9. 1, 2*. Note, Professors of religion, in marrying both themselves and their children, should make conscience of keeping within the bounds of profession. The *bad* will sooner debauch the good than the good re-

form the bad. Those that profess themselves the children of God, must not marry without his consent, which they have not, if they join in affinity with his enemies.

3. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

This comes in here, 1. As a token of God's displeasure at those who married strange wives; he threatens to withdraw his Spirit from them, whom they had grieved by such marriages, contrary to their convictions. *Fleshly lusts* are often punished with spiritual judgments, the sorest of all judgments. Or, 2. As another occasion of the great wickedness of the old world; the Spirit of the Lord, being provoked by their resistance of his motions, ceased to strive with them, and then all religion was soon lost among them. This he warns them of before, that they might not further vex his holy Spirit, but by their prayers might stay him with them. Observe in this verse,

1. God's resolution not always to strive with man by his Spirit. The Spirit then strove by Noah's preaching, 1 Pet. 3. 19, 20, and by inward checks; but it was in vain with the most of men; therefore, says God, *He shall not always strive.* Note, (1.) The blessed Spirit strives with sinners, by the convictions and admonitions of conscience, to turn them from sin to God. (2.) If the Spirit be resisted, quenched, and striven against; though he strive long, he will not strive always, *Hos. 4. 17*. (3.) Those are ripening apace for ruin, whom the Spirit of grace has left off striving with.

2. The reason of that resolution; *For that he also is flesh*, that is, incurably corrupt, and carnal, and sensual, so that it is labour lost to strive with him. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? *He also*, that is, All, one as well as another, they are all sunk into the mire of flesh. Note, (1.) It is the corrupt nature, and inclination of the soul toward the flesh, that oppose the Spirit's strivings, and render them ineffectual. (2.) When a sinner has long adhered to that interest, and sided with the flesh against the Spirit, the Spirit justly withdraws his agency, and strives no more. None lose the Spirit's strivings, but those that have first forfeited them.

3. A reprieve granted, notwithstanding; yet *his days shall be 120 years*; so long I will defer the judgment they deserve, and give them space to prevent it by their repentance and reformation. Justice said, *Cut them down*; but mercy interceded, *Lord, let them alone this year also*; and so far mercy prevailed, that a reprieve was obtained for six-score years. Note, The time of God's patience and forbearance toward provoking sinners is sometimes long, but always limited: reprieves are not pardons; though God bear a great while, he will not bear always.

4. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men, which were of old, men of renown: 5. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

We have here a further account of the corruption of the old world. When the *sons of God* had matched with the *daughters of men*, though it was very displeasing to God, yet he did not immediately



cut them off, but waited to see what the issue of these marriages would be, and which side the children would take after; and it proved, (as it usually does,) that they took after the worst side. Here is,

I. The temptation they were under to oppress and do violence; they were *giants*, they were *men of renown*; they became too hard for all about them, and carried all before them, 1. With their great *bulk*, as the sons of Anak, Numb. 13. 33, and 2. With their great *name*, as the king of Assyria, Isa. 37. 11. These made them the *terror of the mighty in the land of the living*; and thus armed, they daringly insulted the rights of all their neighbours, and trampled upon all that is just and sacred. Note, Those that have so much power over others as to be able to oppress them, have seldom so much power over themselves as not to oppress; great might is a very great snare to many. This degenerate race slighted the honour their ancestors had obtained by virtue and religion, and made themselves a *great name* by that which was the perpetual ruin of their *good name*.

II. The charge exhibited and proved against them, v. 5. The evidence produced was incontestable; God saw it, and that is instead of a thousand witnesses. God sees all the wickedness that is among the children of men; it cannot be concealed from him now, and if it be not repented of, it shall not be concealed by him shortly. Now, what did God take notice of?

1. He observed all the *streams* of sin that flowed along in men's lives, and the breadth and depth of those streams; *he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth*. Observe the connection of this with what goes before; the oppressors were *mighty men*, and *men of renown*; and then God saw that the *wickedness of man was great*. Note, The wickedness of a people is great indeed, when the most notorious sinners are men of renown among them. Things are bad, when bad men are not only honoured notwithstanding their wickedness, but honoured for their wickedness, and the vilest men exalted; wickedness is then great, when great men are wicked. Their wickedness was great, that is, abundance of sin was committed in all places, by all sorts of people; and such sin as was in its own nature most gross, and heinous, and provoking; and committed daringly, and with a defiance of heaven; nor was any care taken by those who had power in their hands, to restrain and punish it. This God saw. Note, All the sins of sinners are known to God the Judge: those that are most conversant in the world, though they see much wickedness in it, yet they see but little of that which is; but God sees all, and judges aright concerning it, how great it is, nor can he be deceived in his judgment.

2. He observed the *fountain* of sin that was in men's hearts: any one might see that the *wickedness of man was great*, for they declared their sin as Sodom; but God's eye went further; *he saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*. A sad sight, and very offensive to God's holy eye! This was the bitter root, the corrupt spring: all the violence and oppression, all the luxury and wantonness, that were in the world, proceeded from the corruption of nature; lust conceived them, Jam. 1. 15. See Matth. 15. 19. (1.) The *heart* was naught: that was deceitful and desperately wicked; the principles were corrupt, and the habits and dispositions evil. (2.) The *thoughts of the heart* were so; thought is sometimes taken for the settled judgment or opinion, and that was bribed, and biased, and misled; sometimes for the workings of the fancy, and those were always either vain or vile, either weaving the spider's web, or hatching the cocatrice's eggs. (3.)

The *imagination of the thoughts of the heart* was so, that is, their designs and devices were wicked. They did not do evil only through carelessness, as those that walk at all adventures, not heeding what they do; but they did evil deliberately, and designedly, contriving how to do mischief. It was bad indeed; for it was *only evil, continually evil*, and *every* imagination was so. There was no good to be found among them, no net at any time: the stream of sin was full, and strong, and constant; and God saw it; see Ps. 14. 1-3.

6. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart: 7. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Here is,

I. God's resentment of man's wickedness; he did not see it as an unconcerned spectator, but as one injured and affronted by it; he saw it as a tender father sees the folly and stubbornness of a rebellious and disobedient child, which not only angers him, but grieves him, and makes him wish he had been written childless. The expressions here used, are very strange. *It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth*, that he had made a creature of such noble powers and faculties, and had put him on this earth, which he built and furnished on purpose to be a convenient, comfortable habitation for him; and *it grieved him at his heart*. These are expressions after the manner of men, and must be understood so as not to reflect upon the honour of God's immutability or felicity.

1. It does not bespeak any passion or uneasiness in God; (nothing can create disturbance to the eternal mind;) but it bespeaks his just and holy displeasure against sin and sinners; against sin as odious to his holiness, and against sin as obnoxious to his justice. He is *pressed* by the sins of his creatures, Amos 2. 13, *swearied*, Isa. 43. 24, *broken*, Ezek. 6. 9, *grieved*, Ps. 95. 10, and here, *grieved to the heart*, as men are when they are wronged and abused by those they have been very kind to, and therefore repent of their kindness, and wish they had never fostered that snake in their bosom, which now hisses in their face, and stings them to the heart. Does God thus hate sin? And shall not we hate it? Has our sin grieved him to the heart? And shall not we be grieved and pricked to the heart for it? O that this consideration might humble us, and shame us, and that we may look on him whom we have thus grieved, and mourn! Zech. 12. 10.

2. It does not bespeak any change in God's *mind*; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? With him there is no variability. But it bespeaks a change of his *will*; when God had made man upright, *he rested and was refreshed*, Exod. 31. 17, and his way toward him was such as showed he was pleased with the work of his own hands; but now that man was apostatized, he could not do otherwise than show himself displeased: so that the change was in man, not in God. God repented that he had *made man*; but we never find him repenting that he *redeemed* man, though that was a work of much greater expense, because special and effectual grace is given to secure the great ends of redemption; so that those *gifts and callings are without repentance*, Rom. 11. 29.

II. God's resolution to destroy man for his wickedness, v. 7. Observe, 1. When God repented that he had made man, he resolved to destroy man.

Thus they that truly repent of sin, will resolve, in the strength of God's grace, to mortify sin, and to destroy it, and so to undo what they have done amiss; we do but mock God in saying that we are sorry for our sin, and that it grieves us to the heart, if we continue to indulge it. In vain do we pretend a change of our *mind*, if we do not evidence it by a change of our *way*. 2. He resolves to destroy man; the original word is very significant, *I will wipe off man from the earth*, (so some,) as dirt or filth is wiped off from a place which should be clean, and is thrown to the dunghill, the proper place for it. See 2 Kings 21. 13. These that are the spots of the places they live in, are justly wiped away by the judgments of God. *I will blot out man from the earth*, (so others,) as these lines are blotted out of a book, which displease the author; or, as the name of a citizen is blotted out of the rolls of the freemen, when he is dead, or disfranchised. 3. He speaks of man as his own creature *then*, when he resolves upon his ruin, *Man whom I have created*; "Though I have created him, that shall not excuse him." Isa. 27. 11, *He that made him, will not save him*; he that is our Creator, if he shall not be our Ruler, will be our Destroyer. Or, "Because I have created him, and he has been so unprofitful and so ungrateful to his Creator, therefore I will destroy him;" those forfeit their lives that do not answer the end of their living. 4. Even the brute creatures were to be involved in this destruction, *Beasts and creeping things, and the fowl of the air*. These were made for man, and therefore must be destroyed *with man*; for it follows, *It repenteth me that I have made them*; for the end of their creation also was frustrated: they were made, that man might serve and honour God with them; and therefore were destroyed, because he had served his lusts with them, and made them subject to vanity. 5. God took up this resolution concerning men, after his Spirit had been long striving with them in vain. None are ruined by the justice of God but those that hate to be reformed by the grace of God.

8. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. 9. These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. 10. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

We have here Noah distinguished from the rest of the world, and a peculiar mark of honour put upon him.

1. When God was displeased with the rest of the world, he favoured Noah, *v. 8. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord*. This vindicates God's justice in his displeasure against the world, and shows that he had strictly examined the character of every person in it, before he pronounced it universally corrupt; for, there being one good man, he found him out, and smiled upon him. It also magnifies his grace towards Noah, that he was made a vessel of God's mercy, when all mankind besides were become the generation of his wrath: distinguishing favours bring under peculiarly strong obligations. Probably, Noah did not find favour in the eyes of men; they hated and persecuted him, because both by his life and preaching he *condemned the world*; but he *found grace in the eyes of the Lord*, and that was honour and comfort enough. God made more account of Noah than of all the world besides; and this made him greater and more truly honourable than all the giants that were in those days, who became mighty men, and men of renown. Let this be the top of your ambition, to *find grace in the eyes of the Lord*; herein let us labour, that, present or

absent, we may be accepted of him, 2 Cor. 5. 9. These are highly favoured, whom God favours.

2. When the rest of the world was corrupt and wicked, Noah kept his integrity, *v. 9. These are the generations of Noah*: this is the account we have to give of him; *Noah was a just man*. This character of Noah comes in here either, (1.) As the reason of God's favour to him: his singular piety qualified him for singular tokens of God's loving kindness. Those that would find grace in the eyes of the Lord, must be as Noah was; and do as Noah did: God loves those that love him: or (2.) As the effect of God's favour to him: it was God's good-will to him that produced this good work in him; he was a very good man, but he was no better than the grace of God made him, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Now observe his character; [1.] *He was a just man*, that is, justified before God by faith in the promised Seed; for he was an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, Heb. 11. 7. He was sanctified, and had right principles and dispositions implanted in him; and he was righteous in his conversation, one that made conscience of rendering to all their due, to God his due, and to men their's. Note, None but a downright honest man, can find favour with God; that conversation which will be pleasing to God, must be governed by *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not by *fleshy wisdom*, 2 Cor. 1. 12. God has sometimes chosen the *foolish* things of the world, but he never chose the *knarvish* things of it. [2.] He was perfect, not with a sinless perfection, but a perfection of sincerity; and it is well for us, that by virtue of the covenant of grace, upon the score of Christ's righteousness, sincerity is accepted as our gospel perfection. [3.] *He walked with God*, as Enoch had done before him; he was not only honest, but devout: he *walked*, that is, he acted with God, as one always under his eye; he lived a life of communion with God; it was his constant care to conform himself to the will of God, to please him, and to approve himself to him. Note, God looks down upon those with an eye of favour, who sincerely look up to him with an eye of faith. But, [4.] That which crowns his character, is, that thus he was, and thus he did, in *his* generation, in that corrupt degenerate age, in which his lot was cast. It is easy to be religious, when religion is in fashion; but it is an evidence of strong faith and resolution, to swim against a stream to heaven, and to appear for God, when no one else appears for him: so Noah did, and it is upon record, to his immortal honour.

11. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. 12. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

The wickedness of that generation is here again spoken of, 1. As a foil to Noah's piety; he was just and perfect, when all the earth was corrupt. or, 2. As a further justification of God's resolution to destroy the world, which he was now about to communicate to his servant Noah.

1. All kind of sin was found among them, for *v. 11*, it is said that the earth was (1.) *Corrupt before God*, that is, in the matters of God's worship: either they had other gods before him, or, they worshipped him by images, or, they were corrupt and wicked in despite and contempt of God, daring him and defying him to his face. (2.) *The earth was also filled with violence*, and injustice toward men; there was no order or regular government; no man was safe in the possession of that which he had the most clear and incontestable right to, no not the most innocent life, nothing but murders, rapes, and rapine. Note, Wickedness, as it is the shame of the human nature

so it is the ruin of human society; it takes away conscience and the fear of God, and men become beasts and devils to one another, like the *fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser*. Sin fills the earth with violence, and so turns the world into a wilderness, into a cock-pit.

2. The proof and evidence of it were undeniable; for *God looked upon the earth*, and was himself an eye-witness of the corruption that was in it, of which before, *v. 5*. The righteous judge in all his judgments proceeds upon the infallible certainty of his own omniscience, *Ps. 33. 13*.

3. That which most aggravated the matter, was the universal spreading of the contagion. *All flesh had corrupted his way*. It was not some particular nations or cities that were thus wicked, but the whole world of mankind were so: there was none that did good, no, not one, beside Noah. Note, When wickedness is become general and universal, ruin is not far off; while there is a remnant of praying people in a nation to empty the measure as it fills, judgments may be kept off a great while; but when all hands are at work to pull down the fences by sin, and none stand in the gap to make up the breach, what can be expected but an inundation of wrath?

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14. Make thee an ark of gopher-wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shall pitch it within and without with pitch. 15. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. 16. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third, *stories* shalt thou make it. 17. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth, shall die. 18. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. 19. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep *them* alive with thee; they shall be male and female. 20. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep *them* alive. 21. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather *it* to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them.

Here it appears indeed that Noah found *grace in the eyes of the Lord*; God's favour to him was plainly intimated in what he said to him, *v. 8. 10*, where his name is mentioned five times in five lines, when once might have served to make the sense clear, as if the Holy Ghost took a pleasure in perpetuating his memory: but it appears much more in what he

says to him in these verses—the informations and instructions here given him.

1. God here makes Noah the *man of his counsel*; communicating to him his purpose to destroy this wicked world by water, as, afterward, he told Abraham his resolution concerning Sodom, *ch. 18. 17, Shall I hide from Abraham?* So here, Shall I hide from Noah, *the thing that I do*, seeing that he shall become a great nation? Note, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, *Ps. 25. 14*; it was with *his servants the prophets*, *Amos 3. 7*, by a spirit of revelation, informing them particularly of his purposes; it is with all believers, by a spirit of wisdom and faith, enabling to understand and apply the general declarations of the written word, and the warnings there given.

Now, 1. God told Noah, in general, that he would destroy the world, *v. 13, The end of all flesh is come before me; I will destroy them*, that is, The ruin of this wicked world is decreed and determined; *it is come*; that is, it will come surely, and come quickly. Noah, it is likely, in preaching to his neighbours, had warned them, in general, of the wrath of God that they would bring upon themselves by their wickedness, and now God seconds it by a particular denunciation of wrath, that Noah might try if that would work upon them; whence observe, (1.) That God confirmeth the words of his messengers, *Isa. 44. 26*. (2.) That to him that has, and uses what he has for the good of others, *more shall be given*, more full instructions. 2. He told him particularly, that he would destroy the world by a *flood of waters*, *v. 17, And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth*. God could have destroyed all mankind by the sword of an angel, a flaming sword turning every way, as he destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, and the camp of the Assyrians; and then there needed no more than to set a mark upon Noah and his family for their preservation; but God chose to do it by a *flood of waters*, which should drown the world. The reasons, we may be sure, were wise and just, though to us unknown. God has many arrows in his quiver, and he may use which he pleases: as he chooses the rod with which he will correct his children, so he chooses the sword with which he will cut off his enemies.

Observe the manner of expression, *I, even I, do bring a flood*; I that am infinite in power, and therefore can do it, infinite in justice, and therefore will do it. (1.) It bespeaks the certainty of the judgment; *I, even I*, will do it; that cannot but be done effectually, which God himself undertakes the doing of; see *Job 11. 10*. (2.) It bespeaks the tendency of it to God's glory, and the honour of his justice; thus he will be magnified and exalted in the earth, and all the world shall be made to know that he is the God to whom *vengeance belongs*: methinks the expression here is somewhat like that, *Isa. 1. 24, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*.

II. God here makes Noah the *man of his covenant*, another Hebrew periphrasis of a friend, *v. 18, But with thee will I establish my covenant*. 1. The covenant of *providence*; that the course of nature shall be continued to the end of time, notwithstanding the interruption which the flood would give to it; this promise was immediately made to Noah and his sons, *ch. 9. 8, &c*. They were as trustees for all this part of the creation, and a great honour was thereby put upon him and his. 2. The covenant of *grace*; that God would be to him a God, and that out of his seed God would take to himself a people. Note, (1.) When God makes a covenant, he establishes it, he makes it sure, he makes it good; his are everlasting covenants. (2.) The covenant of grace has in it the recompense of singular services, and the fountain and foundation of all distinguishing favours; we need

desire no more, either to make up our losses for God, or to make up a happiness for us in God, than to have his covenant established with us.

III. God here makes Noah a *monument of sparing mercy*, by putting him in a way to secure himself in the approaching deluge, that he might not perish with the rest of the world. *I will destroy them*, says God, *with the earth*, v. 13. "But make thee an ark; I will take care to preserve thee alive." Note, Singular piety shall be recompensed with distinguishing salvations, which are in a special manner obliging. This will add much to the honour and happiness of glorified saints, that they shall be saved, when the greatest part of the world is left to perish.

Now, 1. God directs Noah to *make an ark*, v. 14. 16. This ark was like the hulk of a ship, fitted not to *sail* upon the waters, (there was no occasion for that, when there should be no shore to sail to,) but to *float* upon the waters, waiting for their fall. God could have secured Noah by the ministration of angels, without putting him to any care or pains or trouble, himself; but he chose to employ him in making that which was to be the means of his preservation, both for the trial of his faith and obedience, and to teach us that none shall be *saved by Christ*, but those only that *work out their salvation*; we cannot do it without God, and he will not without us: both the providence of God, and the grace of God, own and crown the endeavours of the obedient and diligent.

God gave him very particular instructions concerning this building, which could not but be admirably well-fitted for the purpose, when Infinite Wisdom itself was the Architect. (1.) It must be made of *gopher wood*: Noah, doubtless knew what sort of wood that was, though now we do not, whether cedar, or cypress, or what other. (2.) He must make it three stories high within. (3.) He must divide it into cabins, with partitions, places fitted for the several sorts of creatures, so as to lose no room. (4.) Exact dimensions are given him, that he might make it proportionable, and might have room enough in it to answer the intention, and no more. Note, [1.] Those that *work for God*, must take their measures *from him*, and carefully observe them. [2.] It is fit that he who appoints us our habitation, should fix the bounds and limits of it. (5.) He must *pitch it within and without*; *without*, to shed off the rain, and to prevent the water from soaking in; *within*, to take away the ill smell of the beasts, when kept close. Observe, God does not bid him *haint* it, but *pitch* it. If God give us habitations that are safe, and warm, and wholesome, we are bound to be thankful, though they are not magnificent or nice. (6.) He must make a little window toward the top, to let in light, and (some think) that through that window he might behold the desolations to be made in the earth. (7.) He must make a door in the side of it, by which to go in and out.

2. God promises Noah, that he and his should be preserved alive in the ark, v. 18. *Thou shalt come into the ark*. Note, What we do in obedience to God, we ourselves are likely to have the comfort and benefit of; *If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself*. Nor was he himself only saved in the ark, but *his wife, and his sons, and his sons' wives*. Observe, (1.) The care of good parents; they are solicitous not only for their own salvation, but for the salvation of their families, and especially their children. (2.) The happiness of those children that have godly parents; their parents' piety often procures them temporal salvation, as here; and it furthers them in the way to eternal salvation, if they improve the benefit of it.

IV. God here makes Noah a great blessing to the world, and herein makes him an eminent type of

the Messiah, though not the Messiah himself, as his parents expected, *ch. 5. 29*.

1. God made him a *preacher* to the men of that generation. As a watchman, he received the word from God's mouth, that he might give them warning, *Ezek. 3. 17*. Thus *while the long-suffering of God waited*, by his spirit in Noah, he *preached* to the old world, who, when St. Peter wrote, were *spirits in prison*, 1 Pet. 3. 18.. 20, and herein he was a type of Christ, who, in a land and age wherein *all flesh had corrupted their way*, went about preaching repentance, and warning men of a deluge of wrath coming.

2. God made him a *saviour* to the inferior creatures, to keep the several kinds of them from perishing and being lost in the deluge, v. 19.. 21. This was a great honour put upon him, that not only in him the race of mankind should be kept up, and that from him should proceed a new world, the church, the soul of that world, and Messiah, the Head of that church; but that he should be instrumental to preserve the inferior creatures, and so mankind should in him acquire a new title to them and their service. (1.) He was to provide *shelter* for them, that they might not be drowned. *Two of every sort, male and female*, he must take with him into the ark; and lest he should make any difficulty of gathering them together, and getting them in, God promises, v. 20, that they should of their own accord come to him. He that makes the ox to know his owner and his crib, *then* made him know his preserver and his ark. (2.) He was to provide *sustenance* for them, that they might not be starved, v. 21. He must victual his ship according to the number of his crew, that great family which he had now the charge of, and according to the time appointed for his confinement. Herein also he was a type of Christ, to whom it is owing that the world stands, by whom all things consist, and who preserves mankind from being totally cut off and ruined by sin; in him the holy seed is saved alive, and the creation rescued from the vanity under which it groans. Noah saved those whom he was to rule. so does Christ, Heb. 5. 9.

22. Thus did Noah, according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

Noah's care and diligence in building the ark may be considered,

1. As an effect of his faith in the word of God, God had told him he would shortly drown the world; he believed it, feared the threatened deluge, and, in that fear, prepared the ark. Note, We ought to mix faith with the revelation God has made of his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; the threatenings of the word are not false alarms. Much might have been objected against the credibility of this warning given to Noah. "Who could believe that the wise God, who made the world, should so soon unmake it again; who had drawn the waters off the dry land, *ch. 1. 9, 10*, should cause them to cover it again? How would this be reconciled with the mercy of God, which is over all his works; especially that the innocent creatures should die for man's sin? Whence would water be had sufficient to deluge the world? And, if it must be so, why should notice be given of it to Noah only?" But Noah's faith triumphed over all these corrupt reasonings.

2. As an act of obedience to the command of God; had he consulted with flesh and blood, many objections would have been raised against it. To rear a building, such a one as he never saw, so large, and of such exact dimensions, would put him upon a great deal of care, and labour, and expense; it would be a work of time, the vision was for a great

while to come; his neighbours would ridicule him for his credulity, and he would be the song of the drunkards; his building would be called *Noah's folly*; if the worst came to the worst, as we say, each would fare as well as his neighbours. But these, and a thousand such objections, Noah by faith got over; his obedience was ready and resolute. Thus did Noah willingly and cheerfully, without murmuring and disputing. God says, *Do this*, and he does it: it was also punctual and persevering; he did all exactly according to the instructions given him, and having begun to build, did not give off till he had finished it: so did he, and so must we do.

3. As an instance of wisdom for himself, thus to provide for his own safety; he feared the deluge, and therefore prepared the ark. Note, When God gives warning of approaching judgments, it is our wisdom and duty to provide accordingly. See Exod. 9. 20, 21. Ezek. 3. 18. We must prepare to meet the Lord in his judgments on earth, flee to his name as a strong tower. Prov. 18. 10, enter into our chambers, Isa. 26. 20, 21, especially prepare to meet him at death, and in the judgment of the great day, build upon Christ the Rock, Matth. 7. 24, go into Christ the Ark.

4. As intended for warning to a careless world: and it was fair warning of the deluge coming; every blow of his axes and hammers was a call to repentance, a call to them to prepare arks too. But since by it he could not convince the world, by it he condemned the world, Heb. 11. 7.

### CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have the performance of what was foretold in the foregoing chapter, both concerning the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of Noah; for we may be sure that no word of God shall fall to the ground. There we left Noah busy about his ark, and full of care to get it finished in time, while the rest of his neighbours were laughing at him for his pains. Now here we see what was *the end thereof*; the end of his care, and of their carelessness. And this famous period of the old world gives us some idea of the state of things, when the world that now is, shall be destroyed by fire, as that was by water. See 2 Pet. 3. 6, 7. We have, in this chapter, I. God's gracious call to Noah to come into the ark, v. 1, and to bring the creatures that were to be preserved alive, along with him, v. 2, 3, in consideration of the deluge at hand, v. 4. II. Noah's obedience to this heavenly vision, v. 5. When he was six hundred years old, he came with his family into the ark, v. 6, 7, and brought the creatures along with him, v. 8, 9, an account of which is repeated, v. 13, 16, to which is added God's tender care to shut him in. III. The coming of the threatened deluge, v. 10, the causes of it, v. 11, 12, the prevalence of it, v. 17, 20. IV. The dreadful desolations that were made by it in the death of every living creature upon earth, except those that were in the ark, v. 21, 23. V. The continuance of it in full sea, before it began to ebb, one hundred and fifty days, v. 24.

1. **AND** the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 2. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. 3. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female: to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. 4. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

Here is,

I. A gracious invitation of Noah and his family  
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into a place of safety, now that the flood of waters was coming on, v. 1.

1. The call itself is very kind, like that of a tender father to his children, to come in doors, when he sees night or a storm coming; *Come thou, and all thy house*, that small family that thou hast, *into the ark*. Observe, (1.) Noah did not go into the ark till God bade him; though he knew it was designed for his place of refuge, yet he waited for a renewed command, and had it. It is very comfortable to follow the calls of Providence, and to see God going before us in every step we take. (2.) God does not bid him *go* into the ark, but *come* into it, implying that God would go with him, would lead him into it, accompany him in it, and in due time bring him safe out of it. Note, Wherever we are, it is very desirable to have the presence of God with us, for that is all in all, to the comfort of every condition. This was it that made Noah's ark, which was a prison, to be to him not only a refuge, but a palace. (3.) Noah had taken a great deal of pains to build the ark, and now he was himself preserved alive in it. Note, What we do in obedience to the command of God, and in faith, we ourselves shall certainly have the comfort of, first or last. (4.) Not he only, but his house also, his wife and children, are called with him into the ark. Note, It is good to belong to the family of a godly man; it is safe and comfortable to dwell under such a shadow. One of Noah's sons was Ham, who proved afterward a bad man, yet he was saved in the ark; which intimates, [1.] That wicked children often fare the better for the sake of their godly parents. [2.] That there is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies on earth, and we are not to think it strange; in Noah's family there was a Ham, and in Christ's family there was a Judas: there is no perfect purity on this side heaven. (6.) This call to Noah was a type of the call which the gospel gives to poor sinners. Christ is an ark already prepared, in whom alone we can be safe, when death and judgment come; now the burthen of the song is, "Come, come;" the word says, "Come;" ministers say, "Come;" the Spirit says, "Come, come into the ark."

2. The reason for this invitation is a very honourable testimony to Noah's integrity, *For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation*. Observe, (1.) Those are righteous indeed, that are righteous before God, that have not only the form of godliness by which they appear righteous before men, who may easily be imposed upon, but the power of it, by which they approve themselves to God, who searches the heart, and cannot be deceived in men's character. (2.) God takes notice of, and is pleased with, those that are *righteous before him*; *Thee have I seen*. In a world of wicked people, God could see one righteous Noah; that single grain of wheat could not be lost, no not in so great a heap of chaff. *The Lord knows them that are his*. (3.) God that is a Witness to, will shortly be a witness for, his people's integrity; he that sees it, will proclaim it before angels and men, to their immortal honour. They that obtain mercy to be righteous, shall obtain witness that they are righteous. (4.) God is, in a special manner, pleased with those that are good in bad times and places. Noah was *therefore* illustriously righteous, because he was so in that wicked and adulterous generation. (5.) Those that keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep safe in times of common calamity; those that partake not with others in their sins, shall not partake with them in their plagues; these that are better than others, are, even in this life, safer than others, and it is better with them.



II. Here are necessary orders given concerning the brute creatures that were to be preserved alive with Noah in the ark, *v.* 2, 3. They were not capable of receiving the warning and directions themselves, as man was, who *herein* is taught *more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven*—that he is endued with the power of foresight; therefore man is charged with the care of them: being under his dominion, they must be under his protection; and though he could not secure every individual, yet he must carefully preserve every species, that no tribe, no not the least considerable, might entirely perish out of the creation. Observe in this, 1. God's care for man, and for his comfort and benefit; we do not find that Noah was solicitous of himself about this matter; but God consults our happiness more than we do ourselves. Though God saw that the old world was very provoking, and foresaw that the new one would be little better; yet he would preserve the brute-creatures for man's use: *Doth God take care for oxen?* 1 Cor. 9. 9. Or was it not rather for man's sake that this care was taken? 2. Even the unclean beasts (which were least valuable and profitable) were preserved alive in the ark; for God's tender mercies are over all his works, and not only over those that are of the most eminence and use. 3. Yet more of the clean were preserved than of the unclean, (1.) Because the clean were most for the service of man; and therefore, in favour to him, more of them were preserved, and are still propagated. Thanks be to God, that there are not herds of lions as there are of oxen, nor flocks of tigers as there are of sheep. (2.) Because the clean were for sacrifice to God; and therefore in honour to him, more of them were preserved, three couple for breed, and the odd seventh for sacrifice, *ch.* 8. 20. God gives us six for one in earthly things, as in the distribution of the days of the week, that in spiritual things we should be all for him. What is devoted to God's honour, and used in his service, is particularly blessed and increased.

III. Here is notice given of the now imminent approach of the flood, *v.* 4, *Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain.* 1. "It shall be seven days yet, before I do it." After the 120 years were expired, God grants them a reprieve of seven days longer; both to show how slow he is to anger, and that punishing work is his strange work, and also to give them some further space for repentance; but all in vain; these seven days were trilled away, after all the rest; they continued secure and sensual until the day that the flood came. 2. "It shall be but seven days." While Noah told them of the judgment at a distance, they were tempted to put off their repentance, because the vision was for a great while to come; but now he is ordered to tell them that it is at the door, that they have but one week more to turn them in, but one sabbath more to improve; to see if that will now, at last, awaken them to consider the things that belonged to their peace, which otherwise would soon be hidden from their eyes. But it is common for those who have been careless of their souls during the years of their health, when they have looked upon death at a distance, to be as careless during the days, the seven days, of their sickness, when they see it approaching, their hearts being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

5. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. 6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. 7. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. 8. Of

clean beasts, and of beasts that *are* not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth. 9. There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. 10. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

Here is Noah's ready obedience to the commands that God gave him.

1. He went into the ark, upon notice that the flood would come after seven days, though, probably, as yet there appeared no visible sign of its approach, no cloud arising that threatened it, nothing done toward it, but all continued serene and clear; for as he prepared the ark by faith in the warning given, that the flood would *come*, so he went into it by faith in this warning, that it would come *quickly*, though he did not see that the second causes had yet begun to work. In every step he took, he walked by faith, and not by sense. During these seven days, it is likely, he was settling himself and his family in the ark, and distributing the creatures into their several apartments, which was the conclusion of that visible sermon which he had long been preaching to his careless neighbours, and which, one would think, might have awakened them; but, not obtaining that desired end, it left their blood upon their own heads.

2. He took all his family along with him; his wife, to be his companion and comfort; (though it should seem that, after this, he had no children by her); his sons, and his sons' wives, that by them not only his family, but the world of mankind, might be built up. Observe, Though men were to be reduced to so small a number, and it would be very desirable to have the world speedily re-peopled, yet Noah's sons were to have each of them but one wife, which strengthens the arguments against having many wives; for from the beginning of this new world it was not so: as, at first, God made, so now he kept alive, but one woman for one man; see *Matth.* 19. 4, 8.

3. The brute-creatures readily went in with him: the same hand that at first brought them to Adam to be named, now brought them to Noah to be preserved; the ox now knew his owner, and the ass his protector's crib, nay, even the wildest creatures flocked to it; but man was become more brutish than the brutes themselves, and did not *know*, did not *consider*, *Isa.* 1. 3.

11. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. 12. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

I. The date of this great event; this is carefully recorded, for the great certainty of the story.

1. It was in the 600th year of Noah's life, which, by computation, appears to be 1656 years from the creation. The years of the old world are reckoned, not by the reigns of the giants, but by the lives of the patriarchs; saints are of more account with God than princes: *The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.* Noah was now a very old man, even as men's years went then. Note, (1.) The longer we live in this world, the more we see of the miseries and calamities of it; it is therefore spoken of as the privilege of those that die young, that their *eyes shall not see the evil* which is coming,



2 Kings 22. 20. (2.) Sometimes God exercises his old servants with extraordinary trials of obedient patience. The oldest of Christ's soldiers must not promise themselves a discharge from their warfare, till death discharge them. Still they must gird on their harness, and not boast as though they had put it off. As the year of the deluge is recorded, so,

2. We are told that it was in the *second month, the seventeenth day of the month*, which is reckoned to be about the beginning of November; so that Noah had had a harvest just before, from which to victual his ark.

II. The second causes that concurred to this deluge; in the self-same day that Noah was fixed in the ark, the inundation began. Note, 1. Desolating judgments come not, till God has provided for the security of his own people; see *ch. 19. 22*, I can do nothing till thou be come thither; and we find, *Rev. 7. 3*, the winds are held till the servants of God are sealed. 2. When good men are removed, judgments are not far off; for they are *taken away from the evil to come*, *Isa. 57. 1*. When they are called into the chambers, hidden in the grave, hidden in heaven, then God is *coming out of his place to punish*, *Isa. 26. 20, 21*.

Now see what was done on that day, that fatal day to the world of the ungodly. 1. *The fountains of the great deep were broken up*. Perhaps there needed no new creation of waters; what were already made to be, in the common course of providence, blessings to the earth, were now by an extraordinary act of divine power, made the ruin of it. God has laid up the deep in storehouses, (*Ps. 33. 7.*) and now he broke up those stores. As our bodies have in themselves those humours, which, when God pleases, become the seeds and springs of mortal diseases; so the earth had in its bowels those waters, which, at God's command, sprang up, and flooded it. God had, in the creation, set *bars and doors* to the waters of the sea, that they might not return to cover the earth, (*Ps. 104. 9. Job 38. 9.. 11.*) and now he only removed those ancient landmarks, mounds, and fences; and the waters of the sea returned to cover the earth, as they had done at first, *ch. 1. 9*. Note, All the creatures are ready to fight against sinful man, and any of them is able to be the instrument of his ruin, if God do but take off the restraints by which they are held in, during the day of God's patience. 2. *The windows of heaven were opened, and the waters which were above the firmament were poured out upon the world*; those treasures which God has reserved against the day of trouble, the day of battle and war, *Job 38. 22, 23*. The rain, which ordinarily descends in drops, then came down in streams, or *shouts*, as they call them in the Indies, where clouds have been often known to burst, as they express it there, when the rain descends in a much more violent torrent than we have ever seen in the greatest shower. We read, *Job 26. 8*, that *God binds up the waters in his thick clouds*, and the cloud is not rent under them; but now the bond was loosed, the cloud was rent, and such rains descended as were never known before or since, in such abundance, and of such continuance: the thick cloud was not, as ordinarily it is, wearied with waterings, (*Job 37. 11.*) that is, soon spent and exhausted; but still the clouds returned after the rain, and the divine power brought in fresh recruits. It rained, without intermission or abatement, *forty days and forty nights*, (*v. 12.*) and that, upon the whole earth at once, not, as sometimes, *upon one city, and not upon another*. God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it; for he is slow to anger; out though the destruction came slowly and gradually, yet it came effectually.

Now learn from this, (1.) That all the creatures are at God's disposal, and that he makes what use

he pleases of them, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, as Elihu speaks of the rain, *Job 37. 12, 13*. (2.) That God often makes that which should be for our welfare, to become a trap, *Ps. 69. 22*. That which usually is a comfort and benefit to us, becomes, when God pleases, a scourge and a plague to us. Nothing is more needful or useful than waters, both the springs of the earth, and the showers of heaven; and yet now, nothing is more hurtful, nothing more destructive: every creature is to be what God makes it. (3.) That it is impossible to escape the righteous judgments of God, when they come against sinners with commission; for God can arm both heaven and earth against them; see *Job 20. 27*. God can surround men with the messengers of his wrath, so that if they look upward, it is with horror and amazement; if they look to the earth, behold, trouble and darkness, *Isa. 8. 21, 22*. Who then is able to stand before God, when he is angry? (*Lastly,*) In this destruction of the old world by water, God gave a specimen of the final destruction of the world that now is, by fire; we find the apostles setting the one of these over-against the other, *2 Pet. 3. 6, 7*. As there are waters under the earth, so *Ætna, Vesuvius*, and other volcanoes, proclaim to the world that there are subterraneous fires too; and fire often falls from heaven, many desolations are made by lightning; so that when the time predetermined comes, between these two fires the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up; as the flood was brought upon the old world out of the fountains of the great deep, and through the windows of heaven.

13. In the self-same day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; 14. They and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. 15. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. 16. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

Here is repeated what was related before of Noah's entrance into the ark, with his family and the creatures that were marked for preservation.

I. It is thus repeated, for the honour of Noah, whose faith and obedience herein shone so bright, by which he obtained a good report, and who herein appeared so great a favourite of Heaven, and so great a blessing to this earth.

II. Notice is here taken of the beasts going in *each after his kind*, according to the phrase used in the history of the creation, *ch. 1. 21.. 25*, to intimate that just as many kinds as were created at first, were saved now, and no more; and that this preservation was as a new creation; a life remarkably protected, is, as it were, a new life.

III. Though all enmities and hostilities between the creatures ceased, for the present, and ravenous creatures were not only so mild and manageable, as that the wolf and the lamb lay down together, but so strangely altered, as that the lion did eat straw like an ox, *Isa. 11. 6, 7*, yet, when this present occasion was over, the restraint was taken off, and they were still of the same kind as ever; for the ark did not alter their constitution. Hypocrites in the church, that externally conform to the laws of that

ark, may yet be unchanged; and then it will appear, one time or other, what kind they are after.

IV. It is added, (and the circumstance deserves our notice,) *The Lord shut him in*, v. 16. As Noah continued his obedience to God, so God continued his care of Noah; and here it appeared to be a very distinguishing care; for the shutting of his door set up a partition wall between him and all the world besides. God shut the door, 1. To secure him, and keep him safe in the ark. The door must be shut very close, lest the waters should break in, and sink the ark, and very fast, lest any without should break it down. Thus *God made up Noah, as he makes up his jewels*, Mal. 3. 17. 2. To seclude all others, and keep them for ever out. Hitherto, the door of the ark stood open, and if any, even during the last seven days, had repented and believed, for aught I know, they might have been welcomed into the ark; but now, the door was shut, and they were cut off from all hopes of admittance: for *God shutteth, and none can open*.

V. There is much of our Gospel-duty and privilege to be seen in Noah's preservation in the ark. The apostle makes it a type of our baptism, that is, our christianity, 1 Pet. 3. 20, 21. Observe then, 1. It is our great duty, in obedience to the gospel-call, by a lively faith in Christ, to come into that way of salvation which God has provided for poor sinners. When Noah came into the ark, he quit- ted his own house and lands; so must we quit our own righteousness and our worldly possessions, whenever they come into competition with Christ. Noah must, for a while, submit to the confinements and inconveniences of the ark, in order to his preservation for a new world; so those that come into Christ to be saved by him, must deny themselves, both in sufferings and services. 2. Those that come into the ark themselves, should bring as many as they can in with them, by good instructions, by persuasions, and by a good example: *What knowest thou, O man, but thou mayest thus save thy wife*, (1 Cor. 7. 16.) as Noah did his. There is room enough in Christ for all comers. 3. Those that by faith come into Christ, the Ark, shall by the power of God be shut in, and kept as in a strong hold *by the power of God*, 1 Pet. 1. 5. God put Adam into paradise, but he did not shut him in, and so he threw himself out; but when he put Noah into the ark, he shut him in, and so when he brings a soul to Christ, he insures the salvation: it is not in our own keeping, but in the Mediator's hand. 4. The door of mercy will shortly be shut against those that now make light of it. *Now, knock, and it shall be opened*; but the time will come, when it shall not, Luke 13. 25.

17. And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lifted up above the earth. 18. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. 19. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. 20. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

We are here told,

1. How long the flood was increasing; *forty days*, v. 17. The profane world which believed not that it would come, probably, when it came, flattered themselves with hopes that it would soon abate, and never come to extremity; but still it increased, it prevailed. Note, (1.) When God judges, he will overcome. If he begin, he will make an end; his

way is perfect both in judgment and mercy. (2.) The gradual approaches and advances of God's judgments, which are designed to bring sinners to repentance, are often abused to the hardening of them in their presumption.

2. To what degree they increased; they rose so high, that not only the low flat countries were deluged, but, to make sure work, and that none might escape, the tops of the highest mountains were overflowed, *fifteen cubits*, that is, seven yards and a half. So that *in vain was salvation hoped for from hills or mountains*, Jer. 3. 23. None of God's creatures are so high, but his power can overtop them; and he will make them know that wherein they deal proudly, he is above them. Perhaps the tops of the mountains were washed down by the strength of the waters, which helped much toward the prevailing of the waters above them; for it is said, Job 12. 15, *He sends out the waters*, and they not only overflow, but overturn, the earth. Thus the refuge of lies was swept away, and the waters overflowed the hiding-place of those sinners, (Isa. 28. 17.) and in vain they fly to them for safety, Rev. 6. 16. Now the mountains departed, and the hills were removed, and nothing stood a man in stead but the *covenant of peace*, Isa. 54. 10. There is no place on earth so high as to set men out of the reach of God's judgments, Jer. 49. 16. Obad. 3. 4. God's hand will find out all his enemies, Ps. 21. 8. Observe how exactly they are fathomed, (*fifteen cubits*,) not by Noah's plummet, but by his knowledge who *weigheth the waters by measure*, Job 28. 25.

3. What became of Noah's ark, when the waters thus increased; *it was lifted up above the earth*, (v. 17.) and *went upon the face of the waters*, v. 18. When all other buildings were demolished by the waters, and buried under them, the ark alone subsisted. Observe, (1.) The waters which brake down every thing else, bare up the ark. That which to unbelievers is a savour of death unto death, is to the faithful a savour of life unto life. (2.) The more the waters increased, the higher the ark was lifted up toward heaven. Thus sanctified afflictions are spiritual promotions; and as troubles abound, consolations much more abound.

21. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: 22. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. 23. And every living substance was destroyed, which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. 24. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

Here is,

1. The general destruction of all flesh by the waters of the flood. Come and see the desolations which God makes in the earth, Psal. 46. 8, and how he lays heaps upon heaps. Never did death triumph, from his first entrance unto this day, as it did then. Come, and see Death upon his pale horse, and hell following with him, Rev. 6. 7, 8.

1. All the cattle, fowl, and creeping things, died, except the few that were in the ark. Observe how this is repeated, *All flesh died*, v. 21. *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was on the*

*dry land, v. 22. Every living substance, v. 23.* And why so? *Man* only had done wickedly, and justly is God's hand against him; but these *sheep, what have they done?* I answer, (1.) We are sure God did them no wrong; he is the sovereign Lord of all life, for he is the sole Fountain and Author of it. He that made them as he pleased, might unmake them *when* he pleased; and who shall say unto him, *What doest thou?* May he not do what he will with his own, which were created for his pleasure? (2.) God did admirably serve the purposes of his own glory by their destruction, as well as by their creation. Herein his holiness and justice were greatly magnified; by this appears that he hates sin, and is highly displeased with sinners, when even the inferior creatures, because they are the servants of man, and part of his possession, and because they have been abused to be the servants of sin, are destroyed with him. This makes the judgment the more remarkable, the more dreadful, and consequently, the more expressive of God's wrath and vengeance. The destruction of the creatures was their deliverance from the bondage of corruption, which deliverance the whole creation now groans after, Rom. 8. 21, 22. It was likewise an instance of God's wisdom. As the creatures were made for man when he was made, so they were multiplied: and therefore, now that mankind was reduced to so small a number, it was fit that the beasts should proportionably be reduced, otherwise they would have had the dominion, and would have replenished the earth, and the remnant of mankind that was left would have been overpowered by them. See how God considered this in another case, Exod. 23. 29. *Lest the beast of the field multiply against thee.*

2. All the men, women, and children, that were in the world, (except what were in the ark,) died. *Every man, v. 21, and v. 23,* and perhaps they were as many as are now upon the face of the earth, if not more. Now,

(1.) We may easily imagine what terror and consternation seized on them when they saw themselves surrounded. Our Saviour tells us, that till the very day that the flood came, they were *eating and drinking*, Luke 17. 26, 27, they were drowned in security and sensuality, before they were drowned in those waters; crying, *Peace, peace*, to themselves; deaf and blind to all divine warnings. In this posture death surprised them, as 1 Sam. 30. 16, 17. But O what an amazement were they in then! Now they see and feel that which they would not believe and fear, and are convinced of their folly when it is too late; now they find no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears.

(2.) We may suppose that they tried all ways and means possible for their preservation, but all in vain. Some climb to the tops of trees or mountains, and spin out their terrors there awhile. But the flood reaches them, at last, and they are forced to die with the more deliberation. Some, it is likely, cling to the ark, and now hope that that may be their safety, which they had so long made their sport. Perhaps some get to the top of the ark, and hope to shift for themselves there; but either they perish there for want of food, or, by a speedier despatch, a dash of rain washes them off that deck. Others, it may be, hoped to prevail with Noah for admission into the ark, and pleaded old acquaintance, *Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? Hast thou not taught in our streets?* "Yes," might Noah say, "I have, many a time, to little purpose. I called, but ye refused; ye set at naught all my counsel, Prov. 1. 24, 25, and now it is not in my power to help you: God has shut the door, and I cannot open it." Thus it will be at the great day. Neither climbing high in an outward profession,

nor claiming relation to good people, will bring men to heaven, Matt. 7. 22.—25. 8, 9. Those that are not found in Christ, the Ark, are certainly undone, for ever; salvation itself cannot save them. See Isa. 10. 3.

(3.) We may suppose that some of those who perished in the deluge, had themselves assisted Noah, or were employed by him, in the building of the ark, and yet were not so wise as by repentance to secure themselves a place in it. Thus wicked ministers, though they may have been instrumental to help others to heaven, will themselves be thrust down to hell.

Let us now pause awhile, and consider this tremendous judgment! Let our hearts meditate terror, the terror of this destruction: let us see, and say, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; who can stand before him when he is angry?* Let us see, and say, *It is an evil thing, and a bitter, to depart from God.* The sin of sinners will, without repentance, be their ruin, first or last; if God be true it will. *Though hand join in hand, yet the wicked shall not go unpunished.* The righteous God knows how to bring a flood upon the world of the ungodly, 2 Pet. 2. 5. Eliphaz appeals to this story as a standing warning to a careless world, Job. 22. 15, 16, *Hast thou marked the old way, which wicked men have trodden, which were cut down out of time, and sent into eternity, whose foundation was overflown with the flood?*

1. The special preservation of Noah and his family, v. 23, *Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.* Observe, 1. *Noah lives;* when all about him were monuments of justice, thousands falling on his right hand, and ten thousands on his left, he was a monument of mercy; *only with his eyes might he behold and see the reward of the wicked,* Ps. 91. 7, 8. *In the floods of great waters, they did not come nigh him,* Ps. 32. 6. We have reason to think, that while the long-suffering of God waited, Noah not only preached to, but prayed for, that wicked world, and would have turned away the wrath; but his prayers return into his own bosom, and are answered only in his own escape; which is plainly referred to, Ezek. 14. 14, *Noah, Daniel, and Job, shall but deliver their own souls.* A mark of honour shall be set on intercessors. 2. *He but lives.* Noah remains alive, and that is all; he is, in effect, buried alive; cooped up in a small place, alarmed with the terrors of the descending rain, the increasing flood, and the shrieks and outcries of his perishing neighbours—his heart overwhelmed with melancholy thoughts of the desolations made: but he comforts himself with this, that he is in the way of duty, and in the way of deliverance. And we are taught, Jer. 45. 4, 5, that when desolating judgments are abroad, we must not seek great or pleasant things to ourselves, but reckon it an unspeakable favour, if we have our lives given us for a prey.

## CHAP. VIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left the world in ruins, and the church in straits; but in this chapter, we have the repair of the one, and the enlargement of the other. Now the scene alters, and another state of things begins to be presented to us, and the brighter side of that cloud which there appeared so black and dark: for though God contend long, he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. We have here, 1. The earth made anew, by the recess of the waters, and the appearing of the dry land, now a second time, and both gradual. 1. The increase of the waters is stayed, v. 1, 2. 2. They begin sensibly to abate, v. 3. 3. After sixteen days' ebbing, the ark rests, v. 4. 4. After sixty days' ebbing, the tops of the mountains appeared above water, v. 5. 5. After forty days' ebbing, and twenty days before the mountains appeared, Noah began to send out his spies. a raven and a dove, to gain intelligence, v. 6. 12. 6. Two

months after the appearing of the tops of the mountains, the waters were gone, and the face of the earth was dry, v. 13, though not dried so as to be fit for man till almost two months after, v. 14. II. Man placed anew upon the earth. In which, 1. Noah's discharge and departure out of the ark, v. 15-19. 2. His sacrifice of praise, which he offered to God upon his enlargement, v. 20. 3. God's acceptance of his sacrifice, and the promise he made, thereupon, not to drown the world again, v. 21, 22. And thus, at length, mercy rejoices against judgment.

1. **AND** God remembered Noah, and that *was* with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. 2. The fountains also of the deep, and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; 3. And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated.

Here is,

I. An act of God's grace. *God remembered Noah and every living thing.* This is an expression after the manner of men; for not any of his creatures, Luke 12. 6, much less any of his people, are forgotten of God, Isa. 49. 15, 16. But,

1. The whole race of mankind, except Noah and his family, was now extinguished, and gone into the land of forgetfulness, to be remembered no more; so that God's remembering Noah was the return of his mercy to mankind, of whom he would not make a full end. It is a strange expression, Ezek. 5. 13, *When I have accomplished my fury in them, I will be comforted.* The demands of divine justice had been answered by the ruin of those sinners; he had eased him of his adversaries, Isa. 1. 24, and now his spirit was quieted, Zech. 6. 8, and *he remembered Noah and every living thing.* He remembered mercy in wrath, Hab. 3. 2, remembered the days of old, Isa. 63. 11, remembered the holy seed, and then remembered Noah.

2. Noah himself, though one that had found grace in the eyes of the Lord, yet seemed to be forgotten in the ark, and perhaps began to think himself so; for we do not find that God had told him how long he should be confined, and when he shall be released. Very good men have sometimes been ready to conclude themselves forgotten of God, especially when their afflictions have been unusually grievous and long. Perhaps Noah, though a great believer, yet when he found the flood continuing so long after it might reasonably be presumed to have done its work, was tempted to fear lest he that shut him in, would keep him in, and began to expostulate, *How long wilt thou forget me?* But at length, God returned in mercy to him, and that is expressed by remembering him. Note, These that remember God, shall certainly be remembered by him, how desolate and disconsolate sever, their condition may be. He will appoint them a set time, and remember them, Job 14. 13.

3. With Noah, God remembered every living thing; for though his delight is especially in the sons of men, yet he rejoices in all his works, and hates nothing that he has made. He takes special care not only of his people's persons, but of their possessions; of them and all that belongs to them. He considered the *cattle* of Nineveh, Jonah 4. 11.

II. An act of God's power over wind and water, neither of which is under man's control, but both at *his* beck. Observe,

1. He commanded the wind, and said to that, *Go*, and it went, in order to the carrying off of the flood.

*God made a wind to pass over the earth.* See here, (1.) What was God's remembrance of Noah; it was his relieving of him. Note, those whom God remembers, he remembers effectually, for good; he remembers us to save us, that we may remember him to serve him. (2.) What a sovereign dominion God has over the winds! He has them in his fist, Prov. 30. 4, and brings them out of his treasure, Ps. 135. 7. He sends them when, and whither, and for what purposes, he pleases. Even stormy winds fulfil his word, Ps. 148. 8. It should seem, while the waters increased, there was no wind; for that would have added to the toss of the ark; but now God sent a wind, when it would not be troublesome. Probably, it was a north wind, for that drives away rain. However, it was a drying wind, such a wind as God sent to divide the Red-sea before Israel, Exod. 14. 21.

2. He remanded the waters, and said to them, *Come*, and they came. (1.) He took away the cause. He sealed up the springs of those waters, *the fountains of the great deep, and the windows of heaven.* Note, [1.] As God had a key to open, so he has a key to shut up again, and to stay the progress of judgments by stopping the causes of them: and the same hand that brings the desolation, must bring the deliverance; to that hand therefore our eye must ever be. He that wounds is alone able to heal. See Job 12. 14, 15. [2.] When afflictions have done the work for which they are sent, whether killing work or curing work, they shall be removed. God's word shall not return void, Isa. 55. 10, 11. (2.) Then the effect ceased; not all at once, but by degrees. The waters assuaged, v. 1, *returned from off the earth continually*, v. 3. Heb. they were *going and returning*; which denotes a gradual departure. The heat of the sun exhaled much, and perhaps the subterraneous caverns soaked in more. Note, As the earth was not drowned in a day, so it was not dried in a day. In the creation, it was but one day's work to clear the earth from the waters that covered it, and to make it dry land; nay, it was but half a day's work, *ch.* 1. 9, 10. But the work of creation being finished, this work of providence was effected by the concurring influence of second causes, yet thus enforced by the almighty power of God. God usually works deliverance for his people gradually, that the day of small things may not be despised, nor the day of great things despaired of, Zech. 4. 10. See Prov. 4. 18.

4. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. 5. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

Here we have the effects and evidences of the ebbs of the waters. 1. The ark rested. This was some satisfaction to Noah, to feel the house he was in, upon firm ground, and no longer moveable. It rested upon a mountain, whither it was directed, not by Noah's prudence, (he did not steer it,) but by the wise and gracious providence of God, that it might rest the sooner. Note, God has times and places of rest for his people after their tossings; and many a time he provides for their seasonable and comfortable settlement without their own contrivance, and quite beyond their own foresight. The ark of the church, though sometimes tossed with tempests, and not comforted, Isa. 54. 11, yet has its rests, Acts 9. 31. 2. The tops of the mountains were seen, like little islands, appearing above the water. We must suppose that they were seen by

Noah and his sons; for there were none besides to see them: it is probable that they had looked through the window of the ark every day, like the longing mariners, after a tedious voyage, to see if they could discover land, or as the prophet's servant, 1 Kings 18. 43, 44, and at length they spy ground, and enter the day of the discovery in their journal. They felt ground above forty days before they saw it, according to Dr. Lightfoot's computation, whence he infers that if the waters decreased proportionably, the ark drew eleven cubits in water.

6. And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: 7. And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. 8. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; 9. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. 10. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11. And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive-leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.

We have here an account of the spies which Noah sent forth to bring him intelligence from abroad, *a raven and a dove*. Observe here,

I. That though God had told Noah particularly when the flood would *come*, even to a day, (*ch.* 7. 4.) yet he did not give him a particular account by revelation at what times, and by what steps it should *go away*. 1. Because the knowledge of the former was necessary to his preparing of the ark, and settling of himself in it; but the knowledge of the latter would serve only to gratify his curiosity, and the concealing of it from him would be the needful exercise of his faith and patience. And, 2. He could not foresee the flood, but by revelation; but he might, by ordinary means, discover the decrease of it, and therefore God was pleased to leave him to the use of them.

II. That though Noah by faith expected his enlargement, and by patience waited for it, yet he was inquisitive concerning it, as one that thought it long to be thus confined. Note, Desires of release out of trouble, earnest expectations of it, and inquiries concerning its advances towards us, will very well consist with the sincerity of faith and patience. *He that believes does not make haste to run before God*, but he does make haste to go forth to *meet* him, Isa. 28. 16. Particularly, 1. Noah sent forth a *raven* through the window of the ark, which went forth, as the Hebrew phrase is, *going forth and returning*, that is flying about, and feeding on the carcasses that floated, but returning to the ark for rest; probably, *not in it, but upon it*. This gave Noah little satisfaction; therefore, 2. He sent forth a *dove*, which returned the first time with no good news, but, probably, wet and dirty; but, the second time, she brought an olive-leaf in her bill, which appeared to be first plucked off; a plain indication that

now the trees, the fruit-trees, began to appear above water.

Note here, (1.) That Noah sent forth the dove the second time, seven days after the first time, and the third time was after seven days too; and, probably, the first sending of her out was seven days after the sending forth of the raven, which intimates that it was done on the sabbath-day, which, it should seem, Noah religiously observed in the ark. Having kept the sabbath in a solemn assembly of his little church, he then expected special blessings from heaven, and inquired concerning them. Having directed his prayer, he looked up, Ps. 5. 3. (2.) The dove is an emblem of a gracious soul, which finding no rest for its foot, no solid peace or satisfaction in this world, this deluged, defiling world, returns to Christ as to its Ark, as to its Noah. The carnal heart, like the raven, takes up with the world, and feeds on the carrions it finds there; but *return thou to thy rest, O my soul*, to thy *Noah*, so the word is, Ps. 116. 7. *O that I had wings like a dove*, to flee to him! Ps. 55. 6. And as Noah put forth his hand, and took the dove, and pulled her in to him, into the ark, so Christ will graciously preserve, and help, and welcome, those that fly to him for rest. (3.) The olive-branch, which was an emblem of peace, was brought not by the raven, a bird of prey, nor by a gay and proud peacock, but by a mild, patient, humble, dove. It is a dove-like disposition that brings into the soul earnestness of rest and joy. (4.) Some make these things an allegory. The law was first sent forth like the *raven*, but brought no tidings of the assuaging of the waters of God's wrath, with which the world of mankind was deluged; therefore, in the fulness of time, God sent forth his gospel, as the *dove*, in the likeness of which the Holy Spirit descended, and this presents us with an olive-branch, and brings in a better hope.

13. And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. 14. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

Here is,

1. The ground dry; (*v.* 14.) that is, all the water carried off it, which, upon the first day of the first month, (a joyful new-year's-day it was,) Noah was himself an eye-witness of. He *removed the covering of the ark*, not the whole covering, but so much as would suffice to give him a prospect of the earth about it; and a most comfortable prospect he had. For behold, behold and wonder, *the face of the ground was dry*. Note, (1.) It is a great mercy to see ground about us. Noah was more sensible of it than we are: for mercies restored are much more affecting than mercies continued. (2.) The divine power which now renewed the face of the earth, can renew the face of an afflicted troubled soul, and of a distressed persecuted church. He can make dry ground to appear there where it seemed to have been lost and forgotten, Ps. 18. 16.

2. The ground dried, (*v.* 14.) so as to be a fit habitation for Noah. Observe, Though Noah saw the ground dry the first day of the first month, yet God would not suffer him to go out of the ark till the twenty-seventh day of the second month. Perhaps Noah, being somewhat weary of his restraint, would have quitted the ark at first, but God, in kindness to him, ordered him to stay so much longer. Note, God consults our benefit, rather than our desires;



for he knows what is good for us better than we do for ourselves, and how long it is fit our restraints should continue, and desired mercies should be delayed. We would go out of the ark before the ground is dried; and perhaps, if the door be shut, are ready to remove the covering, and to climb up some other way; but we should be satisfied that God's time of showing mercy is certainly the best time, when the mercy is ripe for us, and we are ready for it.

15. And God spake unto Noah, saying, 16. Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. 17. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee, of all flesh, *both* of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. 18. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: 19. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, *and* whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

Here is,

I. Noah's dismissal out of the ark, *v.* 15...17. Observe, 1. Noah did not stir till God bid him. As he had a command to go into the ark, (*ch.* 7. 1.) so, how tedious soever his confinement there was, he would wait for a command to go out of it again. Note, We must in all our ways acknowledge God, and set him before us in all our removes. Those only go under God's protection, that follow God's direction, and submit to his government. Those that steadily adhere to God's word as their rule, and are guided by his grace as their principle, and take hints from his providence to assist them in their application of general directions to particular cases, may in faith see him guiding their motions in their march through this wilderness. 2. Though God detained him long, yet at last he gave him his discharge; *for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, it shall speak the truth*, (*Hab.* 2. 3.) it shall not lie. 3. God had said, *Come into the ark*, which intimated that God went in with him; now he says, not, *Come forth*, but *Go forth*, which intimates that God, who went in with him, stood with him all the while, till he sent him out safe; for he has said, *I will not leave thee*. 4. Some observe, that when they were ordered into the ark, the men and the women were mentioned separately, *ch.* 6. 18, *Thou and thy sons, and thy wife and thy sons' wives*; whence they infer that, during the time of mourning, they were apart, and their wives apart, *Zech.* 12. 12. But now God did as it were new marry them, sending out Noah and his wife together, and his sons and their wives together, that they might be fruitful and multiply. 5. Noah is ordered to bring the creatures out with him; that having taken the care of feeding them so long, and been at so much pains about them, he might have the honour of leading them forth by their armies, and receiving their homage.

II. Noah's departure when he had his dismissal. As he would not go out without leave, so he would not, out of fear or humour, stay in when he had leave, but was in all points observant of the heavenly vision. Though he had been now a full year and ten days a prisoner in the ark, yet when he found himself preserved there, not only for a new life, but for a new world, he saw no reason to complain of his long confinement. Now observe, 1.

Noah and his family came out alive, though one of them was a wicked Ham, whom, though he escaped the flood, God's justice could have taken away by some other stroke. But they are all alive. Note, When families have been long continued together, and no breaches made upon them, it must be looked upon as a distinguishing favour, and attributed to the Lord's mercies. 2. Noah brought out all the creatures that went in with him, except the raven and the dove, who, probably, were ready to meet their mates at their coming out. Noah was able to give a very good account of his charge; for of all that were given him he had lost none, but was faithful to him that appointed him, *pro hac vice—on this occasion*, high steward of his household.

20. And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar. 21. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. 22. While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.

Here is,

I. Noah's thankful acknowledgment of God's favour to him, in completing the mercy of his deliverance, *v.* 20. 1. *He builded an altar*. Hitherto he had done nothing without particular instructions and commands from God. He had a particular call into the ark, and another out of it; but altars and sacrifices being already of divine institution for religious worship, he did not stay for a particular command thus to express his thankfulness. Those that have received mercy from God, should be forward in returning thanks; and do it, *not of constraint, but willingly*. God is pleased with free-will offerings, and praises that wait for him. Noah was now turned out into a cold and desolate world, where one would have thought his first care would have been to build a house for himself; but, behold, he begins with an altar for God: God, that is the first, must be first served; and he begins well that begins with God. 2. *He offered a sacrifice upon his altar, of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl*, one, the odd seventh that we read of, *ch.* 7. 2, 3.

Here observe, (1.) He offered only these that were clean; for it is not enough that we sacrifice, but we must sacrifice that which God appoints, according to the law of sacrifice, and not a corrupt thing. (2.) Though his stock of cattle was so small, and that rescued from ruin at so great an expense of care and pains, yet he did not grudge to give God his dues out of it. He might have said, "Have I but seven sheep to begin the world with, and must one of those seven be killed and burnt for sacrifice? Were it not better to defer it, till we have mere plenty?" No, to prove the sincerity of his love and gratitude, he cheerfully gives the seventh to his God, as an acknowledgment that all was his, and owing to him. Serving God with our little, is the way to make it more; and we must never think that wasted, with which God is honoured. (3.) See here the antiquity of religion: the first thing we find done in the new world, was an act of worship, *Jer.* 6. 16. We are now to express our thankfulness, not by burnt-offerings, but by the sacrifices of praise,



and the sacrifices of righteousness, by pious devotions, and a pious conversation.

II. God's gracious acceptance of Noah's thankfulness. It was a settled rule in the patriarchal age, *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?* Noah was so. For,

1. God was well pleased with the performance, v. 21. He *smelled a sweet savour, or a savour of rest*, from it; as it is in the Hebrew. As when he had made the world at first on the seventh day, he rested and was refreshed, so now that he had new-made it, in the sacrifice of the seventh he rested. He was pleased with Noah's pious zeal, and these hopeful beginnings of the new world, as men are with fragrant and agreeable smells: though his offering was small, it was according to his ability, and God accepted it. Having caused his anger to rest upon the world of sinners, he here caused his love to rest upon this little remnant of believers.

2. Hereupon he took up a resolution never to drown the world again. Herein he had an eye, not so much to Noah's sacrifice, as to Christ's sacrifice of himself, which was typified and represented by it, and which was indeed an *offering of a sweet-smelling savour*, Eph. 5. 2. Good security is here given, and that which may be relied upon.

(1.) That this judgment should never be repeated. Noah might think, "To what purpose should the world be repaired, when, in all probability, for the wickedness of it, it will quickly be in like manner ruined again?" "No," says God, "it never shall." It was said, ch. 6. 6, *It repented the Lord that he had made man*; now here it speaks as if it repented him that he had *destroyed* man; neither means a change of his mind, but both a change of his way. *It repented him concerning his servants*, Deut. 32.

36. Two ways this resolve is expressed: [1.] *I will not again curse the ground*, Hebrew, *I will not add to curse the ground any more*. God had cursed the ground upon the first entrance of sin (ch. 3. 17.); when he had drowned it, he had added to that curse; but now he determines not to add to it any more. [2.] *Neither will I again smite any more every living thing*, that is, it was determined that whatever ruin God might bring upon particular persons, or families, or countries, he would never again destroy the whole world, till the day shall come when time shall be no more. But the reason of this resolve is very surprising, for it seems the same in effect with the reason given for the destruction of this world, ch. 6. 5. *Because the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*. But there is this difference; there it is said, *The imagination of man's heart is evil continually*, that is,

"His actual transgressions continually cry against him;" here it is said, *It is evil from his youth or childhood*. It is bred in the bone, he brought it into the world with him, he was shapen and conceived in it. Now, one would think, it should follow, "Therefore that guilty race shall be wholly extinguished, and *I will make a full end*." No: "Therefore I will no more take this severe method; for,

*First*, He is rather to be pitied, for it is all the effect of sin dwelling in him; and it is but what might be expected from such a degenerate race: he is called a *transgressor from the womb*, and therefore it is not strange that he deals so very treacherously," Isa. 48. 8. Thus God *remembers that he is flesh*, corrupt and sinful, Ps. 78. 39. *Secondly*, "He will be utterly ruined; for if he be dealt with according to his deserts, one flood must succeed another till all be destroyed." See here, 1. That outward judgments, though they may terrify and restrain men, yet cannot, of themselves, sanctify and renew them; the grace of God must work with those judgments. Man's nature was as sinful after the deluge as it had been before. That God's goodness

takes occasion from man's badness to magnify itself the more; his reasons of mercy are all drawn from himself, not from any thing in us.

(2.) That the course of nature should never be discontinued, v. 22, *While the earth remaineth*, and man upon it, there shall be *summer and winter*, not all winter as had been this last year; "*day and night*," not all night, as probably it was while the rain was descending. Here, [1.] It plainly intimated that this earth is not to remain always; it, and all the works in it, must shortly be burnt up; and we look for *new heavens and a new earth*, when all these things must be dissolved. But, [2.] As long as it does remain, God's providence will carefully preserve the regular succession of times and seasons, and cause each to know its place. To this we owe it, that the world stands, and the wheel of nature keeps its track. See here how changeable the times are, and yet how unchangeable. *First*, The course of nature always changing. As it is with the times, so it is with the events of time, they are subject to vicissitudes, *day and night, summer and winter*, counterchanged. In heaven and hell it is not so, but on earth *God hath set the one over against the other*. *Secondly*, Yet never changed; it is constant in this inconstancy; these seasons have never ceased, nor shall cease, while the sun continues such a steady measurer of time, and the moon such a *faithful witness in heaven*. This is *God's covenant of the day and of the night*, the stability of which is mentioned for the confirming of our faith in the covenant of grace, which is no less inviolable, Jer. 33. 20. We see God's promises to the *creatures* made good, and thence may infer that his promises to all *believers* shall be so.

## CHAP. IX.

Both the world and the church were now again reduced to a family, the family of Noah, of the affairs of which this chapter gives us an account, which we are the more concerned to take cognizance of, because from this family we are all descendants. Here is, I. The covenant of providence settled with Noah and his sons, v. 1.-11. In this covenant, 1. God promises them to take care of their lives, so that (1.) They should replenish the earth, v. 1, 7. (2.) They should be safe from the insults of the brute creatures, which should stand in awe of them, v. 2. (3.) They should be allowed to eat flesh for the support of their lives; only they must not eat blood, v. 3, 4. (4.) The world should never be drowned again, v. 8.-11. 2. God requires of them to take care of one another's lives, and of their own, v. 5, 6. II. The seal of that covenant, namely, the rainbow, v. 12.-17. III. A particular passage of a story concerning Noah and his sons, which occasioned some prophecies that related to after-times. 1. Noah's sin and shame, v. 20, 21. 2. Ham's impudence and impiety, v. 22. 3. The pious modesty of Shem and Japheth, v. 23. 4. The curse of Canaan, and the blessing of Shem and Japheth, v. 24.-27. IV. The age and death of Noah, v. 28, 29.

1. **AND** God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3. Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things: 4. But flesh with the life thereof, *which is the blood thereof*, shall ye not eat. 5. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the

hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man: 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man: 7. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

We read, in the close of the foregoing chapter, the very kind things which *the Lord said in his heart*, concerning the remnant of mankind which was now left to be the seed of a new world. Now here we have those kind things *spoken to them*; in general, *God blessed Noah and his sons*, v. 1, that is, he assured them of his good will to them, and his gracious intentions concerning them. This follows from what he *said in his heart*. Note, All God's promises of good flow from his purposes of love, and the counsels of his own will. See Eph. 1. 11.—3. 11, and compare Jer. 29. 11, *I know the thoughts that I think towards you*. We read, ch. 8. 20, how *Noah blessed God*, by his altar and sacrifice. Now here we find God blessing Noah. Note, 1. God will graciously bless (that is, do well for) them who sincerely bless (that is, speak well of) him. 2. These that are truly thankful for the mercies they have received, take the readiest way to have them confirmed and continued to them.

Now here we have the *Magna Charta*—the Great Charter of this new kingdom of nature which was now to be erected, and incorporated, the former charter having been forfeited and seized.

I. The grants of this charter are kind and gracious to men. Here is,

1. A grant of lands of vast extent, and a promise of a great increase of men to occupy and enjoy them. The first blessing is here renewed, *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*, v. 1, and repeated, v. 7, for the race of mankind was, as it were, to begin again. Now, (1.) God sets the whole earth before them, tells them it is all their own, *while it remains*, to them and their heirs. Note, The earth God has given to the children of men, for a possession and habitation, Ps. 115. 16. Though it is not a paradise, but a wilderness rather, yet it is better than we deserve. Blessed be God, it is not hell. (2.) He gives them a blessing, by the force and virtue of which, mankind should be both multiplied and perpetuated upon earth; so that, in a little time, all the habitable parts of the earth should be more or less inhabited; and though one generation should pass away, yet another generation should come, while the world stands, so that the stream of the human race should be supplied with a constant succession, and run parallel with the current of time, till both be delivered up together into the ocean of eternity. Though death should still reign, and the Lord would still be *known by his judgments*, yet the earth should never again be depopled as now it was, but still replenished, Acts 17. 24..26.

2. A grant of power over the inferior creatures, v. 2. He grants, (1.) A title to them. *Into your hands they are delivered*, for your use and benefit. (2.) A dominion over them, without which the title would avail little. *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast*. This revives a former grant, ch. 1. 28, only with this difference, that man in innocence ruled by love, fallen man rules by fear. Now this grant remains in force, and thus far we have still the benefit of it. [1.] That those creatures which are any way *useful to us*, are reclaimed, and we use them either for service, or food, or both, as they are capable. The horse and ox patiently submit to the bridle and

yoke, and the sheep is dumb both before the shearer, and before the butcher; for *the fear and dread of man* are upon them. [2.] These creatures that are any way *hurtful to us* are restrained, so that though now and then man may be hurt by some of them, yet they do not combine together to rise up in rebellion against man, else God could by these destroy the world as effectually as he did by a deluge; it is one of God's sore judgments, Ezek. 14. 21. What is it that keeps wolves out of our towns, and lions out of our streets, and confines them to the wilderness, but this fear and dread? Nay, some have been tamed, James 3. 7.

3. A grant of maintenance and subsistence, v. 3, *Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you*. Hitherto, most think, man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth, fruits, herbs, and roots, and all sorts of corn and milk; so was the first grant, ch. 1. 29. But the flood having perhaps washed away much of the virtue of the earth, and so rendered its fruits less pleasing, and less nourishing; God now enlarged the grant, and allowed man to eat flesh, which perhaps man himself never thought of, till now that God directed him to it, nor had any more desire to, than a sheep has to suck blood like a wolf. But now man is allowed to feed upon flesh, as freely and safely as upon the green herb. Now here see, (1.) That God is a good Master, and provides, not only that we may live, but that we may live comfortably, in his service; not for necessity only, but for delight. (2.) That every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, 1 Tim. 4. 4. Afterward, some meats that were proper enough for food, were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but from the beginning, it seems, it was not so, and therefore it is not so under the gospel.

II. The precepts and provisos of this charter are no less kind and gracious, and instances of God's good-will to man. The Jewish doctors speak so often of the seven precepts of Noah, or of the sons of Noah, which, they say, were to be observed by all nations, that it may not be amiss to set them down. The first against the worship of idols. The second against blasphemy, and requiring to bless the name of God. The third against murder. The fourth against incest and all uncleanness. The fifth against theft and rapine. The sixth requiring the administration of justice. The seventh against eating of flesh with the life. These the Jews required the observation of from the *proselytes of the gate*. But the precepts here given, all concern the life of man.

1. Man must not prejudice his own life by eating that food which is unwholesome and prejudicial to his health, v. 4, *Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof*, that is, "raw flesh, shall ye not eat, as the beasts of prey do." It was necessary to add this limitation to the grant of liberty to eat flesh, lest, instead of nourishing their bodies by it, they should destroy them. God would hereby show, (1.) That though they were lords of the creatures, yet they were subjects to the Creator, and under the restraint of his law. (2.) That they must not be greedy and hasty in taking their food, but stay the preparing of it; not like Saul's soldiers, 1 Sam. 14. 32, nor *riotous eaters of flesh*, Prov. 23. 20. (3.) That they must not be barbarous and cruel to the inferior creatures; they must be lords, but not Tyrants; they might kill them for their profit, but not torment them for their pleasure; nor tear away the member of a creature while it was yet alive, and eat that. (4.) That during the continuance of the law of sacrifices, in which the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11, (signifying that the life of the sacrifice was accepted for the life of the sinner,) blood must not be locked upon as

a common thing, but must be *poured out before the Lord*, 2 Sam. 23. 16, either upon his altar, or upon his earth. But now that the great and true sacrifice is offered, the obligation of the law ceases with the reason of it.

2. Man must not take away his own life, *v. 5, Your blood of your lives will I require*. Our lives are not so our own, as that we may quit them at our own pleasure, but they are God's, and we must resign them at his pleasure; if we any way hasten our own deaths, we are accountable to God for it.

3. The beasts must not be suffered to hurt the life of man; *at the hand of every beast will I require it*. To show how tender God was of the life of man, though he had lately made such destruction of lives, he will have the *beast* put to death, that kills a man. This was confirmed by the law of Moses, Exod. 21. 28, and I think it would not be unsafe to observe it still. Thus God showed his hatred of the sin of murder, that men might hate it the more, and not only punish, but prevent it. And see Job 5. 23.

4. Wilful murderers must be put to death. This is the sin which is here designed to be restrained by the terror of punishment. (1.) God will punish murderers. *At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man*; that is, "I will avenge the blood of the murdered upon the murderer," 2 Chron. 24. 22. When God requires the life of a man at the hand of him that took it away unjustly, the murderer cannot render that, and therefore must render his own in lieu of it, which is the only way left of making restitution. Note, The righteous God will certainly make inquisition for blood, though men cannot, or do not. One time or other, in this world or in the next, he will both discover concealed murders, which are hidden from man's eye, and punish avowed and justified murders, which are too great for man's hand. (2.) The magistrate must punish murderers, *v. 6, Whoso sheddeth man's blood*, whether upon a sudden provocation, or having premeditated it, (for rash anger is heart-murder as well as malice prepense, Matt. 5. 21, 22.) *by man shall his blood be shed*, that is, by the magistrate, or whoever is appointed or allowed to be the avenger of blood. There are these who are ministers of God for this purpose, to be a protection to the innocent, by being a terror to the malicious and evil-doers, and they must not *bear the sword in vain*, Rom. 13. 14. Before the flood, as it should seem by the story of Cain, God took the punishment of murder into his own hands; but now he committed this judgment to men, to masters of families at first, and afterwards, to the heads of countries, who ought to be faithful to the trust reposed in them. Note, Wilful murder ought always to be punished with death. It is a sin *which the Lord would not pardon* in a Prince, 2 Kings, 24. 3, 4, and which therefore a Prince should not pardon in a Subject. To this law there is a reason annexed; *for in the image of God made he man* at first: man is a creature dear to his Creator, and therefore ought to be so to us; God put honour upon him, let us not then put contempt upon him. Such remains of God's image are still even upon fallen man, as that he who unjustly kills a man, defaces the image of God, and does dishonour to him. When God allowed men to kill their *beasts*, yet he forbade them to kill their *slaves*; for these are of a much more noble and excellent nature, not only God's creatures, but his image, Jam. 3. 9. All men have something of the image of God upon them; but magistrates have, besides, the image of his power, and the saints the image of his holiness, and therefore those who shed the blood of princes or saints, incur a double guilt.

8. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9. And I, behold, I,

establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you: 10. And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth: 11. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

Here is,

1. The general establishment of God's covenant with this new world, and the extent of that covenant, *v. 9, 10*. Where observe, 1. That God is graciously pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant; wherein God greatly magnifies his condescending favour, and greatly encourages man's duty and obedience, as a reasonable and gainful service. 2. That all God's covenants with man are of his own making, *I, behold, I*. It is thus expressed, both to raise our admiration, ("Behold, and wonder, that though God be high, yet he has this respect to man,") and to confirm our assurances of the validity of the covenant. "Behold, and see, I make it; I that am faithful, and able to make it good." 3. That God's covenants are established firmer than the pillars of heaven, or the foundations of the earth, and cannot be disannulled. 4. That God's covenants are made with the covenanters and with their seed; the promise is to them and their children. 5. That those may be taken into covenant with God, and receive the benefits of it, who yet are not capable of restituting, or giving their own consent. For this covenant is made with *every living creature, every beast of the earth*.

II. The particular intention of this covenant; it was designed to secure the world from another deluge, *v. 11, There shall not any more be a flood*. God had drowned the world once, and, still it is as filthy and provoking as ever, and God foresaw the wickedness of it, and yet promised he would never drown it any more; for he deals not with us according to our sins. It is owing to God's goodness and faithfulness, not to any reformation of the world, that it has not often been deluged, and that it is not deluged now. As the old world was ruined, to be a monument of justice, so this world remains to this day, a monument of mercy, according to the oath of God, that the *waters of Noah should no more return to cover the earth*, Isa. 54. 9. This promise of God keeps the sea and clouds in their decreed place, and *sets them gates and bars; hitherto they shall come*, Job 38. 10, 11. If the sea should flow but for a few days, as it does twice every day for a few hours, what desolation would it make! And how destructive would the clouds be, if such showers as we have sometimes seen, were continued long! But God, by flowing seas, and sweeping rains, shows what he could do in wrath; and yet, by preserving the earth from being deluged between both, shows what he can do in mercy, and will do in truth. Let us give him the glory of his mercy in promising, and truth in performing. This promise does not hinder, 1. But that God may bring other wasting judgments upon mankind; for though he has here bound himself not to use this arrow any more, yet he has other arrows in his quiver. 2. Not but that he may destroy particular places and countries by the inundations of the sea or rivers. 3. Nor will the destruction of the world at the last day by fire, be any breach of his promise. Sin that drowned the old world, will burn this.

12. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and

you and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations: 13. I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. 14. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15. And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth. 17. And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

Articles of agreement among men are *sealed*, that the covenants may be the more solemn, and the performances of the covenants the more sure, to mutual satisfaction; God therefore being willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his councils, has confirmed his covenant by a *seal*, (Heb. 6. 17.) which makes the foundations we build on, stand sure, 2 Tim. 2. 19. The seal of this covenant of nature was natural enough; it was the *rainbow*, which, it is likely, was seen in the clouds before, when second causes concurred, but was never a seal of the covenant, till now that it was made so by a divine institution. Now concerning this seal of the covenant, Observe,

1. This seal is affixed with repeated assurances of the truth of that promise which it was designed to be the ratification of. *I set my bow in the cloud*, (v. 13.) *it shall be seen in the cloud*, (v. 14.) that the eye may affect the heart, and confirm the faith; and it shall be the *token of the covenant* (v. 12, 13.); and *I will remember my covenant, that the waters shall no more become a flood*, v. 15. Nay, as if the Eternal Mind needed a memorandum, *I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant*, v. 16. Thus here is line upon line, that we might have a sure and strong consolation, who have laid hold on this hope. 2. The rainbow appears then when the clouds are most disposed to wet, and returns after the rain; then when we have most reason to fear the rain prevailing, God shows this seal of the promise that it shall not prevail. Thus God obviates our fears with such encouragements as are both suitable and seasonable. 3. The thicker the cloud, the brighter the bow in the cloud. Thus as threatening afflictions abound, encouraging consolations much *more* abound, 2 Cor. 1. 5. 4. The rainbow appears when one part of the sky is clear, which intimates mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; and the clouds are hemmed as it were with the rainbow, that it may not overspread the heavens; for the bow is coloured rain, or the edges of a cloud gilded. 5. The rainbow is the reflection of the beams of the sun, which intimates that all the glory and significance of the seals of the covenant are derived from Christ the Sun of righteousness, who is also described with a *rainbow about his throne* (Rev. 4. 3.) and a *rainbow upon his head* (Rev. 10. 1.); which bespeaks not only his majesty, but his mediatorship. 6. The rainbow has fiery colours in it, to signify, that though God will not again drown the world, yet when the mystery of God shall be finished, the world shall be consumed by fire. 7.

A bow bespeaks terror, but it has neither string nor arrow, as the bow ordained against the persecutors has; (Ps. 7. 12, 13.) and a bow alone will do little execution; it is a bow, but it is directed upward, not toward the earth; for the seals of the covenant were intended for comfort, not to terrify. *Lastly*, As God looks upon the bow, that he may remember the covenant, so should we, that we also may be ever mindful of the covenant, with faith and thankfulness.

18. And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham *is* the father of Canaan. 19. These *are* the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread. 20. And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. 23. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

Here is,

I. Noah's family and employment. The names of his sons are again mentioned, (v. 18, 19.) as those from whom the whole earth was overspread. By which it appears that Noah, after the flood, had no more children: all the world came from these three. Note, God, when he pleases, can make a *little one to become a thousand*, and greatly increase the latter end of those whose beginning was small. Such are the power and efficacy of a divine blessing. The business Noah applied himself to, was that of a *husbandman*, Hebr. a *man of the earth*, that is, a man dealing in the earth, that kept ground in his hand, and occupied it. We are all naturally men of the earth, made of it, living on it, and hastening to it: many are *sinfully* so, addicted to earthly things. Noah was led by his calling to trade in the fruits of the earth. He *began to be a husbandman*; that is, some time after his departure out of the ark, he returned to his old employment, from which he had been diverted by the building of the ark first, and, probably, afterward, by the building of a house on dry-land for himself and family. For this good while he had been a carpenter, but now he began again to be a husbandman. Observe, Though Noah was a great man, and a good man, an old man, and a rich man, a man greatly favoured by Heaven, and honoured on earth, yet he would not live an idle life, nor think the husbandman's calling below him. Note, Though God by his providence may take us off from our callings for a time, yet when the occasion is over, we ought with humility and industry to apply ourselves to them again; and in the calling wherein we are called, therein faithfully to *abide with God*, 1 Cor. 7. 24.

II. Noah's sin and shame. He *planted a vineyard*; and when he had gathered his vintage probably, he appointed a day of mirth and feasting in his family, and had his sons and their children with him, to rejoice with him in the increase of his house, as well as in the increase of his vineyard; and we may suppose he prefaced his feast with a sacrifice to the honour of God. If that was omitted, at was just with God to leave him to himself, that he who did not begin with God, might end with the beasts;

but we charitably hope the case was different. And perhaps he appointed this feast, with a design, at the close of it, to bless his sons, as *Isaac, ch. 27. 3, 4, That I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee*. At this feast, he *drank of the wine*; for who planteth a vineyard, and *eateth not of the fruit of it?* But he drank too liberally, more than his head at this age would bear; for he was *drunken*. We have reason to think he was never drunken before or after; observe how he came now to be overtaken in this fault. It was his sin, and a great sin, so much the worse for its being so soon after a great deliverance; but God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, (2 Chron. 32. 31.) and has left this miscarriage of his upon record, to teach us, 1. That the fairest copy that ever mere man wrote since the fall, had its blots and false strokes. It was said of Noah, that he was *perfect in his generations* (ch. 6. 9.); but this shows that it is meant of sincerity, not a sinless perfection. 2. That sometimes those, who, with watchfulness and resolution, have by the grace of God, kept their integrity in the midst of temptation, have, through security, and carelessness, and neglect of the grace of God, been surprised into sin, when the hour of temptation has been over. Noah, who had kept sober in drunken company, is now drunken in sober company. *Let him that thinks he stands take heed*. 3. That we have need to be very careful when we use God's good creatures plentifully, lest we use them to excess. Christ's disciples must take heed, lest at any time *their hearts be overcharged*, Luke 21. 34.

Now the consequence of Noah's sin was *shame*. He was *uncovered within his tent*, made naked to his shame, as Adam when he had eaten forbidden fruit. Yet Adam sought concealment; Noah is so destitute of thought and reason, that he seeks no covering. This was a fruit of the vine, that Noah did not think of. Observe here the great evil of the sin of drunkenness. (1.) It *discovers* men; what infirmities they have, they betray when they are drunken, and what secrets they are intrusted with, are then easily got out of them. Drunken porters keep open gates. (2.) It *disgraces* men, and exposes them to contempt. As it shows them, so it shames them. Men say and do that when drunken, which, when they are sober, they would blush at the thoughts of, Hab. 2. 15, 16.

III. Ham's impudence and impiety: (v. 22.) he *saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren*. To see it accidentally and involuntarily, would not have been a crime; but, 1. He pleased himself with the sight, *as the Edomites looked upon the day of their brother*, (Obad. 12.) pleased and insulting. Perhaps Ham had sometimes been himself drunken, and reproved for it by his good father, whom he was therefore pleased to see thus overcome. Note, It is common for those who walk in false ways themselves, to rejoice at the false steps which they sometimes see others make. But charity rejoices not in iniquity, nor can true penitents, that are sorry for their own sins, rejoice in the sins of others. 2. He *told his two brethren without*, (in the street, as the word is,) in a scornful deriding manner, that his father might seem vile unto them. It is very wrong, (1.) To make a jest of sin, (Prov. 14. 9.) and to be puffed up with that for which we should rather mourn, 1 Cor. 5. 2. And (2.) To publish the faults of any, especially of parents, whom it is our duty to honour. Noah was not only a good man; but had been a good father to him; and this was a most base disingenuous requital to him for his tenderness. Ham is here called the *father of Canaan*, which intimates that he who was himself a father, should have been more respectful to him that was his father.

IV. The pious care of Shem and Japheth to cover their poor father's shame, v. 23. They not only

would not see it themselves, but provided that no one else might see it; herein setting us an example of charity with reference to other men's sin and shame; we must not only not say, *A confederacy*, with those that proclaim it, but we must be careful to conceal it, or however to make the best of it, so doing as we would be done by. 1. There is a mantle of love to be thrown over the faults of all. 1 Pet. 4. 8. Beside that, there is a robe of reverence to be thrown over the faults of parents and other superiors.

24. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. 25. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. 26. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. 27. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.

Here,

I. Noah comes to himself, He *awoke from his wine*; sleep cured him, and, we may suppose, so cured him, that he never relapsed into that sin afterward. Those that sleep as Noah did, should awake as he did, and not as that drunkard, Prov. 23. 35. who says when he awakes, *I will seek it yet again*.

II. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and, like dying Jacob, he tells his sons what should befall them, ch. 49. 1. v. 25.

1. He pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham, in whom Ham is himself cursed; either, because this son of his was now more guilty than the rest, or, because the posterity of this son was afterward to be rooted out of their land, to make room for Israel. And Moses here records it for the animating of Israel in the wars of Canaan; though the Canaanites were a *formidable* people, yet they were of old an accursed people, and doomed to ruin. The particular curse is, *a servant of servants*, that is, the meanest and most despicable servant, *shall he be*, even to his brethren. These who by birth were his equals, shall by conquest be his lords. This certainly points at the victories obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were all either put to the sword, or put under tribute, (Josh. 9. 23. Judg. 1. 28, 30, 33, 35.) which happened not till about 800 years after this. Note, (1.) God often visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially when the children inherit their fathers' wicked dispositions, and imitate the father's wicked practices, and do nothing to cut off the entail of a curse. (2.) Disgrace is justly put upon those that put disgrace upon others, especially that dishonour and grieve their own parents. An undutiful child that mocks at his parents, is *no more worthy to be called a son*, but deserves to be *made as a hired servant*, nay as a *servant of servants*, among his brethren. (3.) Though divine curses operate slowly, yet, first or last, they will take effect. The Canaanites were under a curse of slavery, and yet, for a great while, had the dominion; for a family, a people, a person, may lie under the curse of God, and yet may long prosper in the world, till the measure of their iniquity, like that of the Canaanites, be full. Many are marked for ruin, that are not yet ripe for ruin. Therefore, *Let not thine heart envy sinners*.

2. He entails a blessing upon Shem and Japheth.

(1.) He blesses Shem, or, rather blesses God for him, yet so that it entitles him to the greatest honour and happiness imaginable. v. 26. Observe,

[1.] He calls the Lord, *the God of Shem*; and happy, *thrice happy is that people whose God is the Lord*, Ps. 144. 15. All blessings are included in this. This was the blessing conferred on Abraham and his seed; the God of Heaven was *not ashamed to be called their God*, Heb. 11. 16. Shem is sufficiently recompensed for his respect to his father by this, that the Lord himself puts his honour upon him, *to be his God*, which is a sufficient recompense for all our services and all our sufferings for his name. [2.] He gives to God the glory of that good work which Shem had done, and, instead of blessing and praising him that was the instrument, he blesses and praises God that was the Author. Note, The glory of all that is at any time well done by ourselves or others, must be humbly and thankfully transmitted to God, who works all our good works in us and for us. When we see men's good works, we should glorify, not them, but *our Father*, Matt. 5. 16. Thus David, in effect, blessed Abigail, when he *blessed God* that sent her, 1 Sam. 25. 32, 33, for it is an honour and favour to be employed for God, and used by him in doing good. [3.] He foresees and foretels, that God's gracious dealings with Shem and his family, would be such as would evidence to all the world that he was the God of Shem, on which behalf thanksgivings would by many be rendered to him. *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem*. [4.] It is intimated that the church should be built up and continued in the posterity of Shem; for of him came the Jews, who were, for a great while, the only professing people God had in the world. [5.] Some think reference is here had to Christ, who was the Lord God that in his human nature, should descend from the loins of Shem; for of him, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. [6.] Canaan is particularly enslaved to him; *He shall be his servant*. Note, Those that have the Lord for their God, shall have as much of the honour and power of this world as he sees good for them.

(2.) He blesses Japheth, and, in him, *the isles of the Gentiles*, which were peopled by his seed, v. 27, *God shall enlarge Japheth, and he will dwell in the tents of Shem*. Now,

[1.] Some make this to belong wholly to Japheth, and to bespeak either, *First*, His outward prosperity, that his seed should be so numerous, and so victorious, that they should be masters of the tents of Shem; which was fulfilled, when the people of the Jews, the most eminent of Shem's race, were tributaries to the Grecians first, and afterward to the Romans, both of Japheth's seed. Note, Outward prosperity is no infallible mark of the true church; the tents of Shem are not always the tents of the conqueror. Or, *Secondly*, It bespeaks the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church; and then we would read it, *God shall persuade Japheth*, (for so the word signifies,) and then, being so persuaded, *he shall dwell in the tents of Shem*, that is, Jews and Gentiles shall be united together in the gospel-fold; after many of the Gentiles shall have been proselyted to the Jewish religion, both shall be one in Christ, Eph. 2. 14, 15. And the christian church, mostly made up of the Gentiles, shall succeed the Jews in the privileges of church-membership; the latter having first cast themselves out by their unbelief, the Gentiles shall dwell in their tents, Rom. 11. 11, &c. Note, It is God only that can bring those again into the church, who have separated themselves from it. It is the power of God that makes the gospel of Christ effectual to salvation, Rom. 1. 16. And again, Souls are brought into the church, not by force, but by persuasion, Ps. 110. 3. They are drawn by the cords of a man, and persuaded by reason to be religious.

[.] Others divide this between Japheth and

Shem, Shem having not been directly blessed, v. 26. *First*, Japheth has the blessing of earth beneath; *God shall enlarge Japheth*, enlarge his seed, enlarge his border; Japheth's posterity peopled all Europe, a great part of Asia, and perhaps America. Note, God is to be acknowledged in all our enlargements. It is he that enlarges the coast, and enlarges the heart. And again, Many dwell in large tents, that do not dwell in God's tents, as Japheth did. *Secondly*, Shem has the blessing of Heaven above: *He shall*, that is, God shall, *dwell in the tents of Shem*, that is, "From his loins Christ shall come, and in his seed the church shall be continued." The birth-right was now to be divided between Shem and Japheth, Ham being utterly discarded; in the principality they equally share, Canaan shall be servant to both; the double portion is given to Japheth, whom God shall enlarge; but the priesthood was given to Shem, for *God shall dwell in the tents of Shem*; and certainly we are more happy, if we have God dwelling in our tents, than if we had there all the silver and gold in the world. It is better to dwell in tents with God than in palaces without him; in Salem, where is God's tabernacle, there is more satisfaction than in all the *isles of the Gentiles*. *Thirdly*, They both have dominion over Canaan; *Canaan shall be servant to them*; so some read it. When Japheth joins with Shem, Canaan falls before them both. When strangers become friends, enemies become servants.

28. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. 29. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died.

Here see, 1. How God prolonged the life of Noah; he lived 950 years; 20 more than Adam, and but 19 less than Methuselah; this long life was a further reward of his signal piety, and a great blessing to the world, to which, no doubt, he continued a *preacher of righteousness*, with this advantage, that now all he preached to, were his own children. 2. How God put a period to his life at last; though he lived long, yet he died, having, probably, first seen many that descended from him, dead before him. Noah lived to see two worlds, but being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died, he went to see a better than either.

## CHAP. X.

This chapter shows more particularly what was said in general, ch. 9. 19, concerning the three sons of Noah, that of them was *the whole earth overspread*; and the fruit of that blessing, ch. 9. 1, 7, *replenish the earth*. It is the only certain account extant of the original of nations; and yet perhaps there is no nation but that of the Jews, that can be confident from which of these 70 fountains (for so many there are here) it derives its streams. Through the want of early records, the mixtures of people, the revolutions of nations, and distance of time—the knowledge of the lineal descent of the present inhabitants of the earth is lost; nor were any genealogies preserved but those of the Jews, for the sake of the Messiah; only in this chapter, we have a brief account, I. Of the posterity of Japheth, v. 2. . . 5. II. The posterity of Ham, v. 6. . . 20. and in that particular notice taken of Nimrod, v. 8. . . 10. III. The posterity of Shem, v. 21. . . 31.

1. **N**OW these are the generations of the sons of Noah; Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood. 2. The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 3. And the sons of Gomer; Ashkenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah. 4. And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim,



and Dolanim. 5. By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Moses begins with Japheth's family; either because he was the eldest, or, because his family lay remotest from Israel, and had least concern with them, at the time when Moses wrote; and therefore he mentions that race very briefly; hastening to give account of the posterity of Ham, who were Israel's enemies, and of Shem, who were Israel's ancestors: for it is the church that the scripture is designed to be the history of, and of the nations of the world, only as they were some way or other related to Israel, and interested in the affairs of Israel. Observe, 1. Notice is taken that the sons of Noah had sons born to them after the flood, to repair and rebuild the world of mankind which the flood had ruined. He that had killed, now makes alive. 2. The prosperity of Japheth were allotted to the isles of the Gentiles, (v. 5.) which were, solemnly, by lot, after a survey, divided among them, and, probably, this island of our's among the rest; all places beyond the sea from Judea, are called *isles*, Jer. 25. 22. and this directs us to understand that promise, Isa. 42. 4, *the isles shall wait for his law*, of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ.

6. And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut, and Canaan. 7. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabtah, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Shebah, and Dedan. 8. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. 9. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. 10. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, 12. And Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city. 13. And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Ananim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim, 14. And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (out of whom came Philistim,) and Caphtorim.

That which is observable and improvable in these verses, is, the account here given of *Nimrod*, v. 8. 11. He is here represented as a great man in his day. *He began to be a mighty one in the earth*, that is, whereas those that went before him, were content to stand upon the same level with their neighbours, and though every man bore rule in his own house, yet no man pretended any further; Nimrod's aspiring mind could not rest here; he was resolved to tower above his neighbours, and not only so, but to lord it over them. The same spirit that actuated the giants before the flood, (who became *mighty men, and men of renown*, ch. 6. 4.) now revived in him; so soon was that tremendous judgment which the pride and tyranny of those mighty men brought upon the world, forgotten. Note, there are some, in whom ambition and affectation of dominion seem to be bred in the bone; such there have been, and will be, notwithstanding the wrath of God often revealed from heaven against them. Nothing on this side hell, will humble and break the proud spirits of

some men, in this, like Lucifer, Isa. 14. 14, 15. Now,

I. Nimrod was a *great hunter*; this he began with, and for this, became famous to a proverb. Every great hunter is, in remembrance of him, called a *Nimrod*. 1. Some think he did good with his hunting, served his country by ridding it of the wild beasts which infested it, and so insinuated himself into the affections of his neighbours, and got to be their prince: those that exercise authority, either are, or at least, would be called, *benefactors*, Luke 22. 25. 2. Others think that under pretence of hunting, he gathered men under his command, in pursuit of another game he had to play, which was to make himself master of the country, and to bring them into subjection. He was a *mighty hunter*, that is, He was a violent invader of his neighbour's rights and properties, and a persecutor of innocent men, carrying all before him, and endeavouring to make all his own by force and violence. He thought himself a mighty prince, but *before the Lord*, that is in God's account, he was but a *mighty hunter*. Note, Great conquerors are but great hunters. Alexander and Cesar would not make such a figure in scripture history as they do in common history; the former is represented in prophecy but as a he-goat pushing, Dan. 8. 5. Nimrod was a mighty hunter against the Lord, so the LXX; that is, (1.) He set up idolatry, as Jeroboam did, for the confirming of his usurped dominion: that he might set up a new government, he set up a new religion upon the ruin of the primitive constitution of both: *Babel was the mother of harlots*. Or, (2.) He carried on his oppression and violence, in defiance of God himself; daring Heaven with his impieties, as if he and his huntsmen could outbrave the Almighty, and were a match for the Lord of Hosts and all his armies: *As if it were a small thing to weary men, he thinks to weary my God also*, Isa. 7. 13.

II. Nimrod was a great ruler, v. 10. *The beginning of his kingdom was Babel*. Some way or other, by arts or arms, he got into power, either chosen to it, or forcing his way to it; and so laid the foundations of a monarchy, which was afterward a head of gold, and the terror of the mighty, and bid fair to be universal. It does not appear that he had any right to rule by birth; but either his fitness for government recommended him, as some think, to an election; or, by power and policy, he advanced gradually, and perhaps insensibly, into the throne. See the antiquity of civil government, and particularly that form of it, which lodges the sovereignty in a single person. If Nimrod and his neighbours began, other nations soon learned, to incorporate under one head for their common safety and welfare, which, however it began, proved so great a blessing to the world, that things were reckoned to go ill indeed when there was no king in Israel.

III. Nimrod was a great builder; probably he was architect in the building of Babel, and there he began his kingdom; but when his project to rule all the sons of Noah was baffled by the confusion of tongues, *out of that land he went forth into Assyria* (so the margin reads it, v. 11.) and built *Nineveh*, &c. that having built these cities, he might command them, and rule over them. Observe in Nimrod the nature of ambition: 1. It is *boundless*; much would have more, and still cries, *Give, give*. 2. It is *restless*; Nimrod, when he had four cities under his command, could not be content till he had four more. 3. It is *expensive*; Nimrod will rather be at the charge of rearing cities than not have the honour of ruling them. The spirit of building is the common effect of a spirit of pride. 4. It is *daring*, and will stick at nothing; Nimrod's name signifies *rebellion*, which (if indeed he did abuse his power to the oppression of his neighbours) teaches us

that tyrants to men are rebels to God, and their rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.

15. And Canaan begat Sidon his first-born, and Heth, 16. And the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, 17. And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Simite, 18. And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite: and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. 19. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest unto Sodom and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, and even unto Lasha. 20. These are the sons of Ham, after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

Observe here, 1. That the account of the posterity of Canaan, of the families and nations that descended from him, and of the land they possessed, is more particular than of any other in this chapter; because these were the nations that were to be subdued before Israel, and their land was, in process of time, to become the *holy land, Immanuel's land*; and this God had an eye to, when, in the mean time he cast the lot of that accursed devoted race in that spot of ground which he had spied out for his own people; this Moses takes notice of, Deut. 32. 8, *When the most high divided to the nations their inheritance, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.* 2. That by this account it appears that the posterity of Canaan were both numerous and rich, and very pleasantly seated; and yet Canaan was under a curse, a divine curse, and not a curse causeless. Note, Those that are under the curse of God, may yet perhaps thrive and prosper greatly in this world; for we cannot know love or hatred, the blessing or the curse, by what is *before* us, but by what is *within* us, Eccl. 9. 1. The curse of God always works really, and always terribly; but perhaps it is a *secret* curse, a curse to the soul, and does not work visibly; or a *slow* curse, and does not work immediately; but sinners are by it reserved for, and bound over to, a day of wrath. Canaan here has a better land than either Shem or Japheth, and yet *they* have a better lot, for they inherit the blessing.

21. Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were *children* born. 22. The children of Shem; Elam and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram. 23. And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash. 24. And Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber. 25. And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. 26. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, 27. And Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah, 28. And Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 29. And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all these were the sons of Joktan. 30. And their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sepher a mount of the east. 31. These are the sons of

Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. 32. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

Two things especially are observable in this account of the posterity of Shem.

I. The description of Shem, v. 21. We have not only his name, *Shem*, which signifies a *name*, but two titles to distinguish him by.

1. He was the *father of all the children of Eber*: Eber was his great-grandson; but why should he be called the father of all *his* children, rather than of all Arphaxad's, or Salah's, &c.? Probably, because Abraham and his seed, God's covenant-people, not only descended from Heber, but from him were called *Hebrews*, ch. 14. 13, *Abraham the Hebrew*. St. Paul looked upon it as his privilege, that he was a *Hebrew of the Hebrews*, Phil. 3. 5. Eber himself, we may suppose, was a man eminent for religion in a time of general apostasy, and a great example of piety to his family; and the holy tongue being commonly called from him the *Hebrew*, it is probable that he retained it in his family, in the confusion of Babel, as a special token of God's favour to him; and from him the professors of religion were called the *children of Eber*; now, when the inspired penman would give them an honourable title, he calls him the *father of the Hebrews*; though, when Moses wrote this, they were a poor despised people, bond-slaves in Egypt, yet, being God's people, it was an honour to a man to be akin to them. As Ham, though he had many sons, is disowned by being called the *father of Canaan*, on whose seed the curse was entailed, ch. 9. 22, so Shem, though he had many sons, is dignified with the title of the *father of Eber*, on whose seed the blessing was entailed. Note, A family of saints is more truly honourable than a family of nobles; Shem's *holy* seed than Ham's *royal* seed, Jacob's twelve *patriarchs* than Ishmael's twelve *princes*, ch. 17. 20. Goodness is true greatness.

2. He was the *brother of Japheth the elder*, by which it appears that though Shem is commonly put first, yet he was not Noah's first-born, but Japheth was older. But why should this also be put as part of Shem's title and description, that he was the *brother of Japheth*, since that had been, in effect, said often before? And was he not as much brother to Ham? Probably, this was intended to signify the union of the Gentiles with the Jews in the church. He had mentioned it as Shem's honour, that he was the father of the Hebrews; but lest Japheth's seed should therefore be looked upon as for ever shut out from the church, he here reminds us that he was the *brother of Japheth*, not in birth only, but in blessing, for *Japheth was to dwell in the tents of Shem*. Note, (1.) These are brethren in the best manner, that are so by grace, and that meet in the covenant of God, and in the communion of saints. (2.) God, in dispensing his grace, does not go by seniority, but the younger sometimes gets the start of the elder in coming into the church; so the last shall be first, and the first last.

II. The reason of the name of Peleg, v. 25, because in *his days*, (that is about the time of his birth, when his name was given him,) was the *earth divided* among the children of men that were to inhabit it; either, when Noah divided it by an orderly distribution of it, as Joshua divided the land of Canaan by lot, or when, upon their refusal to comply with that division, God, in justice, divided them by the confusion of tongues; whichsoever of these was the occasion, pious Heber saw cause to perpetuate

the remembrance of it in the name of his son; and justly may our sons be called by the same name, for in our days, in another sense, is the earth, the church, most wretchedly divided.

## CHAP. XI.

The old distinction between the sons of God, and the sons of men, (professors and profane,) survived the flood, and now appeared again, when men began to multiply: according to this distinction, we have, in this chapter, I. The dispersion of the sons of men at Babel, v. 1. .9, where we have, 1. Their presumptuous provoking design, which was, to build a city and a tower, v. 1. .4. 2. The righteous judgment of God upon them in disappointing their design, by confounding their language, and so scattering them, v. 5. .9. II. The pedigree of the sons of God down to Abraham, v. 10. .26, with a general account of his family, and removal out of his native country, v. 27. .32.

1. **AND** the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. 2. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. 3. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. 4. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

The close of the foregoing chapter tells us, that by the sons of Noah, or, among the sons of Noah, the nations were divided in the earth after the flood, that is, were distinguished into several tribes or colonies; and the places they had hitherto lived in together being grown too straight for them, it was either appointed by Noah, or agreed upon among his sons, which way each several tribe or colony should steer its course, beginning with the countries that were next them, and designing to proceed further and further, and to remove to a greater distance from each other, as the increase of their several companies should require. Thus was the matter well settled, one hundred years after the flood, about the time of Peleg's birth: but the sons of men, it should seem, were loath to scatter into distant places; they thought, the more the merrier, and the safer, and therefore they contrived to keep together, and were slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of their fathers had given them, Josh. 18. 3, thinking themselves wiser than either God or Noah. Now here we have,

I. The advantages which befriended their design of keeping together. 1. They were all of one language, v. 1. If there were any different languages before the flood, yet Noah's only, which, it is likely, was the same with Adam's, was preserved through the flood, and continued after it. Now, while they all understood one another, they would be the more likely to love one another, and the more capable of helping one another, and the less inclinable to separate one from another. 2. They found a very convenient commodious place to settle in, v. 2, a plain in the land of Shinar, a spacious plain, and able to contain them all, a fruitful plain, and able, according as their present numbers were, to support them all; though perhaps they had not considered what room there would be for them when their numbers should be increased. Note, Inviting accommodations, for the present, often prove too strong temptations to the neglect of both duty and interest, as it respects futurity.

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II. The method they took to bind themselves to one another, and to settle together in one body. Instead of coveting to enlarge their borders by a peaceable departure under the divine protection, they contrived to fortify them, and as those that were resolved to wage war with heaven, they put themselves into a posture of defence. Their unanimous resolution is, let us build a city and a tower. It is observable, that the first builders of cities, both in the old world, ch. 4. 17, and in the new world here, were not men of the best character and reputation: tents served God's subjects to dwell in, cities were first built by those that were rebels against him, and revolvers from him. Observe here,

1. How they excited and encouraged one another to set about this work. They said, Go to, let us make brick, v. 3, and again v. 4, Go to, let us build us a city; by mutual excitements they made one another more daring and resolute. Note, Great things may be brought to pass, when the undertakers are numerous and unanimous, and stir up one another to it. Let us learn to provoke one another to love and to good works, as sinners stir up and encourage one another to wicked works. See Ps. 122. 1. Isa. 2. 3, 5. Jer. 50. 5.

2. What materials they used in their building. The country being plain, yielded neither stone nor mortar, yet that did not discourage them from their undertaking, but they made brick to serve instead of stone, and slime or pitch instead of mortar. See here, (1.) What shift these will make, that are resolute in their purposes: were we but thus zealously affected in a good thing, we should not stop our work so often as we do, under pretence that we want conveniences for carrying it on. (2.) What a difference there is between men's building and God's; when men build their Babel, brick and slime are their best materials; but when God builds his Jerusalem, he lays even the foundations of it with sapphires, and all its borders with pleasant stones, Isa. 54. 11. 12. Rev. 21. 19.

3. For what ends they built. Some think they intended hereby to secure themselves against the waters of another flood. God had told them indeed he would not again drown the world; but they would trust to a tower of their own making, rather than to a promise of God's making, or an ark of his appointing: if, however, they had had this in their eye, they would have chosen to build their tower upon a mountain, rather than upon a plain; but three things, it seems, they aimed at in building this tower.

(1.) It seems designed for an affront to God himself; for they would build a tower, whose top might reach to heaven, which bespeaks a defiance of God, or at least a rivalry with him; they will be like the Most High, or come as near him as they can, not in holiness, but in height. They forget their place, and, scorning to creep on the earth, resolve to climb to heaven, not by the door, or ladder, but some other way.

(2.) They hoped hereby to make them a name; they would do something to be talked of now, and to give posterity to know that there had been such men as they in the world; rather than die and leave no memorandum behind them, they would leave this monument of their pride, and ambition, and folly. Note, [1.] Affectation of honour, and a name among men, inspires with a strange ardour for great and difficult undertakings, and often betrays to that which is evil, and offensive to God. [2.] It is just with God to bury those names in the dust, which are raised by sin. These Babel-builders put themselves to a great deal of foolish expense, to make them a name; but they could not gain even this point, for we do not find in any history the name of so much as one of these Babel-builders; Philo Ju

Jesus says, They engraved every one his name upon a brick, *in perpetuum rei memoriam*—as a *perpetual memorial*; yet neither did that serve their purpose.

(3.) They did it to prevent their dispersion; *lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth.* "It was done," (says Josephus,) "in disobedience to that command, *ch. 9. 1, Replenish the earth.*" God orders them to scatter; "No," say they, "we will not, we will live and die together." In order herunto, they engage themselves, and one another, in this vast undertaking. That they might unite in one glorious empire, they resolve to build this city and tower, to be the metropolis of their kingdom, and the centre of their unity. It is probable that the hand of ambitious Nimrod was in all this: he could not content himself with the command of a particular colony, but aimed at universal monarchy; in order to which, under pretence of uniting for their common safety, he contrives to keep them in one body, that, having them all under his eye, he might not fail to have them under his power. See the daring presumption of these sinners: here is, [1.] A bold opposition to God; "You shall be scattered," says God; "But we will not," say they; *Woe unto him that thus strives with his maker.* [2.] A bold competition with God. It is God's prerogative to be universal Monarch, Lord of all, and King of kings; the man that aims at it, offers to step into the throne of God, who will not give his glory to another.

5. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. 6. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. 7. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

We have here the quashing of the project of the Babel-builders, and the turning of the counsel of those froward men headlong, that God's counsel might stand, in spite of them. Here is,

I. The cognizance that God took of the design that was on foot, *v. 5, The Lord came down to see the city*: it is an expression after the manner of men; he knew it as clearly and fully as men know that which they come to the place to view. Observe, 1. Before he gave judgment upon their cause, he inquired into it; for God is incontestably just and fair in all his proceedings against sin and sinners, and condemns none unheard. 2. It is spoken of as an act of condescension in God, to take notice even of this building, which the undertakers were so proud of; for he humbles himself to behold the transactions, even the most considerable ones, of this lower world, *Ps. 115. 6.* 3. It is said to be *the tower which the children of men build*; which intimates, (1.) Their weakness and frailty as men: it was a very foolish thing for the children of men, worms of the earth, to defy Heaven, and to provoke

the Lord to jealousy: *Are they stronger than he?* (2.) Their sinfulness and obnoxiousness: they were the sons of Adam, so it is in the Hebrew; nay, of that Adam, that sinful disobedient Adam, whose children are by nature children of disobedience, children that are corrupters. (3.) Their distinction from *the children of God*, the professors of religion, from whom these daring builders had separated themselves, and built this tower to support and perpetuate the separation. Pious Eber is not found among this ungodly crew; for he and his are called *the children of God*, and therefore their souls *come not into the secret, nor unite themselves to the assembly, of these children of men.*

II. The counsels and resolves of the Eternal God concerning this matter; he did not come down merely as a spectator, but as a Judge, as a Prince, to *look upon these proud men, and abase them*, *Job 40. 11...14.*

Observe, 1. He suffered them to proceed a good way in their enterprise, before he put a stop to it; that they might have space to repent, and, if they had so much consideration left, might be ashamed of it, and weary of it, themselves; and if not, that their disappointment might be the more shameful, and every one that passed by, might laugh at them, saying, *These men began to build, and were not able to finish*; that so the works of their hands, from which they promised themselves immortal honour, might turn to their perpetual reproach. Note, God has wise and holy ends in permitting the enemies of his glory to carry on their impious projects a great way, and to prosper long in their enterprises.

2. When they had, with much care and toil, made some considerable progress in their building, then God determined to break their measures, and disperse them.

Observe, (1.) The righteousness of God, which appears in the considerations upon which he proceeded in this resolution, *v. 6.* Two things he considered, [1.] Their *oneness*, as a reason why they must be scattered: "*Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language*; if they continue one, much of the earth will be left uninhabited; the power of their prince will soon be exorbitant; wickedness and profaneness will be insufferably rampant, for they will strengthen one another's hands in it; and, which is worst of all, they will be an overbalance to the church, and these children of men, if thus incorporated, will swallow up the little remnant of God's children." Therefore it is decreed that they must not be one. Note, Unity is policy, but it is not the infallible mark of a true church; yet, while the builders of Babel, though of different families, dispositions, and interests, were thus unanimous in opposing God, what a pity it is, and what a shame, that the builders of Zion, though united in one common Head and Spirit, should be divided, as they are, in serving God! But marvel not at the matter; Christ came not to send peace. [2.] Their *obstinacy*; *now nothing will be restrained from them*; and this is a reason why they must be crossed and thwarted in their design: God had tried, by his commands and admonitions, to bring them off from this project, but in vain; therefore he must take another course with them. See here, *First*, The sinfulness of sin, and the wilfulness of sinners; ever since Adam would not be restrained from the forbidden tree, his unsanctified seed have been impatient of restraint, and ready to rebel against it. *Secondly*, See the necessity of God's judgments upon earth, to keep the world in some order, and to tie the hands of those that will not be checked by law.

(2.) The wisdom and mercy of God in the methods that were taken for the defeating of this enterprise; (*v. 7.*) *Go to, let us go down, and there*

*confound their language:* this was not spoken to the angels, as if God needed either their advice, or their assistance, but God speaks it to himself, or the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost; they said, *Go to, let us make brick;* and *Go to, let us build us a tower;* animating one another to the attempt; and now God says, *Go to, let us confound their languages;* for if men stir up themselves to sin, God will stir up himself to take vengeance, Isa. 59. 17, 18. Now observe here, [1.] The *mercy* of God, in moderating the penalty, and not making that proportionable to the offence; for *he deals not with us according to our sins;* he does not say, “*Let us go down now in thunder and lightning, and consume these rebels in a moment;*” or, “*Let the earth open, and swallow up them and their building, and let them go down quick into hell, who are climbing to heaven the wrong way;*” no, only, “*Let us go down, and scatter them;*” they deserved death, but are only banished or transported; for the patience of God is very great towards a provoking world. Punishments are chiefly reserved for the future state; God’s judgments on sinners in this life, compared with these, are little more than restraints. [2.] The *wisdom* of God, in pitching upon an effectual expedient to stay proceedings, which was the confounding of their language, that they might not understand one another’s speech, nor could they well join hands when their tongues were divided; so that this would be a very proper method, both for taking them off from their building, (for if they could not understand one another, they could not help one another,) as also for disposing them to scatter; for when they could not *understand* one another, they could not *employ* one another. Note, God has various means, and effectual ones, to baffle and defeat the projects of proud men that set themselves against him, and particularly to divide them among themselves, either by dividing their *spirits*, (Judges 9. 23.) or by dividing their *tongues*, as David prays, Ps. 55. 9.

III. The execution of these counsels of God, to the blasting and defeating of the counsels of men, v. 8, 9. God made them know *whose word should stand, his or theirs*, as the expression is, Jer. 44. 28. Notwithstanding their *oneness* and *obstinacy*, God was too hard for them, and wherein they dealt proudly, *he was above them; for who ever hardened his heart against him and prospered?* Three things were done;

1. Their language was confounded. God, who, when he made man, taught him to speak, and put words into his mouth fit to express the conceptions of his mind by, now made those builders to forget their former language, and to speak and understand a new one, which yet was the same to those of the same tribe or family, but not to others; those of one colony could converse together, but not with those of another. Now, (1.) This was a great miracle, and a proof of the power which God has upon the minds and tongues of men, which he turns as the rivers of water. (2.) This was a great judgment upon those builders; for being thus deprived of the knowledge of the ancient and holy tongue, they were become incapable of communicating with the true church, in which it was retained; and, probably, it contributed much to their loss of the knowledge of the true God. (3.) We all suffer by it, to this day: in all the inconveniences we sustain by the diversity of languages, and all the pains and trouble we are at to learn the languages we have occasion for, we smart for the rebellion of our ancestors at Babel. Nay, and those unhappy controversies, which are strifes of words, and arise from our misunderstanding of one another’s language, for aught I know, are owing to this confusion of tongues. (4.) The project of some to frame a universal character, in or-

der to an universal language, how desirable soever it may seem, is yet, I think, but a vain attempt; for it is to strive against a divine sentence, by which the languages of the nations will be divided while the world stands. (5.) We may here lament the loss of the universal use of the Hebrew tongue, which, from this time, was the vulgar language of the Hebrews only, and continued so till the captivity in Babylon, where, even among them, it was exchanged for the Syriac. (6.) As the confounding of tongues divided the children of men, and scattered them abroad, so the gift of tongues, bestowed upon the apostles, (Acts 2.) contributed greatly to the gathering together of the children of God, which were scattered abroad, and the uniting of them in Christ, that with one mind and mouth they might glorify God, Rom. 15. 6.

2. Their building was stopped; *they left off to build the city.* This was the effect of the confusion of their tongues; for it not only incapacitated them for helping one another, but, probably, struck such a damp upon their spirits, that they could not proceed, since they saw, in this, the hand of the Lord gone out against them. Note, [1.] It is wisdom to leave off that which we see God fights against. [2.] God is able to blast and bring to naught all the devices and designs of Babel-builders. He sits in heaven, and laughs at the counsels of the kings of the earth against Him and his Anointed; and will force them to confess that there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord, Prov. 21. 30. Isa. 8. 9, 10.

3. The builders were scattered abroad from thence upon the face of the whole earth, v. 8, 9. They departed in companies, after their families, and after their tongues, (ch. 10. 5, 20, 31.) to the several countries and places allotted to them in the division that had been made, which they knew before, but would not go to take the possession of till now that they were forced to it. Observe here, [1.] That the very thing which they feared, came upon them; they feared dispersion, they sought to evade it by an act of rebellion, and by that act they brought upon themselves the evil with all its horrors: for we are most likely to fall into that trouble which we seek to evade by indirect and sinful methods. [2.] That it was God’s work; *The Lord scattered them.* God’s hand is to be acknowledged in all scattering providences; if the family be scattered, relations scattered, churches scattered, it is the Lord’s doing. [3.] That though they were as firmly in league with one another as could be, yet the Lord scattered them: for no man can keep together what God will put asunder. [4.] That thus God justly took vengeance on them for their oneness in that presumptuous attempt to build their tower; shameful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions; Simeon and Levi, who had been brethren in iniquity, were divided in Jacob, ch. 49. 5, 7. Ps. 83. 3...13. [5.] That they left behind them a perpetual memorandum of their reproach, in the name given to the place; it was called *Babel, confusion.* They that aim at a great name, commonly come off with a bad name. [6.] The children of men were now finally scattered, and never did, nor ever will, come all together again, till the great day, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered before him, Matth. 25. 31, 32.

10. These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad, two years after the flood: 11. And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad, five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. 12. And Arphaxad lived five



and thirty years, and begat Salah: 13. And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. 14. And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber: 15. And Salah lived after he begat Eber, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. 16. And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: 17. And Eber lived after he begat Peleg, four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. 18. And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: 19. And Peleg lived after he begat Reu, two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters. 20. And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug: 21. And Reu lived after he begat Serug, two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. 22. And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor: 23. And Serug lived after he begat Nahor, two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. 24. And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: 25. And Nahor lived after he begat Terah, an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters. 26. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

We have here a genealogy, not an endless genealogy; for here it ends in Abram, the friend of God, and leads further to Christ, the promised Seed, who was the Son of Abram, and from Abram the genealogy of Christ is reckoned, (Matth. 1. 1, &c.) so that put *ch. 5. ch. 11, and Matth. 1*, together, and you have such an entire genealogy of Jesus Christ as cannot be produced, for aught I know, concerning any person in the world, out of his line, and at such a distance from the fountain-head. And laying these three genealogies together, we shall find that twice ten, and thrice fourteen, generations or descents, passed between the first and second Adam, making it clear concerning Christ, not only that he was the Son of Abraham, but the Son of man, and the Seed of the woman. Observe here, 1. That nothing is left upon record concerning those of this line, but their names and ages; the Holy Ghost seeming to hasten through them to the story of Abram. How little do we know of those that are gone before us in this world, even those that lived in the same places where we live, as we likewise know little of those that are our contemporaries, in distant places; we have enough to do, to mind the work of our own day, and let God alone to require that which is past, Eccl. 3. 15. 2. That there was an observable gradual decrease in the years of their lives; Shem reached to 600 years, which yet fell short of the age of the patriarchs before the flood; the three next came short of 500; the three next did not reach to 300; after them, we read not of any that attained to 200, but Terah; and, not many ages after this, Moses reckoned 70 or 80 to be the utmost men ordinarily arrive at: when the earth began to be replenished, men's lives began to shorten; so that the decrease is to be imputed to the wise disposal of providence, rather than to any decay of nature; for the elect's sake, men's days are shortened; and being evil, it is well they are few, and attain not to the years of the lives of our fa-

thers, *cn. 47. 9. 3.* That *Eber*, from whom the Hebrews were denominated, was the longest lived of any that were born after the flood; which perhaps was the reward of his singular piety, and strict adherence to the ways of God.

27. Now these are the generations of Terah: Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. 28. And Haran died before his father Terah, in the land of his nativity, in Ur of the Chaldees. 29. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah. 30. But Sarai was barren; she had no child. 31. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot, the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. 32. And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran.

Here begins the story of Abram, whose name is famous, henceforward, in both Testaments; we have here,

I. His country; *Ur of the Chaldees*, that was the land of his nativity, an idolatrous country, where even the children of Eber themselves were degenerated. Note, Those who are, through grace, heirs of the land of promise, ought to remember what was the land of their nativity; what was their corrupt and sinful state by nature; the rock out of which they were hewn.

II. His relations; mentioned for his sake, and because of their interest in the following story. 1. His father was *Terah*, of whom it is said, *Jesh. 24. 2*, that he served other gods, on the other side of the flood; so early did idolatry gain footing in the world, and so hard is it even for those that have some good principles, to swim against the stream. Though it is said, *v. 26*, that when Terah was seventy years old, he begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran, (which seems to tell us that Abram was the eldest son of Terah, and born in his 70th year,) yet, by comparing *v. 32*, which makes Terah to die in his 205th year, with *Acts 7. 4*, (where it is said that Abram removed from Haran, when his father was dead,) and with *ch. 12. 4*, (where it is said that he was but 75 years old when he removed from Haran,) it appears that he was born in the 130th year of Terah, and, probably, was his youngest son; for, in God's choices, the last are often first, and the first last. We have, 2. Some account of his brethren. (1.) *Nahor*, out of whose family both Isaac and Jacob had their wives. (2.) *Haran*, the father of Lot, of whom it is here said, *v. 28*, that he died before his father Terah. Note, Children cannot be sure that they shall survive their parents: for death does not go by seniority, taking the eldest first: the shadow of death is without any order, *Job 10. 22*. It is likewise said that he died in *Ur of the Chaldees*, before the happy removal of the family out of that idolatrous country. Note, It concerns us to hasten out of our natural state, lest death surprise us in it. 3. His wife was *Sarai*, who, some think, was the same with *Iscah*, the daughter of Haran. Abram himself says of her, that she was the daugh-



ter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother, *ch.* 20. 12. She was ten years younger than Abram.

III. His departure out of Ur of the Chaldees, with his father Terah, his nephew Lot, and the rest of his family, in obedience to the call of God, of which we shall read more, *ch.* 12. 1, &c. This chapter leaves them in Haran, or Charran, a place about the midway between Ur and Canaan, where they dwelt till Terah's head was laid, probably because the old man was unable, through the infirmities of age, to proceed in his journey. Many reach to Charran, and yet fall short of Canaan; they are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither.

## CHAP. XII.

The pedigree and family of Abram we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here, the Holy Ghost enters upon his story; henceforward, Abram and his seed are almost the only subject of the sacred history. In this chapter we have, I. God's call of Abram to the land of Canaan, *v.* 1. 3. II. Abram's obedience to this call, *v.* 4, 5. III. His welcome to the land of Canaan, *v.* 6, 7. IV. His journey to Egypt, with an account of what happened to him there. Abram's flight and fault, *v.* 10. 13. Sarai's danger, and deliverance, *v.* 14. 20.

1. **N**OW the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. 2. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

We have here the call by which Abram was removed out of the land of his nativity into the land of promise; which was designed both to try his faith and obedience, and also to separate him, and set him apart, for God and for special services and favours which were further designed. The circumstances of this call we may be somewhat helped to the knowledge of, from Stephen's speech, *Acts* 7. 2, where we are told, 1. That the God of glory appeared to him, to give him this call; appeared in such displays of his glory, as left Abram no room to doubt the divine authority of this call. God spake to him afterward in divers manners; but this first time, when the correspondence was to be settled, he appeared to him as *the God of glory*, and spake to him. 2. That this call was given him in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran; therefore we rightly read it, *The Lord had said unto Abram*, namely, in Ur of the Chaldees; and, in obedience to this call, as Stephen further relates the story, *v.* 4, *he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran, or Haran, about five years, and from thence, when his father was dead*, by a fresh command, pursuant to the former, God removed him into the land of Canaan. Some think that Haran was in Chaldea, and so was still a part of Abram's country; or that he, having staid there five years, began to call it his country, and to take root there, till God let him know that this was not the place he was intended for. Note, If God loves us, and has mercy in store for us, he will not suffer us to take up our rest any where short of Canaan, but will graciously repeat his calls, till the good work begun, be performed, and our souls repose in God only.

In the call itself, we have a precept and a promise.

I. A trying precept, *v.* 1, *Get thee out of thy country*. Now,

1. By this precept he was tried whether he loved God better than he loved his native soil and dearest friends, and whether he could willingly leave all, to go along with God. His country was become idolatrous, his kindred and his father's house were a constant temptation to him, and he could not continue with them without danger of being infected by them; therefore, *Get thee out*, *וָאֵלֶיךָ וָאֵלֶיךָ* *Vade tibi—Get thee gone*, with all speed, *escape for thy life, look not behind thee*, *ch.* 19. 7. Note, Those that are in a sinful state are concerned to make all haste possible out of it. *Get out for thyself*, (so some read it,) that is, for thine own good. Note, Those who leave their sins and turn to God, will themselves be unspeakable gainers by the change, *Prov.* 9. 12. This command which God gave to Abram, is much the same with the gospel-call by which all the spiritual seed of faithful Abram are brought into covenant with God. For, (1.) Natural affection must give way to divine grace: our country is dear to us, our kindred dearer, and our father's house dearest of all; and yet they must all be hated, *Luke* 14. 26, that is, we must love them less than Christ, hate them in comparison with him, and, whenever any of these come in competition with him, they must be postponed, and the preference given to the will and honour of the Lord Jesus. (2.) Sin and all the occasions of it, must be forsaken, and, particularly, bad company; we must abandon all the idols of iniquity which have been set up in our hearts, and get out of the way of temptation, plucking out even a right eye that leads us to sin, *Matth.* 5. 29, willingly parting with that which is dearest to us, when we cannot keep it without hazard of our integrity. Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God, must quit the society of evil doers, *Ps.* 119. 115. *Acts* 2. 40. (3.) The world, and all our enjoyments in it, must be looked upon with a holy indifference and contempt; we must no longer look upon it as our country, or home, but as our inn, and must, accordingly, sit loose to it, and live above it, get out of it in affection.

2. By this precept he was tried, whether he could trust God further than he saw him; for he must leave his own country, to go to a land that God would show him; he does not say, "It is a land that I will give thee," but merely, "a land that I will show thee." Nor does he tell him what land it was, or what kind of land; but he must follow God with an implicit faith, and take God's word for it, though he had no particular securities given him, that he should be no loser by leaving his country, to follow God. Note, Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; we must quit the things that are seen, for things that are not seen, and submit to the sufferings of this present time, in hopes of a glory that is yet to be revealed, *Rom.* 8. 18, *for it doth not yet appear, what we shall be*, *1 John* 3. 2, any more than it did to Abram, when God called him to a land he would show him, so teaching him to live in a continual dependence upon his direction, and with his eye ever toward him.

II. Here is an encouraging promise, nay, it is a complication of promises, many, and exceeding great and precious. Note, All God's precepts are attended with promises to be obedient; when he makes himself known to us as a Commander, he makes himself known also as a Rewarder; if we obey the command, God will not fail to perform the promise. Here are six promises.

1. *I will make of thee a great nation*; when God took him from his own people, he promised to make him the head of another; he cut him off from being the branch of a wild olive, to make him the root of a good olive. This promise was, (1.) A great relief to Abram's burthen; for he had now no child. Note, God knows how to suit his favours to the

wants and necessities of his children. He that has a plaster for every sore, will provide one for that first, that is most painful. (2.) A great trial to Abram's faith; for his wife had been long barren, so that if he believe, it must be against hope, and his faith must build purely upon that power which *can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*, and make them a great nation. Note, [1.] God makes nations; by him they are *born at once*, Isa. 66. 8, and he speaks to build and plant them, Jer. 18. 9. And [2.] If a nation be made great in wealth and power, it is God that makes it great. [3.] God can raise great nations out of *dry ground*, and can make a *little one to be a thousand*.

2. *I will bless thee*; either particularly, with the blessing of fruitfulness and increase, as he had blessed Adam and Noah; or in general, "*I will bless thee* with all manner of blessings, both of the upper and the nether springs: leave thy father's house, and I will give thee a father's blessing, better than that of thy progenitors." Note, Obedient believers shall be sure to inherit the blessing.

3. *I will make thy name great*; by deserting his country, he lost his name there: "Care not for that," says God, "but trust me, and I will make thee a greater name than ever thou couldest have had there." Having no child, he feared he should have no name; but God will make him a great nation, and so make him a great name. Note, (1.) God is the fountain of honour, and from him promotion comes, 1 Sam. 2. 8. (2.) The name of obedient believers shall certainly be celebrated, and made great: the best report is that which the elders obtained by faith, Heb. 11. 2.

4. *Thou shalt be a blessing*; that is, (1.) "Thy happiness shall be a sample of happiness, so that those who would bless their friends, shall only pray that God would make them like Abram;" as Ruth 4. 11. Note, God's dealings with obedient believers, are so kind and gracious, that we need not desire for ourselves or our friends to be any better dealt with; that is blessedness enough. (2.) "Thy life shall be a blessing to the places where thou shalt sojourn." Note, Good men are the blessings of their country, and it is their unspeakable honour and happiness to be made so.

5. *I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee*; this made it a kind of a league offensive and defensive, between God and Abram. Abram heartily espoused God's cause, and here God promises to interest himself in his; (1.) He promises to be a Friend to his friends, to take kindnesses shown to him as done to himself, and to recompense them accordingly. God will take care that none be losers, in the long run, by any service done for his people; even a cup of cold water shall be rewarded. (2.) He promises to appear against his enemies; there were those that hated and cursed even Abram himself; but while their causeless curses could not hurt Abram, God's righteous curse would certainly overtake and ruin them, Numb. 24. 9. This is a good reason why we should bless them that curse us, because it is enough that God *will curse them*, Ps. 38. 13. 15.

6. *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*; this was the promise that crowned all the rest; for it points at the Messiah, in whom *all the promises are yea and amen*. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the great Blessing of the world, the greatest that ever the world was blessed with; he is a family-blessing, by him salvation is brought to the house, Luke 19. 9. When we reckon up our family blessings, let us put Christ in the *imprimis*—the first place, as the Blessing of blessings. But how are all the families of the earth blessed in Christ, when so many are strangers to him? Answer, [1.] All that are blessed, are blessed in him, Acts 4. 12. [2.] All that

believe, of what family soever they are, shall be blessed in him. [3.] Some of all the families of the earth are blessed in him. [4.] There are some blessings which all the families of the earth are blessed with in Christ; for the gospel-salvation is a *common salvation*, Jude 3. (2.) It is a great honour to be related to Christ; this made Abram's name great, that the Messiah was to descend from his loins, much more than that he should be the father of many nations. It was Abram's honour to be his father by nature; it will be our's to be his brethren by grace, Matt. 12. 50.

4. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram *was* seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

Here is,

I. Abram's removal out of his country; out of Ur first, and afterward out of Haran, in compliance with the call of God; *so Abram departed*; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but did as he was bidden, not *conferring with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1. 15, 16. His obedience was speedy and without delay, submissive and without dispute; for he *went out, not knowing whither he went*, Heb. 11. 8, but knowing whom he followed, and under whose direction he went. Thus God *called him to his foot*, Isa. 41. 2.

II. His age when he removed; he was *seventy and five years old*, an age when he should rather have had rest and settlement; but if God will have him to begin the world again now in his old age, he will submit. Here is an instance of an old convert.

III. The company and cargo that he took with him.

1. He took his wife, and his nephew Lot, with him; not by force and against their wills, but by persuasion. Sarai, his wife, would be sure to go with him; God had joined them together, and nothing should put them asunder. If Abram leave all to follow God, Sarai will leave all to follow Abram; though neither of them knew whither. And it was a mercy to Abram to have such a companion in his travels, a help meet for him. Note, It is very comfortable when husband and wife agree to go together in the way to heaven. Lot also, his kinsman, was influenced by Abram's good example, who was perhaps his guardian after the death of his father, and he was willing to go along with him too. Note, Those that go to Canaan, need not go alone; for though few find the strait gate, blessed be God, some do; and it is our wisdom to go with these with whom God is, Zech. 8. 23, wherever they go.

2. They took all their effects with them; *all their substance* and moveable goods, *that they had gathered*. For, (1.) With themselves they would give up their all, to be at God's disposal, would keep back no part of the price, but venture all in one bottom, knowing it was a good bottom. (2.) They would furnish themselves with that which was requisite, both for the service of God, and the supply of their family, in the country whither they were going. To have thrown away his substance, because God had promised to bless him, had been to tempt God, not to trust him. (3.) They would not be under any temptation to return, therefore they

leave not a hoof behind, lest that should make them *mindful of the country from which they came out.*

3. They took with them the *souls that they had gotten*, that is, (1.) The servants they had bought, which were part of their substance, but are called *souls*, to remind masters that their poor servants have *souls, precious souls*, which they ought to take care of, and provide food convenient for. (2.) The proselytes they had made, and persuaded to attend the worship of the true God, and to go with them to Canaan: the souls which (as one of the Rabbins expresses it) they had *gathered under the wings of the Divine Majesty*. Note, Those who serve and follow God themselves, should do all they can to bring others to serve and follow him too. These souls they are said to have *gained*; we must reckon ourselves true gainers, if we can but win souls to Christ.

IV. Here is their happy arrival at their journey's end. *They went forth to go into the land of Canaan*, so they did before, (*ch.* 11. 31.) and then took up short; but now they held on their way, and, by the good hand of their God upon them, to the land of Canaan they came; where, by a fresh revelation, they were told that this was the land God promised to show them. They were not discouraged by the difficulties they met with in their way, nor diverted by the delights they met with; but *pressed forward*. Note, 1. Those that set out for heaven, must persevere to the end, still reaching forth to those things that are before. 2. That which we undertake, in obedience to God's command, and a humble attendance upon his providence, will certainly succeed, and end with comfort at last.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite *was* then in the land. 7. And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. 8. And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, *having* Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. 9. And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

One would have expected that Abram having had such an extraordinary call to Canaan, some great event should have followed upon his arrival there; that he should have been introduced with all possible marks of honour and respect, and that the kings of Canaan should immediately have surrendered their crowns to him, and done him homage: but, lo! he comes not with observation, little notice is taken of him; for still God will have him to live by faith, and to look upon Canaan, even when he was in it, as a land of *promise*: therefore observe here,

I. How little comfort he had in the land he came to; for, 1. He had it not to himself; *the Canaanite was then in the land*. He found the country peopled and possessed by Canaanites, who were likely to be but bad neighbours, and worse landlords; and, for aught that appears, he could not have ground to pitch his tent on, but by their permission: thus the accursed Canaanites seemed to be in better circumstances than blessed Abram. Note, The children of this world have commonly more of it than God's children. 2. He had not a settlement in it. He *passed through the land*, *v.* 6. He *removed to a*

*mountain*, *v.* 8. He *journeyed, going on* still, *v.* 9. Observe here, (1.) That sometimes it is the lot of good men to be unsettled, and obliged often to remove their habitation. Holy David had his wanderings, his flittings, Ps. 56. 8. (2.) Our removes in this world are often into various conditions.

Abram sojourned, first, in a plain, *v.* 6, then, in a mountain, *v.* 8. God had set the one over against the other. (3.) All good people must look upon themselves as strangers and sojourners in this world, and by faith sit loose to it as a strange country. So Abram did, Heb. 11. 8. . 14. (4.) While we are here in this present state, we must be journeying, and going on still from strength to strength, as having not yet attained.

II. How much comfort he had in the God he followed; when he could have little satisfaction in converse with the Canaanites, whom he found there, he had abundance of pleasure in communion with that God who brought him thither, and did not leave him. Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer, and by these according to the methods of that dispensation, Abram's communion with God was kept up in the land of his pilgrimage.

1. God appeared to Abram; probably, in a vision, and spake to him good words, and comfortable words, *Unto thy seed will I give this land*. Note, (1.) No place or condition of life can shut us out from the comfort of God's gracious visits. Abram is a sojourner, unsettled, among the Canaanites; and yet *here* also he meets with him that lives and sees him. Enemies may part us and our tents, us and our altars, but not us and our God. Nay, (2.) With respect to those that faithfully follow God in a way of duty, though he lead them from their friends, he will himself make up that loss by his gracious appearances to them. (3.) God's promises are sure and satisfying to all those who conscientiously observe and obey his precepts: and those who, in compliance with God's call, leave or lose any thing that is dear to them, shall be sure of something else abundantly better in lieu of it. Abram had left the *land of his nativity*, "Well," says God, "I will give thee this land," Matth. 19. 29. (4.) God reveals himself and his favours to his people by degrees; before he had promised to *show* him this land, now, to *give* it him: as grace is growing, so is comfort. (5.) It is comfort ble to have land of God's giving, not by providence only, but by promise. (6.) Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents. "I will give it, not to thee, but to thy seed;" it is a grant in reversion, to his seed, which yet, it should seem, Abram understood also as a grant to himself of a better land in reversion, of which this was a type; for he looked for a heavenly country, Heb. 11. 16.

2. Abram attended on God in his instituted ordinances. He *built an altar unto the Lord, who appeared to him, and called on the name of the Lord*, *v.* 7, 8. Now consider this, (1.) As done upon a special occasion; when God appeared to him, then and there he built an altar, with an eye to the God who appeared to him. Thus he returned God's visit, and kept up his correspondence with Heaven, as one that resolved it should not fail on his side; thus he acknowledged with thankfulness, God's kindness to him in making him that gracious visit and promise; and thus he testified his confidence in, and dependence upon, the word which God had spoken. Note, An active believer can heartily bless God for a promise which he does not yet see the performance of, and build an altar to the honour of God who appears to him, though he does not yet appear for him. (2.) As his constant practice, whithersoever he removed. As soon as Abram was got to Canaan, though he was but a stranger and sojourner there, yet he set up, and kept up the worship of God in his family; and wherever he had a

tent, God had in altar, and that, an altar sanctified by prayer. For he not only minded the ceremonial part of religion, the offering of sacrifice; but he made conscience of the natural duty of seeking to his God, and calling on his name, that spiritual sacrifice with which God is well-pleased; he preached concerning the name of the Lord, that is, he instructed his family and neighbours in the knowledge of the true God, and his holy religion. The *souls he had gotten in Haran*, being disciples, must be further taught. Note, Those that would approve themselves the children of faithful Abram, and would inherit the blessing of Abram, must make conscience of keeping up the solemn worship of God, particularly in their families, according to the example of Abram: the way of family worship is a good old way, is no novel invention, but the ancient usage of all the saints. Abram was very rich, and had a numerous family, was now unsettled, and in the midst of enemies; and yet, wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar: wherever we go, let us not fail to take our religion along with us.

10. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt, to sojourn there; for the famine *was* grievous in the land. 11. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou *art* a fair woman to look upon: 12. Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This *is* his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. 13. Say, I pray thee, thou *art* my sister; that it may be well with me for thy sake: and my soul shall live because of thee.

Here is,

I. A famine in the land of Canaan, a *grievous famine*; that fruitful land was turned into barrenness, not only to punish the iniquity of the Canaanites who dwelt therein, but to exercise the faith of Abram who sojourned therein; and a very sore trial it was: it tried what he would think, 1. Of God that brought him hither: whether he would not be ready to say, with his murmuring seed, that he was brought forth to be *killed with hunger*, Exod. 16. 3. Nothing short of a strong faith could keep up good thoughts of God under such a providence. 2. Of the land of promise; whether he would think the ground it worth the accepting, and a valuable consideration for the relinquishing of his own country, when, for aught that now appeared, it was a land that *ate up the inhabitants*: now he was tried, whether he could preserve an unshaken confidence that the God who brought him to Canaan, would maintain him there, and whether he could rejoice in him as the God of his salvation, when the fig-tree did not blossom, Heb. 3. 17, 18. Note, (1.) Strong faith is commonly exercised with divers temptations, that it may be *found to praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7. (2.) It pleases God sometimes to try those with great afflictions, who are but young beginners in religion. (3.) It is possible for a man to be in the way of duty, and in the way to happiness, and yet meet with great troubles and disappointments.

II. Abram's remove into Egypt, upon occasion of this famine. See how wisely God provides that there should be plenty in one place when there was scarcity in another, that as member of the great body, we may not say to one another, *I have no need*

*of you*. God's providence took care there should be a supply in Egypt, and Abram's prudence made use of the opportunity; for we tempt God, and do not trust him, if, in the time of distress, we use not the means he has graciously provided for our preservation; we must not expect needless miracles. But that which is especially observable here, to the praise of Abram, is, that he did not offer to return, upon this occasion, to the country from which he came out, nor so much as *towards* it. The land of his nativity lay north-east from Canaan: and therefore, when he must, for a time, quit Canaan, he chooses to go to Egypt which lay south-west, the contrary way, that he might not so much as *seem* to look back; see Heb. 11. 15, 16. Further observe, when he went down into Egypt, it was to sojourn there, not to dwell there. Note, 1. Though Providence, for a time, may cast us into bad places, yet we ought to tarry there no longer than needs must; we may *sojourn* there, where we may not *settle*. 2. A good man, while he is on this side heaven, wherever he is, is but a sojourner.

III. A great fault which Abram was guilty of, in denying his wife, and pretending that she was his sister. The scripture is impartial in relating the misdeeds of the most celebrated saints, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition; that he *who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall*. 1. His fault was, dissembling his relation to Sarai, equivocating concerning it, and teaching his wife, and, probably, all his attendants, to do so too. What he said, was, in a sense, true, (ch. 20. 12.) but with a purpose to deceive; he so concealed a further truth, as, in effect, to deny it, and to expose thereby both his wife and the Egyptians to sin. 2. That which was at the bottom of it, was a jealous timorous fancy he had, that some of the Egyptians would be so charmed with the beauty of Sarai, (Egypt producing few such beauties,) that if they should know he was her husband, they would find some way or other to take him off, that they might marry her. He presumes they would rather be guilty of murder than adultery; such a heinous crime was it then accounted, and such a sacred regard was paid to the marriage-bond: hence he infers, without any good reason, *They will kill me*. Note, The fear of man brings a snare, and many are driven to sin by the dread of death, Luke 12. 4, 5. The grace Abram was most eminent for, was, faith; and yet he thus fell, through unbelief and distrust of the Divine Providence, even *after God had appeared to him twice*. Alas, what will become of the *willows*, when the *cedars* are thus shaken?

14. And it came to pass that when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman, that she *was* very fair. 15. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. 16. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and she-asses, and camels. 17. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai Abram's wife. 18. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What *is* this *that* thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she *was* thy wife? 19. Why saidst thou, She *is* my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take

her, and go thy way. 20. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Here is,

I. The danger Sarai was in of having her chastity violated by the king of Egypt. And, without doubt, the peril of sin is the greatest peril we can be in. *Pharaoh's princes* (his pimps rather) *saw her*, and observing what a comely woman she was, they *commended her before Pharaoh*; not for that which was really her praise—her virtue and modesty, her faith and piety, (those were no excellencies in their eyes,) but for her beauty, which they thought too good for the embraces of a subject, and worthy the admiration of the king; and she was presently taken into Pharaoh's house, as Esther into the seraglio of Ahasuerus, (Esth. 2. 8.) in order to her being taken into his bed. Now we must not look upon Sarai as standing fair for preferment, but as entering into temptation; and the occasions of it were, her own beauty, which is a snare to many, and Abram's equivocation, which is a sin that commonly is an inlet to much sin. While Sarai was in this danger, Abram fared the better for her sake; Pharaoh gave him sheep, and oxen, &c. (v. 16.) to gain his consent with her whom they supposed his sister. We cannot think that Abram expected this when he came down into Egypt, much less that he had an eye to it when he denied his wife; but God brought good out of evil. And thus the *wealth of the sinner* proves, some way or other, *laid up for the just*.

II. The deliverance of Sarai from this danger. For if God did not deliver us, many a time, by prerogative, out of those straits and distresses which we bring ourselves into by our own sin and folly, and which therefore we could not expect any deliverance from by promise, we should soon be ruined, nay, we had been ruined long before this. He deals not with us according to our deserts.

1. God chastised Pharaoh, and so prevented the progress of his sin. Note, Those are happy chastisements, that hinder us in a sinful way, and effectually bring us to our duty, and particularly to the duty of restoring that which we have wrongfully taken and detained. Observe, Not Pharaoh only, but his house, was plagued; probably, those princes especially that had commended Sarai to Pharaoh. Note, Partners in sin are justly made partakers in the punishment. Those that serve others' lusts, must expect to share in their plagues. We are not told particularly what these plagues were; but, doubtless, there was something in the plagues themselves, or some explication added to them, sufficient to convince them that it was for Sarai's sake that they were thus plagued.

2. Pharaoh reproved Abram, and then dismissed him with respect.

(1.) The reproof was calm, but very just; *What is this that thou hast done?* What an improper thing! How unbecoming a wise and good man! Note, If these that profess religion, do that which is unfair and disingenuous, especially if they say that which borders upon a lie, they must expect to fear of it, and have reason to thank those that will tell them of it. We find a prophet of the Lord justly reprov'd and upbraided by a heathen ship-master, Jon. 1. 6. Pharaoh reasons with him, *Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?* Intimating, that if he had known that, he would not have taken her into his house. Note, It is a fault too common among good people, to entertain suspicions of others beyond what there is cause for. We have often found more of virtue, honour, and conscience, in some people, than we thought they

possessed; and it ought to be a pleasure to us to be thus disappointed, as Abram was here, who found Pharaoh to be a better man than he expected. Charity teaches us to hope the best.

(2.) The dismissal was kind, and very generous. He returned him his wife without offering any injury to her honour, v. 19, *Behold thy wife, take her*. Note, Those that would prevent sin, must remove the temptation, or get out of the way of it. He also sent him away in peace, and was so far from any design to kill him, as he apprehended, that he took particular care of him. Note, We often perplex and ensnare ourselves with fears which soon appear to have been altogether groundless. We often fear, where no fear is. We fear the *fury of the oppressor*, as though he were ready to destroy, when really there is no danger, Isa. 51. 13. It had been more for Abram's credit and comfort, to have told the truth at first; for, after all, *honesty is the best policy*. Nay, it is said, v. 20, *Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him*; that is, [1.] He charged them not to injure him in any thing. Note, It is not enough for those in authority, that they do not hurt themselves, but they must restrain their servants, and those about them, from doing hurt. Or, [2.] He appointed them, when Abram was disposed to return home, after the famine, to conduct him safe out of the country, as his convoy. Probably, he was alarmed by the plagues, v. 17, and inferred from them, that Abram was a particular favourite of Heaven, and therefore, through fear of their return, took special care he should receive no injury in his country.

Note, God has often raised up friends for his people, by making men know that it is at their peril if they hurt them. It is a dangerous thing to offend Christ's little ones, Matth. 18. 6. To this passage, among others, the Psalmist refers, Ps. 105. 13. 15. *He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not mine anointed*. Perhaps, if Pharaoh had not sent him away, he would have been tempted to stay in Egypt, and to forget the land of promise. Note, Sometimes God makes use of the enemies of His people, to convince them, and remind them, that this world is not their rest, but that they must think of departing. Lastly, Observe a resemblance between this deliverance of Abram out of Egypt, and the deliverance of his seed thence: 430 years after Abram went into Egypt on occasion of a famine, they went thither, on occasion of a famine also; he was fetched out with great plagues on Pharaoh, so were they; as Abram was dismissed by Pharaoh, and enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians, so were they. For God's care of his people is the same *yesterday, to-day, and for ever*.

### CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have a further account concerning Abram. I. In general, of his condition and behaviour in the land of promise, which was now the land of his pilgrimage. 1. His removes, v. 1, 3, 4, 18. 2. His riches, v. 2, 3. His devotion, v. 4, 18. II. A particular account of a quarrel that happened between him and Lot. 1. The unhappy occasion of their strife, v. 5, 6. 2. The parties concerned in the strife, with the aggravation of it, v. 7. III. The making up of the quarrel, by the prudence of Abram, v. 8, 9. IV. Lot's departure from Abram to the plain of Sodom, v. 10, 12. V. God's appearance to Abram, to confirm the promise of the land of Canaan to him, v. 14, 17.

1. **A**ND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. 2. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the be-



ginning, between Beth-el and Hai; 4. Unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first: and 'here Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Here is,

I. Abram's return out of Egypt, *v.* 1. He came himself, and brought all his with him, back again to Canaan. Note, Though there may be occasion to go sometimes into places of temptation, yet we must hasten out of them as soon as possible. See Ruth 1. 6.

II. His wealth, *v.* 2, *He was very rich.* He was very heavy, so the Hebrew word signifies. For riches are a burthen, and they that will be rich, do but load themselves with thick clay, Hab. 2. 6. There is a burthen of care in getting them, fear in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burthen of account, at last, to be given up concerning them. Great possessions do but make men heavy and unwieldy. Abram was not only rich in faith and good works, and in the promises, but he was rich in cattle, and in silver and gold. Note, 1. God in his providence, sometimes makes good men rich men, and teaches them how to abound, as well as now to suffer want. 2. The riches of good men are the fruits of God's blessing. God had said to Abram, *I will bless thee*; and that blessing made him rich without sorrow. Prov. 10. 22. 3. True piety will very well consist with great prosperity. Though it is hard for a rich man to get to heaven, yet it is not impossible, Mark 10. 23, 24. Abram was very rich, and yet very religious. Nay, as piety is a friend to outward prosperity, 1 Tim. 4. 8, so outward prosperity, if well managed, is an ornament to piety, and an opportunity of doing so much the more good.

III. His removal to Beth-el, *v.* 3, 4. Thither he went, not only because there he had formerly had his tent, and he was willing to go among his old acquaintance; but because there he had, formerly, had his altar: and, though the altar was gone, (probably, he himself having taken it down, when he left the place, lest it should be polluted by the idolatrous Canaanites,) yet he came to the place of the altar, either to revive the remembrance of the sweet communion he had had with God in that place, or, perhaps, to pay the vows he had there made to God when he undertook his journey into Egypt. Long afterward, God sent Jacob to this same place, on that errand, *ch.* 35. 1, *Go up to Beth-el, where thou vowedst the vow.* We have need to be reminded, and should take all occasions to remind ourselves, of our solemn vows; and perhaps the place where they were made, may help to bring them fresh to mind, and it may therefore do us good.

IV. His devotion there. His altar was gone, so that he could not offer sacrifice; but he called on the name of the Lord, as he had done, *ch.* 12. 8. Note, 1. All God's people are praying people. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living christian without prayer. 2. Those that would approve themselves upright with their God, must be constant and persevering in the services of religion. Abram did not leave his religion behind him in Egypt, as many do in their travels. 3. When we cannot do what we would, we must make conscience of doing what we can, in the acts of devotion. When we want an altar, let us not be wanting in prayer, but, wherever we are, call on the name of the Lord.

5. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6. And the land was not able to bear them, that

they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. 8. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. 9. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left-hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right-hand, then I will go to the left.

We have here an unhappy falling-out between Abram and Lot, who had hitherto been inseparable companions; (see *v.* 1, and *ch.* 12. 4,) but now parted.

I. The occasion of their quarrel was their riches. We read, *v.* 2, how rich Abram was; now here we are told, *v.* 5, that Lot which went with Abram, was rich too; God blessed him with riches, because he went with Abram. Note, 1. It is good being in good company, and going with those with whom God is, Zech. 8. 23. 2. Those that are partners with God's people in their obedience and sufferings, shall be sharers with them in their joys and comforts, Isa. 66. 10. Now, they both being very rich, the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell comfortably and peaceably together. So that their riches may be considered, (1.) As setting them at a distance one from another; because the place was too strait for them, and they had not room for their stock, it was necessary they should live asunder. Note, Every comfort in this world has its cross attending it. Business is a comfort: but it has this inconvenience in it, that it allows us not the society of those we love, so often, nor so long, as we could wish. (2.) As setting them at variance one with another. Note, Riches are often an occasion of strife and contention among relations and neighbours. This is one of those foolish and hurtful lusts, which they that will be rich, fall into, 1 Tim. 6. 9. Riches not only afford matter for contention, and are the things most commonly striven about; but they also stir up a spirit of contention, by making people proud and covetous. Meum and tuum—Mine and Thine, are the great make-bates of the world. Poverty and travail, wants and wanderings, could not separate between Abram and Lot; but riches did it. Friends are soon lost; but God is a Friend from whose love neither the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity, shall separate us.

II. The immediate instruments of the quarrel were their servants. The strife began between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle, *v.* 7. They strove, it is probable, which should have the better pasture, or the better water; and both interested their masters in the quarrel. Note, Bad servants often make a great deal of mischief in families, by their pride and passion, their lying, slandering, and tale-bearing. It is a very wicked thing for servants to do ill offices between relations and neighbours, and to sow discord; those that do so, are the Devil's agents, and their masters' worst enemies.

III. The aggravation of the quarrel was, that the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land, this made the quarrel, 1. Very dangerous; if Abram and Lot cannot agree to feed their flocks together,



it is well if the common enemy do not come upon them, and plunder them both. Note, The division of families and churches often proves the ruin of them. 2. *Very scandalous*. No doubt, the eyes of all the neighbours were upon them, especially because of the singularity of their religion, and the extraordinary sanctity they professed; and notice would soon be taken of this quarrel, and improvement made of it, to their reproach, by the Canaanites and Perizzites. Note, The quarrels of professors are the reproach of profession, and give occasion, as much as any thing, to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

IV. The making up of this quarrel was very happy. It is best to preserve the peace, that it be not broken; but the next best is, if differences do happen, with all speed to accommodate them, and quench the fire that is broken out. The motion for staying this strife was made by Abram, though he was the senior and superior relation.

1. His petition for peace was very affectionate. *Let there be no strife, I pray thee*. Abram here shows himself to be a man, (1.) Of a *cool* spirit, that had the command of his passion, and knew how to turn away wrath with a soft answer. Those that would keep the peace, must never render railing for railing. (2.) Of a *condescending* spirit; he was willing to beseech even his inferior to be at peace, and made the first overture of reconciliation. Conquerors reckon it their glory to give peace by power; and it is no less so to give peace by the meekness of wisdom. Note, The people of God should always approve themselves a peaceable people; whatever others are for, they must be for peace.

2. His plea for peace was very cogent. (1.) "Let there be no strife *between me and thee*. Let the Canaanites and Perizzites contend about trifles; but let not me and thee fall out, who know better things, and look for a better country." Note, Professors of religion should, of all others, be careful to avoid contention. *Ye shall not be so*, Luke 22. 26. *We have no such custom*, 1 Cor. 11. 16. "Let there be no strife *between me and thee*, who have lived together and loved one another, so long." Note, The remembrance of old friendships should quickly put an end to new quarrels which at any time happen. (2.) Let it be remembered that *we are brethren*, Heb. *We are men brethren*; a double argument. [1.] We are *men*; and, as men, we are *mortal* creatures, we may die to-morrow, and are concerned to be found in peace; we are *rational* creatures, and should be ruled by reason. We are men, and not brutes, men, and not children; we are sociable creatures, let us be so to the uttermost. [2.] We are *brethren*. Men of the same nature, of the same kindred and family, of the same religion; companions in obedience, companions in patience. Note, The consideration of our relation to each other, as brethren, should always prevail to moderate our passions, and either to prevent, or put an end to, our contentions. Brethren should love as brethren.

3. His proposal for peace was very fair. Many who profess to be for peace, yet will do nothing towards it; but Abram *herely* approved himself a real friend to peace, that he proposed an unexceptionable expedient for the preserving of it, v. 9, *Is not the whole land before thee?* As if he had said, "Why should we quarrel for room, while there is room enough for us both?" (1.) He concludes that they must part, and is very desirous that they should part friends. *Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me*. What could be expressed more affectionately? He does not expel him, and force him away, but advises that he should separate himself. Nor does he charge him to depart, but humbly desires him to

withdraw. Note, Those that have power to command, yet, sometimes, for love's sake, and peace sake, should *rather beseech*, as Paul Philemon, v. 8, 9. When the great God condescends to beseech us, we may well afford to beseech one another, to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5. 20. (2.) He offers him a sufficient share of the land they were in. Though God had promised Abram to give this land to his seed, *ch.* 12. 7, and it does not appear that ever any such promise was made to Lot, which Abram might have insisted on, to the total exclusion of Lot; yet he allows him to come in partner with him, and tenders an equal share to one that had not an equal right, and will not make God's promise to patronise his quarrel, nor under the protection of that, put any hardship upon his kinsman. (3.) He gives him his choice, and offers to take up with his leavings; *If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right*. There was all the reason in the world, that Abram should choose first; yet he recedes from his right. Note, It is a noble conquest, to be willing to yield for peace sake; it is the conquest of ourselves, and our own pride and passion, Matth. 5. 39, 40. It is not only the punctilios of honour, but even interest itself, that, in many cases, must be sacrificed to peace.

10. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well-watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even as* the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. 11. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. 13. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.

We have here the choice that Lot made when he parted from Abram; upon this occasion, one would have expected, 1. That he should have expressed an unwillingness to part from Abram, and that, at least, he should have done it with reluctance. 2. That he should have been so civil as to have remitted the choice back again to Abram. But we find not any instance of deference or respect to his uncle, in the whole management. Abram having offered him the choice, without compliment he accepted it, and made his election. Passion and selfishness make men rude. Now, in the choice which Lot made, we may observe,

I. How much he had an eye to the *goodness of the land*. He beheld all the plain of Jordan, the flat country in which Sodom stood, that it was admirably well watered every where, (and perhaps the strife had been about water, which made him particularly fond of the convenience,) and so Lot chose him all that plain, v. 10, 11. That valley which was like the garden of Eden itself, now yielded him a most pleasant prospect; it was, in his eye, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; and therefore he doubted not that it would yield him a comfortable settlement, and that in such a fruitful soil he should certainly thrive, and grow very rich; and this was all he looked at. But what came of it? Why, the next news we hear of him, is, that he is in the briars among them, he and his carried captive; while he lived among them, he vexed his righteous soul with their conversation, and never had a good day with them, till, at last, God fired the

town over his head, and forced *him* to the mountain for safety, who chose the plain for wealth and pleasure. Note, Sensual choices are sinful choices, and seldom speed well. Those who in choosing relations, callings, dwellings, or settlements, are guided and governed by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life, and consult not the interests of their souls and their religion, cannot expect God's presence with them, nor his blessing upon them, but are commonly disappointed even in that which they principally aimed at, and miss of that which they promised themselves satisfaction in. In all our choices, this principle should over-rule us. That this is the best for us, which is best for our souls.

II. How little he considered the *badness of the inhabitants*. But the men of Sodom were wicked, v. 13. Note, 1. Though all are sinners, yet some are greater sinners than others; the men of Sodom were sinners of the first magnitude, *sinners before the Lord*, that is, impudent daring sinners; they were so, to a proverb; hence we read of those that *declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not*, Isa. 3. 9. 2. That some sinners are the worse for living in a good land. So the Sodomites were; for *this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness*; and all these were supported by the great plenty their country afforded, Ezek. 16. 49. Thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them*. 3. That God often gives great plenty to great sinners. Fifty Sodomites dwell in a city, a fruitful plain, while faithful Abram and his pious family dwell in tents upon the barren mountains. 4. When wickedness is come to the height, ruin is not far off. Abounding sins are sure presages of approaching judgments. Now Lot's coming to dwell among the Sodomites may be considered, (1.) As a great mercy to them, and a likely means of bringing them to repentance; for now they had a prophet among them, and a preacher of righteousness; if they had hearkened to him, they might have been reformed, and the ruin prevented. Note, God sends preachers, before he sends destroyers; for he is not *willing that any should perish*. (2.) As a great affliction to Lot, who was not only grieved to see their wickedness, (2 Pet. 2. 7, 8.) but was molested and persecuted by them, because he would not do as they did. Note, It has often been the vexatious lot of good men, to live among wicked neighbours, to *sojourn in Mesech*, (Ps. 120. 5.) and it cannot but be the more grievous, if, as Lot here, they have brought it upon themselves by an unadvised choice.

14. And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, north-ward, and south-ward, and east-ward, and west-ward: 15. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. 18. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God made to Abram, to confirm the promise to him and his. Observe,

I. When it was that God renewed and ratified the promise; *after that Lot was separated from him* that is, 1. After the quarrel was over; for those are best prepared for the visits of divine grace, whose spirits are calm and sedate, and not ruffled with any passion. 2. After Abram's humble self-denying condescensions to Lot for the preserving of peace; was then that God came to him with this token of his favour. Note, God will abundantly make up in *spiritual* peace, what we lose for the preserving of *neighbourly* peace. When Abram had willingly offered Lot one half of his right, God came, and confirmed the whole to him. 3. After he had lost the comfortable society of his kinsman, by whose departure his hands were weakened, and his heart saddened; then God came to him with these good words, and comfortable words. Note, Communion with God may, at any time, serve to make up the want of conversation with our friends; when our relations are separated from us, yet God is not. 4. After Lot had chosen that pleasant, fruitful vale, and was gone to take possession of it; lest Abram should be tempted to envy him, and to repent that he had given him the choice, God comes to him, and assures him that what he had, should remain to him and his heirs for ever; so that though Lot perhaps had the better *land*, yet Abram had the better *title*; Lot had the paradise, such as it was, but Abram had the promise; and the event soon made it appear that, however it seemed now, Abram had really the better part. See Job 22. 20. God owned Abram after his strife with Lot, as the churches did Paul after his strife with Barnabas, Acts 15. 39, 40.

II. The promises themselves which God now comforted and enriched Abram with. Two things he assures him of; a good land, and a numerous issue to enjoy it.

1. Here is the grant of a good land, a land famous above all lands, for it was to be the holy land, and Immanuel's land; this is the land here spoken of. (1.) God here shows Abram the land, as he had promised, (ch. 12. 1.) and afterward he showed it to Moses from the top of Pisgah. *Lot had lifted up his eyes, and beheld the plain of Jordan*, (v. 10.) and he was gone to enjoy what he saw: "Come," says God to Abram, "*now lift thou up thine eyes, and look, and see thine own*." Note, That which God has to show us, is infinitely better and more desirable than any thing that the world has to offer to our view. The prospects of an eye of faith are much more rich and beautiful than those of an eye of sense. Those for whom the heavenly Canaan is designed in the other world, have sometimes, by faith, a comfortable prospect of it in their present state; for we look at the things that are not seen, as real, though distant. (2.) He secures this land to him and his seed for ever; (v. 15.) *To thee will I give it*; and again (v. 17.) *I will give it unto thee*; every repetition of the promise is a ratification of it. *To thee and thy seed*, not to Lot and his seed; they were not to have their inheritance in this land, and therefore Providence so ordered it, that he should be separated from Abram first, and then the grant should be confirmed to him and his seed; thus God often brings good out of evil, and makes men's sins and follies subservient to his own wise and holy counsels. *To thee and thy seed*; to thee, to sojourn as a stranger; to thy seed, to dwell and rule in as proprietors. *To thee*, that is, to thy seed. The granting it to him and his for ever, intimates that it was typical of the heavenly Canaan, which is given to the spiritual seed of Abram for ever, Heb. 11. 14. (3.) He gives him livery and seisin of it, though it was a reversion, v. 17, "*Arise, walk through the land*. Enter and take possession, survey the parcels, and it will appear better than upon a distant

prospect." Note, God is willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his covenant, and the inestimable worth of covenant-blessings. *Go, walk about Zion, Ps. 48. 12.*

2. Here is the promise of a numerous issue to replenish this good land, so that it should never be lost for want of heirs, *v. 16, I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth*, that is, "They shall increase incredibly, and take them altogether, they shall be such a great multitude as no man can number." They were so in Sodom's time, *1 Kings 4. 20. Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.* This God here gives him the promise of. Note, The same God that provides the inheritance, provides the heirs. He that has prepared the holy land, prepares the holy seed; he that gives glory, gives grace to make meet for glory.

*Lastly,* We are told what Abram did, when God had thus confirmed the promise to him, *v. 12. 1. He removed his tent.* God bid him *walk through the land*, that is, "Do not think of fixing in it, but expect to be always unsettled, and walking through it to a better Canaan;" in compliance with God's will herein, *he removes his tent*, conforming himself to the condition of a pilgrim. *2. He builded there an altar*, in token of his thankfulness to God for the kind visit he had made him. Note, When God meets us with gracious promises, he expects that we should attend with our humble praises.

## CHAP. XIV.

We have four things in the story of this chapter. I. A war with the king of Sodom and his allies, *v. 1. 11.* II. The captivity of Lot in that war, *v. 12.* III. Abram's rescue of Lot from that captivity, with the victory he obtained over the conquerors, *v. 13. 16.* IV. Abram's return from that expedition, (*v. 17.*) with an account of what passed, 1. Between him and the king of Salem, *v. 18. 20.* 2. Between him and the king of Sodom, *v. 21. 24.* So that here we have that promise to Abram, in part, fulfilled, that God would *make his name great.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; 2. *That these made war with Berah king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.* 3. All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt-sea. 4. Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5. And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth-Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Enims in Shaveh-Kiriathaim, 6. And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7. And they returned, and came to En-mishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwell in Hazezon-tamar. 8. And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Gomorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela; (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim; 9. With Chedorlaomer the king

of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five. 10. And the vale of Siddim was full of slime-pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. 11. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

We have here an account of the first war that ever we read of in scripture, which (though the wars of the nations make the greatest figure in history, we had not had the record of, if Abram and Lot had not been concerned in it. Now concerning this war, we may observe,

I. The parties engaged in it. The invaders were four kings; two of them no less than kings of Shinar and Elam, that is, Chaldea and Persia; yet, probably, not the sovereign princes of those great kingdoms in their own persons, but either officers under them, or rather the heads and leaders of some colonies which came out of those great nations, and settled themselves near Sodom, but retained the names of the countries from which they had their original. The invaded were the kings of five cities that lay near together in the plain of Jordan; Sodom; Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. Four of them are named, but not the fifth, the king of Bela; either because he was much more mean and inconsiderable, or because he was much more wicked and inglorious, than the rest, and worthy to be forgotten.

II. The occasion of this war was, the revolt of the five kings from under the government of Chedorlaomer. Twelve years they served him. Small joy had they of their fruitful land, while thus they were tributaries to a foreign power, and could not call what they had their own. Rich countries are a desirable prey, and idle luxurious countries are an easy prey, to growing greatness. The Sodomites were the posterity of Canaan whom Noah had pronounced a servant to Shem, from whom Elam descended; thus soon did that prophecy begin to be fulfilled. In the 13th year, beginning to be weary of their subjection, they rebelled, denied their tribute, and attempted to shake off the yoke, and retrieve their ancient liberties. In the 14th year, after some pause and preparation, Chedorlaomer, in conjunction with his allies, set himself to chastise the rebels, to reduce the revoltors; and, since he could not have it otherwise, to fetch his tribute from them upon the point of his sword. Note, Pride, covetousness, and ambition, are the lusts from which wars and fighting come. To those insatiable idols the blood of thousands has been sacrificed.

III. The progress and success of the war. The four kings laid the neighbouring country waste, and enriched themselves with the spoil of them, *v. 5...* 7, upon the alarm of which, it had been the wisdom of the king of Sodom to submit, and desire conditions of peace; for how could he grapple with an enemy thus flushed with victory? But he would rather venture the utmost extremity than yield, and it sped accordingly; *Quos Deus destruet, eos demeritat—Those whom God means to destroy, he delivers up to infatuation.*

1. The forces of the king of Sodom and his allies were routed; and, it should seem, many of them perished in the slime-pits, who had escaped the sword, *v. 10.* In all places, we are surrounded

with deaths of various kinds, especially in the field of battle.

2. The cities were plundered, *v.* 11. All the goods of Sodom, and particularly their stores and provisions of victuals, were carried off by the conquerors. Note, When men abuse the gifts of a bountiful providence to gluttony and excess, it is just with God, and his usual way, by some judgment or other, to strip them of that which they have so abused, *Hos.* 2. 8, 9.

3. Lot was carried captive, *v.* 12. They took Lot among the rest, and his goods. Now Lot may here be considered, (1.) As sharing with his neighbours in this common calamity. Though he was himself a righteous man, and (which here is expressly not ced) Abram's brother's son, yet he was involved with the rest in this trouble. Note, [1.] *All things come alike to all*, *Ecc.* 9. 2. The best of men cannot promise themselves to be exempted from the greatest troubles in this life; neither our own piety, nor our relation to those who are the favourites of heaven, will be our security, when God's judgments are abroad. [2.] Many an honest man fares the worse for his wicked neighbours; it is therefore our wisdom to separate ourselves, or, at least, to distinguish ourselves from them, *2 Cor.* 6. 17, and so deliver ourselves, *Rev.* 18. 4. (2.) As smarting for the foolish choice he made of a settlement here: this is plainly intimated here, when it is said, *They took Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom*. So near a relation of Abram should have been a companion and disciple of Abram, and should have abode by his tents; but if he choose to dwell in Sodom, he must thank himself, if he share in Sodom's calamities. Note, When we go out of the way of our duty, we put ourselves from under God's protection, and cannot expect that the choices which are made by our lusts, should issue to our comfort. Particular mention is made of their taking Lot's goods, those goods which had occasioned his contest with Abram, and his separation from him. Note, It is just with God to deprive us of those enjoyments by which we have suffered ourselves to be deprived of our enjoyment of him.

13. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. 14. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. 15. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobab, which is on the left hand of Damascus. 16. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

We have here an account of the only military action we ever find Abram engaged in; and this he was prompted to not by his avarice or ambition, but purely by a principle of charity; it was not to enrich himself, but to help his friend. Never was any military expedition undertaken, prosecuted, and finished, more honourably than this of Abram's.

Here is,

I. The tidings brought him of his kinsman's distress. Providence so ordered it, that he now so-

journed not far off, that he might be a very present help. 1. He is here called *Abram the Hebrew*, that is, the son and follower of Heber, in whose family the profession of the true religion was kept up in that degenerate age. Abram here acted like a Hebrew—in a manner not unworthy the name and character of a religious professor. 2. The tidings were brought by one that had escaped with his life for a prey. Probably, he was a Sodomite, and as bad as the worst of them; yet, knowing Abram's relation to Lot, and concern for him, he implores his help, and hopes to speed for Lot's sake. Note, The worst of men, in the day of their trouble, will be glad to claim acquaintance with those that are wise and good, and so get an interest in them. The rich man in hell, called Abram *Father*; and the foolish virgins make court to the wise for a share of their oil.

II. The preparations he made for this expedition. The cause was plainly good, his call to engage in it was clear; and therefore, with all speed, *he armed his trained servants, born in his house*, to the number of *three hundred and eighteen*. A great family, but a small army, about as many as Gideon's that routed the Midianites, *Judg.* 7. 7. He drew out his *trained servants*, or his *catechised servants*, not only instructed in the art of war, which was then far short of the perfection which later and worse ages have improved it to, but instructed in the principles of religion; for Abram commanded his household to keep the way of the Lord. This shows that Abram was, 1. A *great* man, who had so many servants depending upon him, and employed by him; which was not only his strength and honour, but gave him a great opportunity of doing good, which is all that is truly valuable and desirable in great places and great estates. 2. A *good* man, who not only served God himself, but instructed all about him in the service of God. Note, Those that have great families, have not only many bodies, but many souls beside their own, to take care of and provide for. Those that would be found the followers of Abram, must see that their servants be *catechised* servants. 3. A *wise* man; for though he was a man of peace, yet he disciplined his servants for war, not knowing what occasion he might have, some time or other, so to employ them. Note, Though our holy religion teaches us to be for peace, yet it does not forbid us to provide for war.

III. His allies and confederates in this expedition. He prevailed with his neighbours, *Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre*, (with whom he kept up a fair correspondence,) to go along with him. It was his prudence thus to strengthen his own troops with their auxiliary forces; and, probably, they saw themselves concerned, in interest, to act, as they could, against this formidable power, lest their own turn should be next. Note, 1. It is our wisdom and duty to behave ourselves so respectfully and obligingly towards all men, as that, whenever there is occasion, they may be willing and ready to do us a kindness. 2. Those who depend on God's help, yet, in times of distress, ought to make use of men's help, as Providence offers it; else they tempt God.

IV. His courage and conduct were very remarkable. 1. There was a great deal of bravery in the enterprise itself, considering the disadvantages he lay under. What could one family of husbandmen and shepherds do against the armies of four princes, who now came fresh from blood and victory? It was not a vanquished, but a victorious army, that he was to pursue; nor was he constrained by necessity to this daring attempt, but moved to it by generosity; so that, all things considered, it was, for aught I know, as great an instance of true courage as ever Alexander or Cæsar was celebrated for. Note, Religion tends to make men, not coward.

but truly valiant. The righteous is bold as a lion. The true christian is the true hero. 2. There was a great deal of policy in the management of it. Abram was no stranger to the stratagems of war; he divided himself, as Gideon did his little army, Judg. 7. 16, that he might come upon the enemy from several quarters at once, and so make his few seem a great many; he made his attack by night, that he might surprise them. Note, Honest policy is a good friend both to our safety, and to our usefulness. The serpent's head (provided it be nothing akin to the old serpent) may well become a good christian's body, especially if it have a dove's eye in it, Matt. 10. 16.

V. His success was very considerable, v. 15, 16. He defeated his enemies, and rescued his friends; and we do not find that he sustained any loss. Note, Those that venture in a good cause, with a good heart, are under the special protection of a good God, and have reason to hope for a good issue. Again, *It is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few*, 1 Sam. 14. 6. Observe,

1. He rescued his kinsman; twice here he is called his *brother Lot*; the remembrance of the relation that was between them, both by nature and grace, made him forget the little quarrel that had been between them, in which Lot had by no means acted well towards Abram. Justly might Abram have upbraided Lot with his folly in quarrelling with him and removing from him, and have told him that he was well enough served, he might have known when he was well off; but, in the charitable breast of pious Abram, it is all forgiven and forgotten; and he takes this opportunity to give a real proof of the sincerity of his reconciliation. Note, (1.) We ought to be ready, whenever it is in the power of our hands, to succour and relieve those that are in distress, especially our relations and friends. *A brother is born for adversity*, Prov. 17. 17. A friend in need is a friend indeed. (2.) Though others have been wanting in their duty to us, yet we must not therefore deny our duty to them. Some have said that they can more easily forgive their enemies than their friends; but we shall see ourselves obliged to forgive both, if we consider, not only that our God, when we were enemies, reconciled us, but also that he *passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage*, Mic. 7. 18.

2. He rescued the rest of the captives, for Lot's sake; though they were strangers to him, and such as he was under no obligation to at all; nay, though they were Sodomites, sinners before the Lord exceedingly, and though, probably, he might have recovered Lot alone by ransom; yet he brought back all the women and the people, and their goods, v. 16. Note, As we have opportunity, we must do good to all men. Our charity must be extensive, as opportunity offers itself. Wherever God gives life, we must not grudge the help we can give to support it. God does good to the just and unjust, and so must we, Matt. 5. 45. This victory which Abram obtained over the kings, the prophet seems to refer to, Isa. 41. 2, *Who raised up the righteous man from the east, and made him rule over kings?* And some suggest that as before, he had a title to this land by grant, so now, by conquest.

17. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. 18. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19. And he blessed

him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, Possessor of heaven and earth: 20. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

This paragraph begins with the mention of the respect which the king of Sodom paid to Abram, at his return from the slaughter of the kings; but before a particular account is given of that, the story of Melchizedek is briefly related. Concerning whom, observe,

1. Who he was. He was *king of Salem and priest of the most high God*; and other glorious things are said of him, Heb. 7. 1, &c. 1. The rabbins, and most of our rabbinical writers, conclude that Melchizedek was Shem the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those that descended from him, according to the patriarchal model. But this is not at all probable; for why should his name be changed? And how came he to settle in Canaan? 2. Many christian writers have thought that this was an appearance of the Son of God himself, our Lord Jesus, known to Abram, at this time, by this name, as, afterward, Hagar called him by another name, ch. 16. 13. He appeared to him as a righteous king, owning a righteous cause, and giving peace. It is hard to think that any mere man should be said to be *without father, without mother, and without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life*, Heb. 7. 3. It is witnessed of Melchizedek, that he liveth, and that he abideth a priest continually, v. 3, 8; nay, v. 13, 14, the apostle makes him of whom these things are spoken, to be our Lord who sprang out of Judah. It is likewise hard to think that any mere man should, at this time, be greater than Abram in the things of God, and that Christ should be a priest after the order of any mere man, and that any human priesthood should so far excel that of Aaron as it is certain that Melchizedek's did. 3. The most received opinion is, that Melchizedek was a Canaanite prince, that reigned in Salem, and kept up the true religion there; but if so, why he should occur here only in all the story of Abram, why Abram should have altars of his own, and not attend the altars of his neighbour Melchizedek who was greater than he, seems unaccountable. Mr. Gregory of Oxford tells us, that the *Arabic Catena*, which he builds much upon the authority of, gives this account of Melchizedek: That he was the son of Heraclim, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, and that his mother's name was Salathiel, the daughter of Gomer, the son of Japheth, the son of Noah.

II. What he did. 1. He brought forth bread and wine, for the refreshment of Abram and his soldiers, and in congratulation of their victory. This he did as a king, teaching us to do good and to communicate, and to be given to hospitality, according to our ability; and representing the spiritual provisions of strength and comfort which Christ has laid up for us in the covenant of grace for our refreshment, when we are wearied with our spiritual conflicts. 2. As priest of the most high God, he blessed Abram, which we may suppose a greater refreshment to Abram than his bread and wine were. Thus God, having raised up his son Jesus, has sent him to bless us, as one having authority; and these whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. Christ went to heaven when he was blessing his disciples, Luke 24. 51, for that is it which he ever lives to do.

III. What he said, v. 19, 20. Two things were said by him, 1. He blessed Abram from God, v. 19, *Blessed be Abram, blessed of the most high God*. Observe the titles he here gives to God, which are very glorious: (1.) *The most high God*, which be

speaks his absolute perfections in himself, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures; he is King of kings. Note, It will greatly help both our faith and our reverence in prayer, to eye God as the most high God, and to call him so. (2.) *Possessor of heaven and earth*, that is, rightful Owner, and sovereign Lord, of all the creatures; because he made them. This bespeaks him a great God, and greatly to be praised, Ps. 24. 1, and them a happy people who have an interest in his favour and love. 2. He blessed God for Abram, v. 20, and *blessed be the most high God*. Note, (1.) In all our prayers, we must praise God, and join Hallelujahs with all our Hosannahs. These are the spiritual sacrifices we must offer up daily, and upon particular occasions. (2.) God, as the most high God, must have the glory of all our victories, Exod. 17. 15. 1 Sam. 7. 10, 12. Judg. 5. 1, 2. 2 Chron. 20. 21. In them he shows himself higher than our enemies, Exod. 18. 11, and higher than we; for without him we could do nothing. (3.) We ought to give thanks for others' mercies as for our own; triumphing with them that triumph. (4.) Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, is the Mediator both of our prayers and praises, and not only offers up our's, but his own for us. See Luke 10. 21.

IV. What was done to him. *Abram gave him tithes of all*, that is, of the spoils, Heb. 7. 4. This may be looked upon, 1. As a gratuity presented to Melchizedek, by way of return for his tokens of respect. Note, They that receive kindness, should show kindness. Gratitude is one of nature's laws. 2. As an offering vowed and dedicated to the most high God, and therefore put into the hands of Melchizedek his priest. Note, (1.) When we have received some signal mercy from God, it is very fit that we should express our thankfulness by some special act of pious charity. God must always have his dues out of our substance; especially when, by any particular providence, he has either preserved or increased it to us. (2.) That the tenth of our increase is a very fit proportion to be set apart for the honour of God, and the service of his sanctuary. (3.) That Jesus Christ, our great Melchizedek, is to have homage done him, and to be humbly acknowledged by every one of us as our King and Priest; and not only the tithe of all, but all we have, must be surrendered and given up to him.

21. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. 22. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, 23. That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich: 24. Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

We have here an account of what passed between Abram and the king of Sodom, who succeeded him that fell in the battle, v. 10, and thought himself obliged to do this honour to Abram, in return for the good services he had done him.

Here is,

I. The king of Sodom's grateful offer to Abram, v. 21, *Give me the soul, and take thou the substance*: so the Hebrew reads it. Here he fairly begs the persons, but as freely bestows the goods on Abram. Note, 1. Where a right is dubious and divided, it

is wisdom to compound the matter by mutual concessions rather than to contend. The king of Sodom had an original right both to the persons and to the goods, and it would bear a debate whether Abram's acquired right by rescue would supersede his title, and extinguish it; but, to prevent all quarrels, the king of Sodom makes this fair proposal. 2. Gratitude teaches us to recompense to the utmost of our power those that have undergone fatigues, run hazards, and been at expense, for our service and benefit. *Who goes a warfare at his own charges?* 1 Cor. 9. 7. Soldiers purchase their pay dearer than any labourers, and are well worthy of it, because they expose their lives.

II. Abram's generous refusal of this offer. He not only resigned the persons to him, who, being delivered out of the hand of their enemies, ought to have served Abram, but he restored all the goods too. He would not take from a thread to a shoe-latchet, not the least thing that had ever belonged to the king of Sodom or any of his. Note, A lively faith enables a man to look upon the wealth of this world with a holy contempt, 1 John 5. 4. What are all the ornaments and delights of sense to one that has God and heaven ever in his eye? He resolves even to a thread and a shoe-latchet; for a tender conscience fears offending in a small matter.

Now, 1. Abram ratifies this resolution with a solemn oath. *I have lift up mine hand to the Lord, that I will not take any thing*, v. 22. Here observe, (1.) The titles he gives to God, *The most high God, the Possessor of heaven and earth*, the same that Melchizedek had just now used, v. 19. Note, It is good to learn of others how to order our speech concerning God, and to imitate those who speak well in divine things. This improvement we are to make of the conversation of devout good men, we must learn to speak after them. (2.) The ceremony used in this oath, *I have lift up my hand*. In religious swearing we appeal to God's knowledge of our truth and sincerity, and imprecate his wrath if we swear falsely; the *lifting up of the hand* is very significant and expressive of both. (3.) The matter of the oath, namely, that he would not take any reward from the king of Sodom, was lawful, but what he was not antecedently obliged to. [1.] Probably, Abram vowed, before he went to the battle, that if God would give him success, he would, for the glory of God, and the credit of his profession, so far deny himself and his own right, as to take nothing of the spoils to himself. Note, The vows we have made when we are in pursuit of a mercy, must be carefully and conscientiously kept when we have obtained the mercy, though they were made against our interest. A citizen of Zion, if he has sworn, whether it be to God or man, though it prove to his own hurt, yet he changeth not, Ps. 15. 4. Or, [2.] Perhaps Abram, now when he saw cause to refuse the offer made him, at the same time confirmed his refusal with this oath, to prevent further importunity. Note, First, There may be good reason sometimes why we should debar ourselves of that which is our undoubted right, as St. Paul, 2 Cor. 8. 13.—9. 12. Secondly, That strong resolutions are of good use to put by the force of temptations.

2. He backs his refusal with a good reason, *lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram rich*; which would reflect reproach, (1.) Upon the promise and covenant of God, as if they would not have enriched Abram without the spoils of Sodom. And, (2.) Upon the piety and charity of Abram, as if all he had in his eye, when he undertook that hazardous expedition, was to enrich himself. Note, [1.] We must be very careful that we give not occasion to others to say things which they ought not. [2.] The people of God must, for their credit's sake, take



heed of doing any thing that looks mean or mercenary, or that savours of covetousness and self-seeking. Probably, Abram knew the king of Sodom to be a proud and scornful man, and one that would, though most unreasonably, be apt to turn such a thing as this to his reproach afterward; when we have to do with such men, we have need to act with particular caution.

3. He limits his refusal with a double proviso, *v. 24*. In making vows, we ought carefully to insert the necessary exceptions, that we may not afterward say before the angel, *It was an error*, *Ecc. 5. 6*. Abram here excepts, (1.) The food of his soldiers; they were worthy of their meat while they trod out the corn. This would give no colour to the king of Sodom to say that he had enriched Abram. (2.) The shares of his allies and confederates. *Let them take their portion*. Note, Those who are strict in restraining their own liberty, yet ought not to impose those restraints upon the liberties of others, nor to judge of them accordingly; we must not make ourselves the standard to measure others by. A good man will deny himself that liberty which he will not deny another, contrary to the practice of the Pharisees, *Matt. 23. 4*. There was not the same reason why Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, should quit their right, that there was why Abram should. They did not make the profession that he made, nor were they, as he was, under the obligation of a vow; they had not the hopes that Abram had of a portion in the other world, and therefore, by all means, *let them take their portion* of this.

## CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, we have a solemn treaty between God and Abram, concerning a covenant that was to be established between them. In the former chapter, we had Abram in the field with kings, here in the mount with God; and though there he looked great, yet, methinks, here he looks much greater; that honour have the great men of the world, but *this honour have all the saints*. The covenant to be settled between God and Abram, was a covenant of promises; accordingly, here is, I. A general assurance of God's kindness and good-will to Abram, *v. 1*. II. A particular declaration of the purposes of his love concerning him, in two things: 1. That he would give him a numerous issue, *v. 2. 6*. 2. That he would give him Canaan for an inheritance, *v. 7...21*. Either an estate without an heir, or an heir without an estate, would but have been a half comfort to Abram. But God ensures both to him; and that which made these two, the promised seed, and the promised land, comforts indeed to this great believer, was, that they were both typical of those two invaluable blessings, Christ and heaven; and so, we have reason to think, Abram eyed them.

1. **A**FTER these things, the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Observe here,

1. The time when God had this treaty with Abram: *After these things*. 1. After that famous act of generous charity which Abram had done, in rescuing his friends and neighbours out of distress, and that, *not for price nor reward*; after that, God made him this gracious visit. Note, Those that show favour to men, shall find favour with God. 2. After that victory which he had obtained over four kings: lest Abram should be too much elevated and pleased with that, God comes to him, to tell him he had better things in store for him. Note, A believing converse with spiritual blessings is an excellent means to keep us from being too much taken up with temporal enjoyments. The gifts of common providence are not comparable to those of covenant-love.

II. The manner in which God conversed with  
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Abram; *The word of the Lord came unto Abram*, that is, God manifested himself and his will to Abram in a vision; which supposes Abram awake, and some visible appearance of the Shechinah, or some sensible token of the presence of the divine glory. Note, The methods of divine revelation are adapted to our state in a world of sense.

III. The gracious assurance God gave him of his favour to him. 1. He called him by name, *Abram*, which was a great honour to him, and made his name great, and was also a great encouragement and assistance to his faith. Note, God's good word then does us good, when it is spoken by his Spirit to us in particular, and brought to our hearts. The word says, *Ho, every one*, *Isa. 55. 1*; the Spirit says, *Ho, such a one*. 2. He cautioned him against being disquieted and confounded; *Fear not, Abram*. Abram might fear lest the four kings he had routed, should rally again, and fall upon him to his ruin; "No," says God, "*Fear not*. Fear not their revenges, nor thy neighbours' envy; I will take care of thee." Note, (1.) Where there is great faith, yet there may be many fears, *2 Cor. 7. 5*. (2.) God takes cognizance of his people's fears though ever so secret, and *knows their souls*, *Ps. 31. 7*. (3.) It is the will of God that his people should not give way to prevailing fears, whatever happens. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but fear not, Abram. 3. He assured him of safety and happiness; that he should for ever be, (1.) As safe as God himself could keep him; *I am thy Shield*, or, somewhat more emphatically, *I am a Shield to thee*, present with thee, actually caring for thee. See *1 Chron. 17. 24*. Not only the God of Israel, but a God to Israel. Note, The consideration of this, that God himself is, and will be, a Shield to his people to secure them from all destructive evils, and a Shield ready to them, and a Shield round about them, should be sufficient to silence all their perplexing tormenting fears. (2.) As happy as God himself could make him; *I will be thy exceeding great Reward*; not only thy Rewarder, but thy Reward. Abram had generously refused the rewards which the king of Sodom offered him, and here God comes, and tells him he shall be no loser by it. Note, [1.] The rewards of believing obedience and self-denial, are exceeding great, *1 Cor. 2. 9*. [2.] God himself is the chosen and promised felicity of holy souls; chosen in this world, promised in a better. He is the *portion of their inheritance, and their cup*.

2. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3. And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir: but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels, shall be thine heir. 5. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

We have here the assurance given to Abram of a numerous offspring which should descend from him. In which, observe,

I. Abram's repeated complaint, *v. 2, 3*. This was that which gave occasion to this promise. The great affliction that sat heavy upon Abram, was the

want of a child; and the complaint of this he here *shows out before the Lord, and shows before him his trouble*, Ps. 142. 2. Note, Though we must never complain of God, yet we have leave to complain to him, and to be large and particular in the statement of our grievances; and it is some ease to a burthened spirit, to open its case to a faithful and compassionate friend; such a friend God is, whose ear is always open. Now his complaint is four-fold.

1. That he had no child, *v. 3, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed; not only no son, but no seed*; if he had had a daughter, from her the promised Messiah might have come, who was to be the seed of the woman; but he had neither son nor daughter. He seems to lay an emphasis on that, *to me*. His neighbours were full of children, his servants had children born in his house; "But *to me*," he complains, "thou hast given me none;" and yet God had told him he should be a favourite above all. Note, (1.) Those that are written childless, must see God writing them so. (2.) God often withholds those temporal comforts from his own children, which he gives plentifully to others that are strangers to him.

2. That he was never likely to have any; intimated in that, *I go*, or "I am going, childless, going into years, going down the hill apace; nay, I am going out of the world, going the way of all the earth. *I die childless*." So the LXX. "I leave the world, and leave no child behind me."

3. That his servants were, for the present, and were likely to be to him, instead of sons. While he lived, *the steward of his house was Eliezer of Damascus*; to him he committed the care of his family and estate, who might be faithful, but only as a servant, not as a son. When he died, *one born in his house would be his heir*, and would bear rule over all that for which he had laboured, Eccl. 2. 18, 19, 21. God had already told him that he would make of him *a great nation*, ch. 12. 2, and his seed as *the dust of the earth*, ch. 13. 16, but he had left him in doubt whether it should be his seed begotten, or his seed adopted, by a son of his loins, or only a son of his house. "Now, Lord," says Abram, "if it be only an adopted son, it must be one of my servants, which will reflect disgrace upon the promised Seed, that is to descend from him." Note, While promised mercies are delayed, our unbelief and impatience are apt to conclude them denied.

4. That the want of a son was so great a trouble to him, that it took away the comfort of all his enjoyments. "Lord what wilt thou give me? All is nothing to me, if I have not a son." Now (1.) If we suppose that Abram looked no further than a temporal comfort, this complaint was culpable. God had, by his *providence*, given him some good things, and more by his *promise*; and yet Abram makes no account of them, because he has not a son. It did very ill become *the father of the faithful* to say, *What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* immediately after God had said, *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*. Note, Those do not rightly value the advantages of their covenant-relation to God and interest in him, who do not think it sufficient to balance the want of any creature-comfort whatever. But, (2.) If we suppose that Abram, herein, had an eye to the Promised Seed, the imprudence of his desire was very commendable; all was nothing to him if he had not the earnest of that great blessing, and an assurance of his relation to the Messiah, which God had already encouraged him to maintain the expectation. He has wealth, and victory, and honour; but, while he is kept in the dark about the main matter, it is all nothing to him. Note, Till we have some comfortable evidence of our interest in Christ and the

new covenant, we should not rest satisfied with any thing else. "This, and the other, I have; but what will this avail me, if I go Christless?" Yet thus far the complaint was culpable, that there was some diffidence of the promise at the bottom of it, and a weariness of waiting God's time. Note, True believers sometimes find it hard to reconcile God's promises and his providences, when they seem to disagree.

II. God's gracious answer to this complaint. To the first part of the complaint, (*v. 2*.) God gave no immediate answer, because there was something of fretfulness in it; but when he renewed his address somewhat more calmly, (*v. 3*.) God answered him graciously. Note, If we continue instant in prayer, and yet pray with a humble submission to the divine will, we shall not seek in vain. 1. God gave him an express promise of a son, *v. 4*. This that is born in thy house, *shall not be thine heir*, as thou fearest, but one that shall *come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir*. Note, (1.) God makes heirs; he says, "This shall not, and this shall;" whatever men devise and design, in settling their estates, God's counsel shall stand. (2.) God is often better to us than our own fears, and gives the mercy we had long despaired of. 2. To affect him the more with surprise, he took him out, and showed him the stars, (this vision being early in the morning before day,) and then tells him, *So shall thy seed be*, *v. 5*. (1.) So numerous; the stars seem innumerable to a common eye: Abram feared he should have no child at all, but God tells him that the descendants from his loins should be so many as not to be numbered. (2.) So illustrious, resembling the stars in splendour: *for to them pertained the glory*, Rom. 9. 4. Abram's seed, according to his flesh, were like the *dust of the earth*, (ch. 13. 16.) but his spiritual seed are like the *stars of heaven*, not only numerous, but glorious, and very precious.

III. Abram's firm belief of the promise God now made him, and God's favourable acceptance of his faith, *v. 6*. 1. He believed in the Lord, that is, he believed the truth of that promise which God had now made him, resting upon the irresistible power, and the inviolable faithfulness, of him that made it; *Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Note, Those who would have the comfort of the promises, must mix faith with the promises. See how the apostle magnifies this faith of Abram, and makes it a standing example, Rom. 4. 19, 21, *He was not weak in faith; he staggered not at the promise; he was strong in faith; he was fully persuaded*. The Lord work such a faith in every one of us! Some think that his believing in the Lord, respected, not only the Lord promising, but the Lord promised, the Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. He believed in him, that is, received and embraced the divine revelation concerning him, and rejoiced to see his day, though at so great a distance, John 8. 56. 2. God counted it to him for righteousness; that is, upon the score of this, he was accepted of God, and, as the rest of the patriarchs, by faith he obtained the witness that he was righteous, Heb. 11. 4. This is urged in the New Testament, to prove that we are justified by faith without the works of the law; (Rom. 4. 3. Gal. 3. 6.) for Abram was so justified, while he was yet uncircumcised. If Abram that was so rich in good works, was not justified by them, but by his faith, much less can we, that are so poor in them. This faith, which was imputed to Abram for righteousness, had lately struggled with unbelief, (*v. 2*.) and, coming off a conqueror, it was thus crowned, thus honoured. Note, A fiducial, practical, acceptance of, and dependence upon, God's promise of grace and glory, in and through Christ, is that,

which according to the tenor of the new covenant, gives us a right to all the blessings contained in that promise. All believers are justified as Abram was, and it was his faith that was counted to him for righteousness.

7. And he said unto him, *I am the LORD* that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9. And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon. 10. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. 11. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away.

We have here the assurance given to Abram, of the land of Canaan for an inheritance.

I. God declares his purpose concerning it, v. 7. Observe here, Abram made no complaint in this matter, as he had done for the want of a child. Note, Those that are sure of an interest in the Promised Seed, will see no reason to doubt of a title to the promised land. If Christ is our's, heaven is our's. Observe, again, When he believed the former promise, (v. 6.) then God explained and ratified this to him. Note, To him that has (improves what he has) more shall be given. Three things God here reminds Abram of for his encouragement concerning the promise of this good land.

1. What God is in himself: *I am the Lord Jehovah*; and therefore, (1.) "*I may give it thee, for I am sovereign Lord of all, and have a right to dispose of the whole earth.*" (2.) "*I can give it thee, whatever opposition may be made, though by the sons of Anak.*" God never promises more than he is able to perform, as men often do. (3.) "*I will make good my promise to thee;*" Jehovah is not a man that he should lie.

2. What he had done for Abram: he had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, *out of the fire of the Chaldees*, so some, that is, (1.) From their idolatries: for the Chaldeans worshipped the fire; or, (2.) From their persecutions. The Jewish writers have a tradition that Abram was cast into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship idols, and was miraculously delivered. It is rather a *place* of that name. Thence God brought him by an effectual call; brought him with a gracious violence; snatched him as a brand out of the burning. This was, [1.] A *special* mercy; "*I brought thee, and left others, thousands, to perish there;*" God called him alone, Isa. 51. 2 [2.] A *spiritual* mercy; a mercy to his soul, a deliverance from sin, and its fatal consequences. If God save our souls, we shall want nothing that is good for us. [3.] A *fresh* mercy; lately bestowed, and therefore should the mercy be affecting; as that in the preface to the commandments, *I am the Lord that brought thee out of Egypt* lately. [4.] A *foundation* mercy; the beginning of mercy, peculiar mercy to Abram, and therefore a pledge of further mercy, Isa. 66. 9. Observe how God speaks of it as that which he gloried in, *I am the Lord that brought thee out*. He glories in it as an act both of power and grace; compare Isa. 29. 22, where he glories in it, long afterward. *Thus saith the Lord who redeemed Abram, redeemed him from sin.*

3. What he intended to do yet further for him;

"*I brought thee hither, on purpose to give thee this land to inherit it, not only to possess it, but to possess it as an inheritance, which is the sweetest and surest title.*" Note, (1.) The providence of God has secret but gracious designs in all its various dispensations toward good people; we cannot conceive the projects of providence, till the event shows them in all their mercy and glory. (2.) The great thing God designs in all his dealings with his people, is, to bring them safe to heaven. They are *chosen to salvation*, (2 Thess. 2. 13.) *called to the kingdom*, (1 Thess. 2. 12.) *begotten to the inheritance*, (1 Pet. 1. 3, 4.) and by all *made meet* for it, Col. 1. 12, 13. 2 Cor. 4. 17.

II. Abram desires a sign, v. 8, *Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* This did not proceed from distrust of God's power, or promise, as that of Zecharias; but he desired this, 1. For the strengthening and confirming of his own faith; he believed, (v. 6.) but here he prays, *Lord, help me against my unbelief*. Now he believed, but he desired a sign to be treasured up against an hour of temptation, not knowing how his faith might, by some event or other, be shocked and tried. Note, We all need, and should desire, helps from heaven for the confirming of our faith, and should improve sacraments, which are instituted signs for that purpose. See Judg. 6. 36. 40. 2 Kings 20. 8. 10. Isa. 7. 11, 12. 2. For the ratifying of the promise of his posterity, that they also might be brought to believe it. Note, Those that are satisfied themselves, should desire that others also might be satisfied, of the truth of God's promises. John sent his disciples to Christ, not so much for his own satisfaction as for their's, Matt. 11. 2. 3. Canaan was a type of heaven. Note, It is a very desirable thing to *know that we shall inherit the heavenly Canaan*, that is, to be confirmed in our belief of the truth of that happiness, and to have the evidences of our title to it more and more cleared up to us.

III. God directs Abram to make preparations for a sacrifice, intending by that to give him a sign, and Abram makes preparation accordingly, v. 9. 11, *Take me an heifer, &c.* Perhaps Abram expected some extraordinary sign from heaven; but God gives him a sign upon a sacrifice. Note, Those that would receive the assurances of God's favour, and would have their faith confirmed, must attend instituted ordinances, and expect to meet with God in them. Observe, 1. God appointed that each of the beasts used for this service should be three years old, because then they were at their full growth and strength. God must be served with the best we have, for he is the best. 2. We do not read that God gave Abram particular directions how to manage these beasts and fowls, knowing that he was so well versed in the law and custom of sacrifices, that he needed not any particular directions; or, perhaps, instructions were given him, which he carefully observed, though they are not recorded: at least, it was intimated to him, that they must be prepared for the solemnity of ratifying a covenant; and he well knew the manner of preparing them. 3. Abram took as God appointed him, though as yet he knew not how these things should become a sign to him. This was not the first instance of Abram's implicit obedience. He divided the beasts in the midst, according to the ceremony used in confirming covenants, (Jer. 34. 18, 19.) where it is said, *They cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts.* 4. Abram having prepared according to God's appointment, now set himself to wait for the sign God might give him by these, like the prophet upon his watch-tower, Hab. 2. 1. While God's appearing to own his sacrifice, was deferred, Abram continued waiting, and his expectations were raised by those delays; *when the fowls came down upon*

the carcasses to prey upon them, as common and neglected things, *Abram drove them away*, (v. 11.) believing that the vision would, at the end, *speak, and not lie*. Note, A very watchful eye must be kept upon our spiritual sacrifices, that nothing be suffered to prey upon them, and render them unfit for God's acceptance. When vain thoughts, like these fowls, come down upon our sacrifices, we must drive them away, and not suffer them to lodge within us, but *attend on God without distraction*.

12. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

We have here a full and particular discovery made to Abram of God's purposes concerning his seed. Observe,

I. The time when God came to him with this discovery; *when the sun was going down, or declining*, about the time of the *evening oblation*, 1 Kings 18. 36. Dan. 9. 21. Early in the morning, before day, while the stars were yet to be seen, God had given him orders concerning the sacrifices, (v. 5.) and we may suppose it was, at least his morning's work to prepare them and set them in order; when he had done this, he abode by them, praying and waiting till towards evening. Note, God often keeps his people long in expectation of the comforts he designs them, for the confirmation of their faith: but though the answers of prayer, and the performance of promises, come slowly, yet they come surely; *at evening time it shall be light*.

II. The preparatives for this discovery; 1. *A deep sleep fell upon Abram*, not a common sleep through weariness or carelessness, but a divine ecstasy, like that which the *Lord God caused to fall upon Adam*, (ch. 2. 21.) that being hereby wholly taken off from the view of things sensible, he might be wholly taken up with the contemplation of things spiritual. The doors of the body were locked up, that the soul might be private and retired, and might act the more freely, and like itself. 2. With this sleep, *a horror of great darkness fell upon him*; a sudden change! But just before, we had him solacing himself in the comforts of God's covenant, and in communion with him: and here *a horror of great darkness* falls upon him. Note, The children of light do not always walk in the light, but sometimes clouds and darkness are round about them. This great darkness, which brought horror with it, was designed, (1.) To strike an awe upon the spirit of Abram, and to possess him with a holy reverence, that the familiarity which God was pleased to admit him to, might not breed contempt. Note, Holy fear prepares the soul for holy joy; the spirit of bondage makes way for the spirit of adoption. God wounds first, and then heals; humbles first, and then lifts up, Isa. 6. 5, 6. (2.) To be a specimen of the methods of God's dealings with his seed; they must first be in the horror and darkness of Egyptian slavery, and then enter with joy into the good

land; and therefore he must have the foretaste of their sufferings, before he had the foresight of their happiness. (3.) To be an indication of the nature of that covenant of peculiarity which God was now about to make with Abram. The Old Testament dispensation, which was founded on that covenant, was a dispensation, [1.] Of darkness and obscurity, 2 Cor. 3. 13. [2.] Of dread and horror, Heb. 12. 18, &c.

III. The prediction itself; several things are here foretold.

1. The suffering state of Abram's seed for a long time, v. 13. Let not Abram flatter himself with the hopes of nothing but honour and prosperity in his family: no, he must know of a surety, that which he was loath to believe, that the promised seed should be a persecuted seed. Note, (1.) God sends the worst first; we must first suffer and then reign. (2.) He lets us know the worst before it comes, that when it comes, it may not be a surprise to us, John 16. 4. Now we have here, [1.] The *particulars* of their sufferings. *First*, They shall be *strangers*; so they were, first in Canaan, Ps. 105. 12, and afterward in Egypt: before they were lords of their own land, they were strangers in a strange land. The inconveniences of an unsettled state, make a happy settlement the more welcome. Thus the heirs of heaven are, first, strangers on earth, a land that is not their's. *Secondly*, They shall be *servants*; so they were to the Egyptians, Exod. 1. 13. See how that which was the doom of the Canaanites, ch. 9. 25, proves the distress of Abram's seed; they are made to serve, but with this difference, the Canaanites serve under a curse, the Hebrews under a blessing, and the *upright shall have dominion in the morning*, Ps. 49. 14. *Thirdly*, They shall be *sufferers*. Those whom they serve, *shall afflict them*; see Exod. 1. 11. Note, Those that are blessed and beloved of God, are often sorely afflicted by wicked men; and God foresees it, and takes cognizance of it. [2.] The *continuance* of their sufferings; *four hundred years*. This persecution *began with mocking*, when Ishmael, the son of an Egyptian, persecuted Isaac, who was *born after the spirit*, ch. 21. 9. Gal. 4. 29. It *continued in loathing*; for it was an abomination to the Egyptians to eat bread with the Hebrews, ch. 43. 32, and it came, at last, to *murder*, the basest of murders, that of their new-born children; so that more or less, it continued 400 years, though in extremity, not so many. This was a long time, but a limited time.

2. The judgment of the enemies of Abram's seed, v. 14, *That nation whom they shall serve*, even the Egyptians, *will I judge*. Th's points at the plagues of Egypt, by which God not only constrained the Egyptians to release Israel, but punished them for all the hardships they had put upon them. Note, (1.) Though God may suffer persecutors and oppressors to trample upon his people a great while, yet he will certainly reckon with them at last; for *his day is coming*, Ps. 37. 12, 13. (2.) The punishment of persecutors is the judgment of them; it is a righteous thing with God, and a particular act of justice, to *recompense tribulations to those that trouble his people*. The judging of the church's enemies, is God's work. *I will judge*: God can do it, for he is the Lord; he will do it, for he is his people's God, and he has said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*. To him therefore we must leave it, to be done in his way and time.

3. The deliverance of Abram's seed out of Egypt; that great event is here foretold, *Afterward, shall they come out with great substance*. It is here promised, (1.) That they shall be *enlarged*; *afterward*, they shall come out, that is, either, after they have been afflicted 400 years, when the days of their servitude are fulfilled, then they may expect deliver-

ance; or, after the Egyptians are judged and plagued. Note, The destruction of oppressors is the redemption of the oppressed; they will not let God's people go, till they are forced to it. (2.) That they should be *enriched*; they shall come out with great substance this was fulfilled, Exod. 12. 35, 36. God took care they should have, not only a good land to go to, but a good stock to bring with them.

4. Their happy settlement in Canaan, v. 16. They shall not only come out of Egypt, but *they shall come hither again*, hither to the land of Canaan, wherein thou now art. The discontinuance of their possession shall be no defeasance of their right; we must not reckon those comforts lost for ever, that are intermitted for a time. The reason why they must not have the land of promise in possession till the fourth generation, is, because the *iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*. Israel cannot be possessed of Canaan, till the Amorites be disposed; and they are not yet ripe for ruin. The righteous God has determined that they shall not be cut off, till they have persisted in sin so long, and arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that there may appear some equitable proportion between their sin and their ruin; and therefore till it come to that, the seed of Abram must be kept out of possession. Note, (1.) The measure of sin fills gradually: those that continue impenitent in wicked ways, are treasuring up unto themselves wrath. (2.) Some people's measure of sin fills slowly. The Sodomites, who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly, soon filled their measure; so did the Jews, who were in profession near to God; but the iniquity of the Amorites was long in the filling up. (3.) That this is the reason of the prosperity of wicked people; the measure of their sins is not yet full. The wicked *live, become old, and are mighty in power*, while God is *laying up their iniquity for their children*, Job 21. 7, 19. See Matt. 23. 32. Deut. 32. 34.

5. Abram's peaceful quiet death and burial, before these things should come to pass, v. 15. As he should not live to see that good land in the possession of his family, but must die as he lived, a stranger in it; so, to balance that, he should not live to see the troubles that should come upon his seed, much less to share in them. This is promised to Josiah, 2 Kings 22. 23. Note, Good men are sometimes greatly favoured by being *taken away from the evil to come*, Isa. 57. 1. Let this satisfy Abram, that, for his part, (1.) He shall go to his fathers in peace. Note, [1.] Even the friends and favourites of Heaven are not exempt from the stroke of death; *Are we greater than our father Abram which is dead?* John 8. 53. [2.] Good men die willingly; they are not fetched, they are not forced, but they go; their soul is not required, as his, Luke 12. 20, but cheerfully resigned: they would not live always. [3.] At death we go to our fathers, to all our fathers that are gone before us to the state of the dead, Job 21. 32, 33, to our godly fathers that are gone before us to the state of the blessed, Heb. 12. 23. The former thought helps to take off the terror of death, the latter puts comfort into it. [4.] Whenever a godly man dies, he dies in peace. If the way be piety, the end is peace, Ps. 37. 37. Outward peace, to the last, is promised to Abram; peace and truth in his days, whatever should come after, 2 Kings 20. 19. Peace with God, and everlasting peace, are sure to all the seed. (2.) He shall be *buried in a good old age*. Perhaps mention is made of his burial here, where the land of Canaan is promised him, because a burying place was the first possession he had in it. He shall not only die in peace, but die in honour, die, and be *buried* decently; not only *die in peace*, but *die in season*, Job 5. 25, 26. Note, [1.] Old age is a blessing; it is promised

in the fifth commandment; it is pleasing to nature; and a great opportunity to usefulness; [2.] Especially if it be a good old age: their's may be called a good old age, *First*, That are old and healthful, not loaded with such distempers as make them weary of life; *Secondly*, That are old and holy, old disciples, Acts 21. 16, whose hoary head is *found in the way of righteousness*, Prov. 16. 31. old and useful, old and exemplary for godliness; their's is indeed a good old age.

17. And it came to pass that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 18. In the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19. The Kenites, and the Kennizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20. And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, 21. And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Here is,

I. The covenant ratified, v. 17; the sign which Abram desired, was given at length, when the sun was gone down, so that it was dark; for that was a dark dispensation.

1. The *smoking furnace* signified the affliction of his seed in Egypt; they were there in the *iron furnace*, Deut. 4. 20, the *furnace of affliction*, Isa. 48. 10, labouring in the very fire. They were there in the smoke, their eyes darkened, that they could not see to the end of their troubles, and they at a loss to conceive what God would do with them; clouds and darkness were round about them.

2. The *burning lamp* denoteth comfort in this affliction: and this God showed Abram, at the same time that he showed him the *smoking furnace*. (1.) *Light* denoteth deliverance out of the furnace; their salvation was as a *lamp that burneth*, Isa. 62. 1. When God came down to deliver them, he appeared in a bush that *burned, and was not consumed*, Exod. 3. 2. (2.) The *lamp* denoteth direction in the smoke; God's word was their lamp; this word to Abram was so, it was a light shining in a dark place; perhaps this burning lamp prefigured the pillar of cloud and fire, which led them out of Egypt, in which God was. (3.) The *burning lamp* denoteth the destruction of their enemies who kept them so long in the furnace: see Zech. 12. 6. The same cloud that enlightened the Israelites, troubled and burned the Egyptians.

3. The *passing of these between the pieces*, was the confirming of the covenant God now made with him, that he might have strong consolation, being fully persuaded that what God promised, he would certainly perform. It is probable that this furnace and lamp, which passed between the pieces, burned and consumed them, and so completed the sacrifice, and testified God's acceptance of it, as of Gideon's, Judg. 6. 21. Manonah's, Judg. 13. 19, 20. and Solomon's, 2 Chron. 7. 1. so intimates, (1.) That God's covenants with man are made by *sacrifice*, Ps. 50. 5; by Christ, the great Sacrifice: no agreement without atonement. (2.) God's acceptance of our spiritual sacrifices, is a token for good, and an earnest of further favours: see Judg. 13. 23. And by this we may know that he accepts our sacrifices, if he kindle in our souls a holy fire of pious and devout affections in them.

II. The covenant repeated and explained, v. 18, *In that same day*, that day never to be forgotten,



the Lord made a covenant with Abram, that is, gave a promise to Abram, saying, *Unto thy seed have I given this land.* Here is, 1. A rehearsal of the grant: he had said before, *To thy seed will I give this land, ch. 12. 7.—13. 15.* But here he says, *I have given it;* that is, (1.) I have given the promise of it, the charter is sealed and delivered, and cannot be disannulled. Note, God's promises are God's gifts, and are so to be accounted of. (2.) The possession is as sure, in due time, as if it were now actually delivered to them: what God has promised, is as sure as if it were already done; hence it is said, *He that believes hath everlasting life, John 3. 36,* for he shall as surely go to heaven as if he were there already. 2. A recital of the particulars granted, such as is usual in the grants of land. He specifies the boundaries of the land intended hereby to be granted, v. 18. And then, for the greater certainty, as is usual in such cases, he mentions in whose tenure and occupation these lands now were. Then several nations or tribes, are here spoken of, v. 19. 21. that must be cast out, to make room for the seed of Abram. They were not possessed of all these countries, when God brought them into Canaan. The bounds are fixed much narrower, Num. 34. 2, 3, &c. But, (1.) In David's time and Solomon's, their jurisdiction extended to the utmost of these limits, 2 Chron. 9. 26. (2.) It was their own fault that they were not sooner and longer in possession of all these territories. They forfeited their right by their sins, and by their own sloth and cowardice kept themselves out of possession. 3. The land granted, is here described in its utmost extent, because it was to be a type of the heavenly inheritance, where there is room enough: in our Father's house are many mansions. The present occupants are named, because their number and strength, and long prescription, should be no hindrance to the accomplishment of this promise in its season, and to magnify God's love to Abram and his seed, in giving to that one nation the possession of many nations: so precious were they in his sight, and so *honourable*, Isa. 43. 4.

## CHAP. XVI.

Hagar is the person mostly concerned in the story of this chapter, an obscure Egyptian woman, whose name and story we had never heard of, if Providence had not brought her into the family of Abram. Probably, she was one of those maid-servants, which the king of Egypt, among other gifts, bestowed upon Abram, ch. 12. 16. Concerning her, we have four things in this chapter; I. Her marriage to Abram her master, v. 1. 3. II. Her misbehaviour toward Sarai, her mistress, v. 4, 6. III. Her discourse with an angel that met her in her flight, v. 7. 14. IV. Her deliverance of a son, v. 15, 16.

1. **N**OW Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had an hand-maid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

We have here the marriage of Abram to Hagar, who was his secondry wife; herein, though some excuse may be made for him, he cannot be justified; for *from the beginning it was not so*; and when it was so, it seems to have proceeded from an irregular desire to build up their families for the speedier peopling of the world and the church: it must not be

so now. Christ has reduced this matter to the first institution, and makes the marriage union to be between one man and one woman only.

Now,

I. The maker of this match (would one think it?) was Sarai herself: she said to Abram, *I pray thee go in unto my maid, v. 2.* Note, 1. It is the policy of Satan to tempt us by our nearest and dearest relations, or those friends that we have an opinion of and an affection for. The temptation is most dangerous, when it is sent by a hand that is least expected: it is our wisdom therefore to consider, not so much who speaks, as what is spoken. 2. God's commands consult our comfort and honour, much better than our own contrivances do. It had been much more for Sarai's interest, that Abram should have kept to the rule of God's law, than that he should have been guided by her foolish projects; but we often do ill for ourselves.

II. The inducement to it was Sarai's barrenness.

1. *Sarai bare Abram no children;* she was *very fair, ch. 12. 14;* she was an agreeable dutiful wife, and a sharer with him in his large possessions; and yet written childless. Note, (1.) God dispenses his gifts variously, loading us with benefits, but not overloading us: some cross or other is appointed to be an allay to great enjoyments. (2.) The mercy of children is often given to the poor, and denied to the rich; given to the wicked, and denied to good people; though the rich have most to leave them, and good people would take most care of their education: God does herein as it has pleased him.

2. She owned God's providence in this affliction; *the Lord hath restrained me from bearing.* Note, (1.) As where children are, it is God that gives them, ch. 33. 5, so where they are wanted, it is he that withholdeth them, ch. 30. 2. This evil is of the Lord. (2.) It becomes us to acknowledge this, that we may bear it, and improve it, as an affliction of his ordering for wise and holy ends.

3. She used this as an argument with Abram to marry his maid; and he was prevailed with by this argument to do it. Note, (1.) When our hearts are too much set upon any creature-comfort, we are easily put upon the use of indirect methods for the obtaining of it: inordinate desires commonly produce irregular endeavours: if our wishes be not kept in a submission to God's providence, our pursuits will scarcely be kept under the restraints of his precepts. (2.) It is for want of a firm dependence upon God's promise, and a patient waiting for God's time, that we go out of the way of our duty to catch at expected mercy; *He that believes, does not make haste.*

4. Abram's compliance with Sarai's proposal, we have reason to think, was from an earnest desire of the Promised Seed, on whom the covenant should be entailed. God had told him that his heir should be a son of his body, but had not yet told him that it should be a son by Sarai; therefore he thought, "Why not by Hagar: since Sarai herself proposed it?" Note, (1.) Foul temptations may have very fair pretences, and be coloured with that which is very plausible. (2.) Fleishly wisdom, as it anticipates God's time of mercy, so it puts us out of God's way. (3.) This would be happily prevented, if we would ask counsel of God by the word and by prayer, before we attempt that which is important and suspicious: herein Abram was wanting; he married without God's consent. *This persuasion came not of him that called him.*

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5. And Sarai said unto Abram, My



wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee. 6. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

We have here the immediate bad consequences of Abram's unhappy marriage to Hagar; a deal of mischief it made quickly: when we do not well, both sin and trouble lie at the door; and we may thank ourselves for the guilt and grief that follow us, when we go out of the way of our duty. See it in this story.

I. Sarai is despised, and thereby provoked and put into a passion, *v.* 4. Hagar no sooner perceives herself with child by her master, than she looks scornfully upon her mistress, upbraids her perhaps with her barrenness, insults over her, to make her to fret, as 1 Sam. 1. 6, and boasts of the prospect she had of bringing an heir to Abram, to that good land and to the promise; now she thinks herself a better woman than Sarai, more favoured by Heaven, and likely to be better beloved by Abram; and therefore she will not take it as she has done. Note, 1. Mean and servile spirits, when favoured and advanced either by God or man, are apt to grow haughty and insolent, and to forget their place and original. See Prov. 29. 21.—30. 21..23. It is a hard thing to bear honour aright. 2. We justly suffer by those whom we have sinfully indulged, and it is a righteous thing with God, to make those instruments of our trouble, whom we have made instruments of our sin, and to ensnare us in our own evil counsels; this stone will return upon him that rolleth it.

II. Abram is clamoured upon, and cannot be easy while Sarai is out of humour; she accosts him violently, and very unjustly charges him with the injury, (*v.* 5.) *My wrong be upon thee*; with a most unreasonable jealousy, suspecting that he countenanced Hagar's insolence; and, as one not willing to hear what Abram had to say for the rectifying of the mistake, and the clearing of himself, she rashly appeals to God in the case, *The Lord judge between me and thee*; as if Abram had refused to right her. Thus does Sarai, in her passion, speak as one of the foolish women speaketh. Note, 1. It is an absurdity which passionate people are often guilty of, to quarrel with others for that which they themselves must bear the blame of: Sarai could not but own that she had given her maid to Abram, and yet she cries out, *My wrong be upon thee*, when she should have said, *What a fool was I to do so!* That is never said wisely, which pride and anger have the inditing of; when passion is upon the throne, reason is out of doors, and is neither heard nor spoken. 2. Those are not always in the right, who are most loud and forward in appealing to God; rash and bold imprecations are commonly evidences of guilt and a bad cause.

III. Hagar is afflicted and driven from the house, *v.* 6. Observe,

1. Abram's meekness resigns the matter of the maid-servant to Sarai, whose proper province it was to rule that part of the family; *Thy maid is in thy hand*: though she was his wife, he would not countenance or protect her in any thing that was disrespectful to Sarai, for whom he still retained the same affection that ever he had. Note, Those who would keep up peace and love, must return soft answers to hard accusations; husbands and wives particularly should agree, and endeavour not

to be both angry together: *yielding pacifies great offences*; see Prov. 15. 1.

2. Sarai's passion will be revenged upon Hagar; *she dealt hardly with her*, not only confining her to her usual place and work, as a servant, but probably, making her to serve with rigour. Note, God takes notice of, and is displeased with the hardships which harsh masters unreasonably put upon their servants: they ought to forbear threatening, with Job's thought, *Did not he that made me, make him?* Job 31. 15.

3. Hagar's pride cannot bear it, her high spirit is become impatient of rebuke; *she fled from her face*; she not only avoided her wrath for the present, as David did Saul's, but she totally deserted her service, and ran away from the house, forgetting, (1.) What wrong she hereby did to her mistress, whose servant she was, and to her master, whose wife she was. Note, Pride will hardly be restrained by any bonds of duty, no not by many. (2.) That she herself had first given the provocation, by despising her mistress. Note, Those that suffer for their faults, ought to *bear it patiently*, 1 Pet. 2. 20.

7. And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

Here is the first mention we have in scripture of an angel's appearance. Hagar was a type of the law, which was given by the disposition of angels; but the world to come is not put in subjection to them, Heb. 2. 5. Observe,

1. How the angel arrested her in her flight, *v.* 7. It should seem, she was making toward her own country; for she was in the way to Shur, which lay toward Egypt. It were well if our afflictions would make us think of our home, the better country. But Hagar was now out of her place, and out of the way of her duty, and going further astray, when the angel found her. Note, 1. It is a great mercy to be stopped in a sinful way, either by conscience or by providence. 2. God suffers those that are out of the way, to wander a while, that when they see their folly, and what a loss they have brought themselves to, they may be the better disposed to return. Hagar was not stopped till she was in the wilderness, and had sat down weary enough, and glad of clear water to refresh herself with: God brings us into a wilderness, and there meets us, Hos. 2. 14.

II. How he examined her, *v.* 8. He called her *Hagar, Sarai's maid*, 1. As a check to her pride: though she was Abram's wife, and, as *such*, was obliged to return, yet he calls her *Sarai's maid*, to humble her. Note, Though civility teaches us to call others by their highest titles, yet humility and wisdom teach us to call ourselves by the lowest. 2. As a rebuke to her flight: Sarai's maid ought to be in Sarai's tent, and not wandering in the wilderness, and smuttering by a fountain of water. Note, It is good for us often to call to mind what our place and relation are. See Eccl. 10. 4.

Now, (1.) The questions the angel put to her, were proper and very pertinent. [1.] "*Whence comest thou?*" Consider that thou art running away, both from the duty thou wast bound to, and the privileges thou wast blessed with, in Abram's tent." Note, It is a great advantage to live in a religious

family, which those ought to consider, who have that advantage, yet upon every slight inducement, are forward to quit it. [2.] "*Whither wilt thou go?*" Thou art running thyself into sin, in Egypt." (If she return to that people, she will return to their gods,) "and into *danger*, in the wilderness" through which she must travel, Deut. 8. 15. Note, Those who are forsaking God and their duty, would do well to remember not only *whence they are fallen*, but *whither they are falling*. See Jer. 2. 18. *What hast thou to do* (with Hagar) in the way of Egypt? John 6. 68.

(2.) Her answer was honest, and a fair confession; *I flee from the face of my mistress*. In which [1.] She acknowledges her fault in fleeing from her mistress, and yet, [2.] excuses it, that it was *from the face*, or displeasure of her mistress. Note, Children and servants must be treated with mildness and gentleness, lest we provoke them to take any irregular courses, and so become accessory to their sin, which will condemn us, though it will not justify them.

(3.) How he sent her back, with suitable and compassionate counsel, v. 9, "*Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hand*. Go home, and humble thyself for what thou hast done amiss, and beg pardon, and resolve for the future, to behave thyself better." He makes no question but she would be welcome, though it does not appear that Abram sent after her. Note, Those, that are gone away from their place and duty, when they are convinced of their error, must hasten their return and reformation, how mortifying soever it may be.

10. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

12. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. 13. And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? 14. Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

We may suppose that the angel having given Hagar that good counsel, (v. 9.) *to return to her mistress*, she immediately promised to do so, and was setting her face homeward; and then the angel went on to encourage her with an assurance of the mercy God had in store for her and her seed: for God will meet those with mercy, that are returning to their duty: *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest*, Ps. 32. 5.

Here is,

I. A prediction concerning her posterity, given her for her comfort in her present distress. Notice is taken of her condition; *Behold, thou art with child*; and therefore this is not a fit place for thee to be in. Note, It is a great comfort to women with child to think that they are under the particular cognizance and care of the Divine Providence. God graciously considers that case, and suits supports to it.

Now, I. The angel assures her of a safe delivery,

and that of a son, which Abram desired. This fright and ramble of her's might have destroyed her hope of an offspring; but God dealt not with her according to her folly; *Thou shalt bear a son*: she was saved in child-bearing, not only by providence, but by promise.

2. He names her child, which was an honour both to her and it; call him *Ishmael*, *God will hear*; and the reason is, because the Lord has heard; he has, and therefore he will. Note, The experience we have had of God's seasonable kindness to us in distress, should encourage us to hope for the like help in the like exigencies, Ps. 10. 17. He has *heard thy affliction*. Note, (1.) Even there where there is little cry of devotion, the God of pity sometimes graciously hears the cry of affliction: tears speak as well as prayers. This speaks comfort to the afflicted, that God not only sees what their afflictions are, but hears what they say. (2.) That seasonable succours, in the day of affliction, ought always to be remembered with thankfulness to God. Such a time, in such a strait, *the Lord heard the voice of my affliction, and helped me*. See Deut. 26. 7. Ps. 31. 22.

3. He promises her a numerous offspring, v. 10, *I will multiply thy seed exceedingly*, Hebr. *Multiplying, I will multiply it*, that is, multiply it in every age, so as to perpetuate it. It is supposed that the Turks at this day descend from Ishmael; and they are a great people. This was in pursuance of the promise made to Abram, ch. 13. 16, *I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth*. Note, Many that are children of godly parents, have, for their sakes, a very large share of outward common blessings, though, like Ishmael, they are not taken into covenant: many are multiplied that are not sanctified.

4. He gives a character of the child she should bear, which, however it may seem to us, perhaps was not very disagreeable to her, v. 12, *He will be a wild man; a wild ass of a man*, so the word is; rude and bold, and fearing no man; untamed, untractable, living at large, and impatient of service and restraint. Note, The children of the bondwoman, who are out of covenant with God, are, as they were born, like the wild ass's colt; 'tis grace that reclaims men, civilizes them, and makes them wise, and good for something. It is foretold, (1.) That he should live in strife, and in a state of war; *his hand against every man*, that is his sin; and *every man's hand against him*, that is his punishment. Note, Those that have turbulent spirits, have commonly troublesome lives; they that are provoking, vexatious, and injurious to others, must expect to be repaid in their own coin. He that has his hand and tongue against every man, shall have every man's tongue and hand against him; and he has no reason to complain of it. And yet, (2.) That he should live in safety, and hold his own against all the world; *he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*; though threatened and insulted by all his neighbours, yet he shall keep his ground, and, for Abram's sake, more than his own, shall be able to make his part good with them: accordingly we read, ch. 25. 18, that he died, as he lived, *in the presence of all his brethren*. Note, Many that are much exposed by their own imprudence, yet are strangely preserved by the Divine Providence; so much better is God to them than they deserve, who not only *forfeit* their lives by sin, but *hazard* them.

II. Hagar's pious reflection upon this gracious appearance of God to her, v. 13, 14. Observe in what she said,

I. Her awful adoration of God's omniscience and providence, with application of it to herself; *she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her* that is, thus she made confession of his name, thus

she said to his praise, *Thou God seest me*: this should be with her, his name for ever, and this his memorial, by which she will know him and remember him while she lives, *Thou God seest me*. Note, (1.) The God with whom we have to do, is a seeing God, an all-seeing God. *God is*, (as the ancients expressed it) *all eye*. (2.) We ought to acknowledge this with application to ourselves. He that sees all, sees me, as David, Ps. 139. 1, *O God, thou hast searched me and known me*. (3.) A believing regard to God, as a God that sees us, will be of great use to us in our returns to him. It is a proper word for a penitent: [1.] "Thou seest my sin and folly:" I have *sinned before thee*, says the prodigal; *in thy sight*, says David. [2.] "Thou seest my sorrow and affliction;" that Hagar especially refers to: when we have brought ourselves into distress by our own folly, yet God has not forsaken us. [3.] "Thou seest the sincerity and seriousness of my return and repentance. Thou seest my secret mournings for sin, and secret motions toward thee." [4.] "Thou seest me, if in any instance I depart from thee," Ps. 44. 20, 21. This thought should always restrain us from sin, and excite us to duty; *Thou God seest me*.

2. Her humble admiration of God's favour to her: "*Have I here also looked after him that seeth me?*" Have I here *seen the back parts* of him that seeth me?" So it might be read, for the word is much the same with that, Exod. 33. 23. She saw not *face to face*, but as *through a glass darkly*, 1 Cor. 13. 12. Probably, she knew not who it was that talked with her, till he was departing, as Judges 6. 21, 22.—13. 21; and then she looked after him, with a reflection like that of the two disciples, Luke 24. 31, 32. Or, *Have I seen him that sees me?* Note, (1.) The communion which holy souls have with God, consists in their having an eye of *faith* toward him, as a God that has an eye of *favour* toward them. The intercourse is kept up by the eye. (2.) The privilege of our communion with God, is to be looked upon with wonder and admiration, considering *what we are*, who are admitted to this favour. "Have I that am so mean, I that am so vile?" 2 Sam. 7. 18. This privilege is thus to be looked upon, considering the *place* where we are thus favoured; "*here also?*" Not only in Abram's tent, and at his altar, but *here also*, in this wilderness? Here, where I never expected it, where I was out of the way of my duty? *Lord, how is it?*" John 14. 22. Some make the answer to this question to be negative, and so look upon it as a penitent reflection: "*Have I here also*, in my distress and affliction, *looked after God?*" No, I was as careless and unmindful of him as ever I used to be; and yet he has thus visited and regarded me:" for God often prevents us with his favours, and is found of those that seek him not, Isa. 65. 1.

III. The name which this gave to the place, v. 14, *Beer-lahai-roi, The well of him that lives and sees me*. It is probable that Hagar put this name upon it; and it was retained long after, in *perpetuam rei memoriam*—a lasting memorial of this event. This was the place, where the God of glory manifested the special cognizance and care he took of a poor woman in distress. Note, 1. He that is all-seeing, is ever-living; he lives and sees us. 2. Those that are graciously admitted into communion with God, and receive seasonable comforts from him, should tell others what he has done for their souls, that they also may be encouraged to seek him, and trust in him. 3. God's gracious manifestations of himself to us are to be had in everlasting remembrance by us, and should never be forgotten.

15. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and  
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Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16. And Abram was four-score and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

It is here taken for granted, though not expressly recorded, that Hagar did as the angel commanded her, returned to her mistress, and submitted herself; and then, in the fulness of time, she brought forth her son. Note, Those who obey divine precepts, shall have the comfort of divine promises. This was the son of the bond-woman that was *born after the flesh*, Gal. 4. 23, representing the unbelieving Jews, v. 25. Note, 1. Many who can call Abraham *father*, yet are *born after the flesh*, Matt. 3. 9. 2. The carnal seed in the church are sooner brought forth than the spiritual. It is an easier thing to persuade men to assume the form of godliness, than to submit to the power of godliness.

## CHAP. XVII.

This chapter contains articles of agreement covenanted and concluded upon between the great Jehovah, the Father of mercies, on the one part, and pious Abram, the Father of the faithful, on the other part. Abram is therefore called the *friend of God*, not only because he was the man of his *council*, but because he was the man of his *covenant*; both these secrets were with him: mention was made of this covenant, ch. 15. 18, but here it is particularly drawn up, and put into the form of a covenant, that Abram might have strong consolation. Here is, I. The circumstances of the making of this covenant, the time and manner, v. 1, and the posture Abram was in, v. 3. II. The covenant itself. In the general scope of it, v. 1. And afterward, in the particular instances. 1. That he should be the father of many nations, v. 4, 6, and, in token of that, his name was changed, v. 5. 2. That God would be a God to him and his seed, and would give them the land of Canaan, v. 7, 8. And the seal of this part of the covenant was circumcision, v. 9... 14. 3. That he should have a son by Sarai, and in token of that, *her name was changed*, v. 15, 16. This promise Abram received, v. 17. And his request for Ishmael (v. 18.) was answered, abundantly to his satisfaction, v. 19. 22. III. The circumcision of Abram and his family, according to God's appointment, v. 22-27.

1. **AND** when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, *I am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

Here is,

I. The time when God made Abram this gracious visit; *when he was 99 years old*, full 13 years after the birth of Ishmael. 1. So long, it should seem, God's extraordinary appearances to Abram were intermitted; and all the communion he had with God, was only in the usual way of ordinances and providences. Note, There are some special comforts which are not the daily bread, no not of the best saints, but they are favoured with them now and then. On this side heaven, they have convenient food, but not a continual feast. 2. So long the promise of Isaac was deferred. (1.) Perhaps to correct Abram's over-hasty marrying of Hagar. Note, The comforts we sinfully anticipate, are justly delayed. (2.) That Abram and Sarai being so far stricken in age, God's power, in this matter, might be the more magnified, and their faith the more tried. See Deut. 32. 36, John 11. 6, 15. (3.) That a child so long waited for, might be an *Isaac*, a son indeed, Isa. 54. 1.

II. The way in which God made this covenant with him; *The Lord appeared to Abram*, in the

*Shechinah*, some visible display of God's immediate glorious presence with him. Note, God first makes himself known to us, and gives us a sight of him by faith, and then takes us into his covenant.

III. The posture Abram put himself into upon this occasion. *He fell on his face while God talked with him*, v. 3. Either, 1. As one overcome by the brightness of the divine glory, and unable to bear the sight of it, though he had seen it several times before: Daniel and John did likewise, though they were also acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, Dan. 8. 27.—10. 9, 15. Rev. 1. 17. Or, 2. As one ashamed of himself, and blushing to think of the honours done to one so unworthy: he looks upon himself with humility, and upon God with reverence, and, in token of both, *falls on his face*, putting himself into a posture of adoration. Note, (1.) God graciously condescends to talk with those whom he takes into his covenant and communion with himself. He talks with them by his *word*, Prov. 6. 22. He talks with them by his *spirit*, John 14. 26. This honour have all his saints. (2.) Those that are admitted into fellowship with God, are, and must be, very humble and very reverent in their approaches to him. If we say we have fellowship with him, and the familiarity breeds contempt, we deceive ourselves. (3.) Those that would receive comfort from God, must set themselves to give glory to God, and to worship at his footstool.

IV. The general scope and summary of the covenant, laid down as the foundation on which all the rest was built; it is no other than the covenant of grace, still made with all believers in Jesus Christ, v. 1. Observe here,

1. What we may expect to find God to us; *I am the Almighty God*; by this name he chose to make himself known to Abram rather than by his name *Jehovah*, Exod. 6. 3. He used it to Jacob, ch. 35. 11. They called him by this name, ch. 28. 3.—43. 14.—48. 3; It is the name of God that is mostly used throughout the book of Job, at least thirty times in the discourses of that book. After Moses, *Jehovah* is more frequently used, and this very rarely; I am *El-shaddai*; it bespeaks the almighty power of God, either, (1.) As an *avenger*, from עָרַב *he laid waste*, so some; and they think God took this title from the destruction of the old world. This is countenanced by Isa. 13. 6, and Joel 1. 15. Or, (2.) As a *benefactor*, עֲשֵׂה *who*, and יָסוּף *sufficient*. He is a God, that is enough; or, as our old English translation reads it here very significantly, *I am God all-sufficient*. Note, The God with whom we have to do, is a *God that is enough*. [1.] He is enough in himself; he is self-sufficient; he has every thing, and he needs not any thing. [2.] He is enough to us, if we be in covenant with him: we have all in him, and we have enough in him; enough to satisfy our most enlarged desires, enough to supply the defect of every thing else, and to secure to us a happiness for our immortal souls: see Ps. 16. 5, 6.—73. 25.

2. What God requires that we be to him; the covenant is mutual, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, that is, upright and sincere; for herein the covenant of grace is well-ordered, that sincerity is our gospel perfection. Observe, (1.) That to be religious, is to walk before God in our integrity; it is to set God always before us, and to think, and speak, and act, in every thing, as those that are always under his eye. It is to have a constant regard to his word as our rule, and to his glory as our end, in all our actions, and to be continually in his fear. It is to be *inward with him*, in all the duties of religious worship, for in them particularly we walk before God, 1 Sam. 2. 30, and to be *entire for him*, in all holy conversation. I know no religion

but sincerity. (2.) That upright walking with God, is the condition of our interest in his all-sufficiency. If we neglect him, or dissemble with him, we forfeit the benefit and comfort of our relation to him. (3.) A continual regard to God's all-sufficiency, will have a great influence upon our upright walking with him.

4. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. 6. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

The promise here is introduced with solemnity: "*As for me*," says the great God, "behold, behold and admire it, behold and be assured of it, my covenant is with thee;" as before, v. 2, *I will make my covenant*. Note, The covenant of grace is a covenant of God's own making; this he glories in, (*as for me*), and so may we. Now here,

1. It is promised to Abram, that he should be a *father of many nations*: that is, 1. That his seed after the flesh, should be very numerous, both in Isaac and Ishmael, and in the sons of Keturah; something extraordinary is doubtless included in this promise, and we may suppose that the event answered to it, and that there have been, and are, more of the children of men descended from Abraham, than from any one man at an equal distance with him from Noah, the common root. 2. That all believers, in every age, should be looked upon as his spiritual seed, and that he should be called, not only the *friend of God*, but the *father of the faithful*. In this sense, the Apostle directs us to understand this promise, Rom. 4. 16, 17. He is the father of those in every nation, that by faith enter into covenant with God, and (as the Jewish writers express it) *are gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty*.

II. In token of this, his name was changed from *Abram*, a *high father*, to *Abraham*, the *father of a multitude*. This was, 1. To put an honour upon him: it is spoken of as the glory of the church, that she shall be called by a *new name*, which the mouth of the Lord shall name, Isa. 62. 2. Princes dignified their favourites, by conferring new titles upon them; thus was Abraham dignified by him that is indeed the Fountain of honour: all believers have a new name, Rev. 2. 17. Some think it added to the honour of Abraham's new name, that a letter of the name *Jehovah* was inserted into it, as it was a disgrace to Jeroniah to have the first syllable of his name cut off, because it was the same with the first syllable of that sacred name, Jer. 22. 28. Believers are named from Christ, Eph. 3. 15. 2. To encourage and confirm the faith of Abraham; while he was childless, perhaps even his own name was sometimes an occasion of grief to him: why should he be called a *high father*, who was not a father at all? But now that God had promised him a numerous issue, and had given him a name which signified so much, that name was his joy. Note, God calls things that are not, as though they were. It is the apostle's observation upon this very thing, Rom. 4. 17; he called Abraham the *father of a multitude*, because he should prove to be so in due time, though as yet he had but one child.

7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,

in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. 9. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. 10. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your fore-skin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12. And he that is eight days old, shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his fore-skin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Here is,

1. The *continuance* of the covenant; intimated in three things. 1. It is *established*; not to be altered or revoked: it is fixed, it is ratified, it is made as firm as the divine power and truth can make it. 2. It is *entailed*; it is a covenant, not with Abraham only, (then it would die with him,) but with his seed after him, not only with his seed after the flesh, but his spiritual seed. 3. It is *everlasting* in the evangelical sense and meaning of it. The covenant of grace is everlasting; it is *from* everlasting in the counsels of it, and *to* everlasting in the consequences of it; and the external administration of it is transmitted with the seal of it to the seed of believers, and the internal administration of it by the Spirit, to Christ's seed in every age.

II. The *contents* of the covenant; it is a covenant of promises, exceeding great and precious promises. Here are two, which, indeed, are all sufficient. 1. That God would be their God, *v.* 7, 8. All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys, and all its hopes, are summed up in this: a man needs desire no more than this, to make him happy. What God is himself, that he will be to his people; his wisdom their's, to guide and counsel them; his power their's, to protect and support them; his goodness their's, to supply and comfort them. What faithful worshippers can expect from the God they serve, believers shall find in God as their's. This is enough, yet not all. 2. That Canaan should be their everlasting possession, *v.* 8. God had before promised this land to Abraham, and his seed, *ch.* 15. 18. But here, where it is promised for an everlasting possession, surely it must be looked upon as a type of heaven's happiness, that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God, *Heb.* 4. 9. This is that better country to which Abraham had an eye, and the grant of which was that which answered to the vast extent and compass of that promise, that God would be to them a God; so that if God had not prepared and designed this, he would

have been ashamed to be called their God, *Heb.* 11. 16. As the land of Canaan was secured to the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, so heaven is secured to all his spiritual seed, by a covenant, and for a possession, truly everlasting. The offer of this eternal life is made in the word, and confirmed by the sacraments, to all that are under the external administration of the covenant; and the earnest of it is given to all believers, *Eph.* 1. 14. Canaan is here said to be the land wherein Abraham was a stranger; and heaven is a land to which we are strangers, for it does not yet appear what we shall be.

III. The *token* of the covenant, and that is *circumcision*, for the sake of which the covenant is itself called the *covenant of circumcision*, *Acts* 7. 8. It is here said to be the covenant which Abraham and his seed must keep, as a copy or counterpart, *v.* 9, 10. It is called a sign and seal, *Rom.* 4. 11, for it was, 1. A confirmation to Abraham and his seed, of those promises which were God's part of the covenant, assuring them that they should be fulfilled; that in due time Canaan should be their's; and the continuance of this ordinance, after Canaan was their's, intimates that that promise looked further, to another Canaan, which they must still be in expectation of: see *Heb.* 4. 8. 2. An obligation upon Abraham and his seed, to that duty which was their part of the covenant; not only to the duty of accepting the covenant and consenting to it, and the putting away of the corruption of the flesh, (which were more immediately and primarily signified by circumcision,) but, in general, to the observation of all God's commands, as they should at any time hereafter be intimated and made known to them; for circumcision made men *debtors to do the whole law*, *Gal.* 5. 3. They who will have God to be to them a God, must consent and resolve to be to him a people.

Now, (1.) Circumcision was a bloody ordinance; for all things by the law were purged with blood, *Heb.* 9. 22. See *Exod.* 24. 8. But the blood of Christ being shed, all bloody ordinances are now abolished; circumcision therefore gives way to baptism. (2.) It was peculiar to the *males*; though the women also were included in the covenant, for the man is the head of the woman. In our kingdom, the oath of allegiance is required only from men: some think that the blood of the males only was shed in circumcision, because respect was had in it to Jesus Christ, and his blood. (3.) It was the flesh of the fore-skin that was to be cut off, because it is by ordinary generation that sin is propagated, and with an eye to the Promised Seed, who was to come from the loins of Abraham. Christ having not yet offered himself for us, God would have man to enter into covenant by the offering of some part of his own body, and no part could be better spared. It is a secret part of the body: for the true circumcision is that of the heart: this honour God put upon an uncemely part, *1 Cor.* 12. 23, 24. (4.) The ordinance was to be administered to children when they were eight days old, and not sooner: that they might gather some strength to be able to undergo the pain of it, and that at least one sabbath might pass over them. (5.) The children of the *stranger*, of whom the master of the family was the true domestic owner, were to be circumcised, *v.* 12, 13, which looked favourably upon the gentiles, who should, in due time, be brought into the family of Abraham by faith: see *Gal.* 3. 14. (6.) The religious observance of this institution was required, under a very severe penalty, *v.* 14. The contempt of circumcision was a contempt of the covenant; if the parents did not circumcise their children, it was at their peril, as in the case of Meses, *Exod.* 4. 24, 25. With respect to these that were

not circumcised in their infancy, if, when they grew up, they did not themselves come under this ordinance, God would surely reckon with them. If they cut not off the flesh of their fere-skin, God would cut them off from their people. It is a dangerous thing to make light of divine institutions, and to live in the neglect of them.

15. And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall her name be*. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of nations*; kings of people shall be of her. 17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall *a child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18. And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and with his seed after him*. 20. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. 22. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Here is,

I. The promise made to Abram of a son by Sarai, that son in whom the promise, made to him, should be fulfilled, that he should be the father of many nations; for *she also shall be a mother of nations, and kings of people shall be of her*, v. 16. Note, 1. God reveals the purposes of his good-will to his people by degrees. God had told Abraham, long before, that he should have a son by Sarai. 2. The blessing of the Lord makes fruitful, and adds no sorrow with it, no such sorrow as was in Hagar's case. "I will bless her with the blessing of fruitfulness, and then thou shalt have a son of her." 3. Civil government and order are a great blessing to the church. It is promised, not only that *people*, but *kings of people*, should be of her; not a headless rout, but a well-modelled, well-governed society.

II. The ratification of this promise was the change of Sarai's name into Sarah, v. 15, the same letter added to her name that was to Abraham's, and for the same reasons. Sarai signifies *my princess*, as if her honour were confined to one family only; Sarah signifies *a princess*, namely of *multitudes*; or, signifying that from her should come the Messiah, the Prince, even the Prince of the kings of the earth.

III. Abraham's joyful, thankful entertainment of this gracious promise, v. 17. Upon this occasion, he expressed, 1. *Great humility*; he fell on his face. Note, The more honours and favours God confers upon us, the lower we should be in our own eyes, and the more reverent and submissive before God. 2. *Great joy*; he laughed, it was a laughter of delight, not of distrust. Note, Even the promises of a holy God, as well as his performances, are the

joys of holy souls; there is the joy of faith, as well as the joy of fruition. Now it was that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day; now he saw it, and was glad, John 8. 56, for as he saw heaven in the promise of Canaan, so he saw Christ in the promise of Isaac. 3. *Great admiration*; *shall a child be born to him that is an 100 years old?* He does not here speak of it as at all *doubtful*, (for we are sure that he *staggered not at the promise*, Rom. 4. 20.) but as very *wonderful*, and that which could not be effected but by the almighty power of God, and as very *kind*, and a favour which was the more affecting and obliging for this, that it was extremely surprising, Ps. 126. 1, 2.

IV. Abraham's prayer for Ishmael, v. 18, *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* This he speaks, not as desiring that Ishmael might be preferred before the son he should have by Sarah; but, dreading lest he should be abandoned and forsaken of God, he puts up this petition on his behalf. Now that God is talking with him, he thinks he has a very fair opportunity to speak a good word for Ishmael, and he will not let it slip. Note, 1. Though we ought not to prescribe to God, yet he gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly free with him, and particular in making known our requests, Phil. 4. 6. Whatever is the matter of our care and fear, should be spread before God in prayer. 2. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, for all their children, as Job, who offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all, Job 1. 5. Abraham would not have it thought, when God promised him a son by Sarah, which he so much desired, that then his son by Hagar was forgotten; no, still he bears him upon his heart, and shows a concern for him. The prospect of further favours must not make us unmindful of former favours. 3. The great thing we should desire of God for our children, is, that they may live before him, that is, that they may be kept in covenant with him, and may have grace to walk before him in their uprightness; spiritual blessings are the best blessings, and which we should be most earnest with God for, both for ourselves, and others. These live well, that live before God.

V. God's answer to his prayer; and it is an answer of peace; Abraham could not say that he sought God's face in vain.

1. *Common* blessings are secured to Ishmael, v. 20, *As for Ishmael*, whom thou art in so much care about, *I have heard thee*; he shall find favour for thy sake; *I have blessed him*, that is, I have many blessings in store for him. (1.) His posterity shall be *numerous*; *I will multiply him exceedingly*, more than his neighbours: this is the fruit of the blessing, as that, ch. 1. 28. (2.) They shall be *considerable*; *twelve princes shall he beget*: we may charitably hope that spiritual blessings also were bestowed upon him, though the visible church was not brought out of his loins, and the covenant was not lodged in his family. Note, Great plenty of outward good things is often given to those children of godly parents, who are born after the flesh, for their parents' sake.

2. *Covenant*-blessings are reserved for Isaac, and appropriated to him, v. 19, 21. If Abraham, in his prayer for Ishmael, meant that he would have the covenant made with him, and the Promised Seed to come from him; then, God did not answer him in the letter, but in that sense which was equivalent, nay, which was every way better. (1.) God repeats to him the promise of a son by Sarah; *she shall bear thee a son indeed*. Note, [1.] Even true believers need to have God's promises doubled and repeated to them, that they may have strong consolation, Heb. 6. 18. [2.] Children of the promise are children indeed. (2.) He names that child,



calls him *Isaac, Laughter*; because Abraham rejoiced in spirit, when this son was promised him. Note, If God's promises be our joy, his mercies promised shall in due time be our *exceeding* joy. Christ will be *Laughter* to them that look for him; they that now rejoice in hope, shall shortly rejoice in having that which they hope for: this is laughter that is not mad. (3.) He entails the covenant upon that child; *I will establish my covenant with him*. Note, God takes whom he pleases into covenant with himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: see Rom. 9. 8, 18. Thus was the covenant settled between God and Abraham, with its several limitations and remainders, and then the covenant ended; *God left off talking with him*, and the vision disappeared, *God went up from Abraham*. Note, Our communion with God here is broken and interrupted; in heaven it will be a continual and everlasting feast.

23. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their fore-skin in the self-same day, as God had said unto him. 24. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin. 25. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin. 26. In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

We have here Abraham's obedience to the law of circumcision; he himself, and all his family, were circumcised; so receiving the token of the covenant, and distinguishing themselves from other families that had no part nor lot in the matter. 1. It was an *implicit* obedience; he did as God said unto him, and did not ask why or wherefore. God's will was not only a law to him, but a reason; he did it, because God bid him. 2. It was a *speedy* obedience; in the self-same day, v. 23, 26. Sincere obedience is not dilatory, Ps. 119. 60. While the command is yet sounding in our ears, and the sense of duty is fresh, it is good to apply ourselves to it immediately, lest we deceive ourselves by putting it off to a more convenient season. 3. It was an *universal* obedience; he did not circumcise his family, and excuse himself, but set them an example; nor did he take the comfort of the seal of the covenant to himself only, but desired that all might share with him in it: this is a good example to masters of families; they and their houses must serve the Lord. Though God's covenant was not established with Ishmael, yet he was circumcised; for children of believing parents, as such, have a right to the privileges of the visible church, and the seals of the covenant, whatever they may prove afterward; Ishmael is blessed, and therefore circumcised. 4. Abraham did this, though much might be objected against it: though circumcision was painful, though to grown men it was shameful; though, while they were so weak and unfit for action, their enemies might take advantage against them, as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites; though Abraham was 99 years old, and had been justified and accepted of God long since; though so strange a thing done religiously, might be turned to his reproach by the Canaanite and the Perizzite that dwelt then in the

land; yet God's command was sufficient to answer these, and a thousand such objections; what God requires, we must do, not *conferring with flesh and blood*.

## CHAP. XVIII.

We have an account in this chapter of another interview between God and Abraham, probably, within a few days after the former, as a reward of his cheerful obedience to the law of circumcision. Here is, I. The kind visit, which God made him, and the kind entertainment which he gave to that visit, v. 1. 8. II. The matters discoursed of between them. 1. The purposes of God's love concerning Sarah, v. 9. 15. 2. The purposes of God's wrath concerning Sodom. (1.) The discovery God made to Abraham of his design to destroy Sodom, v. 16. 22. (2.) The intercession Abraham made for Sodom, v. 23. 33.

1. **A**ND the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; 2. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that, ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. 7. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. 8. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

This appearance of God to Abraham seems to have had in it more of freedom and familiarity, and less of grandeur and majesty, than those we have hitherto read of; and therefore more resembles that great visit, which, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was to make to the world; when the Word would be made flesh, and appear as one of us. Observe here,

I. How Abraham expected strangers, and how richly his expectations were answered, v. 1. *He sat in the tent-door, in the heat of the day*; not so much to repose or divert himself, as to seek an opportunity of doing good, by giving entertainment to strangers and travellers, there being perhaps no inns to accommodate them. Note, 1. We are likely to have the most comfort of those good works that we are most free and forward to. 2. God graciously visits those in whom he has first raised the expectation of him, and manifests himself to these that wait for him. When Abraham was thus sitting, he saw three men coming toward him. These three men were three spiritual heavenly beings, now assuming human bodies, that they might be visible to Abraham, and conversable with him. Some think that they were all created angels, others, that one of

them was the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant, whom Abraham distinguished from the rest, *v. 3*, and who is called *Jehovah*, *v. 13*. The apostle improves this, for the encouragement of hospitality, *Heb. 13. 2*. Those that have been forward to entertain strangers, have entertained angels, to their unspeakable honour and satisfaction. Where, upon a prudent and impartial judgment, we see no cause to suspect ill, charity teaches us to hope well, and to show kindness accordingly; it is better to feed five drones, or wasps, than to starve one bee.

II. How Abraham entertained those strangers, and how kindly his entertainment was accepted. The Holy Ghost takes particular notice of the very free and affectionate welcome which Abraham gave to the strangers. 1. He was complaisant and respectful to them; forgetting his age, he *ran to meet them* in the most obliging manner, and *bowed himself toward the ground*, though as yet he knew nothing of them, but that they appeared graceful respectable men. Note, Religion does not destroy, but improves good manners, and teaches us to honour all men. Decent civility is a great ornament to piety. 2. He was very earnest and importunate for their stay, and took it as a great favour, *v. 3, 4*. Note, (1.) It becomes those whom God has blessed with plenty, to be liberal and open hearted in their entertainments, according to their ability, and (not to compliment, but cordially) to bid their friends welcome: we should take a pleasure in showing kindness to any; for both God and man love a cheerful giver. Who would *eat the bread of him that has an evil eye?* *Prov. 23. 6, 7*. (2.) Those that would have communion with God, must earnestly desire it, and pray for it. God is a Guest worth entreating. 3. His entertainment, though it was very free, yet was plain and homely, and there was nothing in it of the gaudy and niceness of these times. His dining-room was an harbour under a tree; no rich table-linen, no side-board set with plate; his feast was a joint or two of veal, and some *cakes baked on the hearth*, and both hastily dressed up; here were no dainties, no varieties, no forced-meats, no sweet-meats, but good plain wholesome food, though Abraham was very rich, and his guests very honourable. Note, We ought not to be curious in our diet: let us be thankful for food convenient, though it be homely and common; and not be desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat to those that love them and set their hearts upon them. 4. He and his wife were both of them very attentive, and busy, in accommodating their guests with the best they had, Sarah herself is cook and baker; Abraham runs to fetch the calf, brings out the milk and butter, and thinks it not below him to wait at table, that he might show how heartily welcome his guests were. Note, (1.) Those that have real merit, need not take state upon them. (2.) Hearty friendship will stoop to any thing but sin, Christ himself has taught us to wash one another's feet, in humble love. They that thus abase themselves, shall be exalted. Here Abraham's faith showed itself in good works; and so must our's, else it is dead, *Jam. 2. 21, 26*. The father of the faithful was famous for charity, and generosity, and good house-keeping; and we must learn of him to *do good, and communicate*. Job did not eat his morsel alone, *Job 31. 17*.

9. And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind him. 11. Now Abraham and

Sarah were old and well-stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13. And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed, I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15. Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

These heavenly guests, (being sent to confirm the promise lately made to Abraham, that he should have a son by Sarah,) while they are receiving Abraham's kind entertainment, thus return his kindness: he receives angels, and has angels' reward; a gracious message from Heaven, *Matt. 10. 41*.

I. Care is taken that Sarah should be with a hearing. She must conceive by faith, and therefore the promise must be made to her, *Heb. 11. 11*. It was the modest usage of that time, that the women did not sit at meat with men, at least, not with strangers, but confined themselves to their own apartments; therefore Sarah is here out of sight; but she must not be out of hearing. The angels inquire, *v. 9*, *Where is Sarah thy wife?* By naming her, they gave intimation enough to Abraham that though they seemed strangers, yet they very well knew him and his family; by inquiring after her, they showed a friendly kind concern for the family and relations of one whom they found respectful to them. It is a piece of common civility, which ought to proceed from a principle of christian love, and then it is sanctified. And by speaking of her, (she over-hearing it,) they drew her to listen to what was further to be said. *Where is Sarah thy wife?* say the angels; *Behold, in the tent*, said Abraham. Where should she be else? There she is in her place, as she used to be, and is now within call. Note, 1. The daughters of Sarah must learn of her, to be *chaste keepers at home*, *Titus 2. 5*. There is nothing got by gadding. 2. Those are most likely to receive comfort from God and his promises, that are in their place, and in the way of their duty, *Luke 2. 8*.

II. The promise is then renewed and ratified, that she should have a son, *v. 10*, *"I will certainly return unto thee, and visit thee next time, with the performance, as now I do, with the promise."* God will return to those that bid him welcome, that entertain his visits: *"I will return thy kindness, Sarah thy wife shall have a son;"* it is repeated again, *v. 14*. Thus the promises of the Messiah were often repeated in the Old Testament, for the strengthening of the faith of God's people. We are slow of heart to believe, and therefore have need of line upon line to the same purport. This is that word of promise which the apostle quotes, *Rom. 9. 9*, as that, by the virtue of which Isaac was born. Note, 1. The same blessings which others have from common providence, believers have from the promise, which makes them very sweet, and very sure. 2. The spiritual seed of Abraham owe their life, and joy, and hope, and all, to the promise. They are born by the word of God, *1 Pet. 1. 23*.

III. Sarah thinks this too good news to be true, and therefore cannot as yet find in her heart to believe it, *v. 12*, *Sarah laughed within herself*. It was not a pleasing laughter of faith, like Abraham's, *ch. 17. 17*, but it was a laughter of doubting and

mis-trust. Note, The same thing may be done from very different principles, which God only can judge of, who knows the heart. The great objection which Sarah could not get over, was her age. "*I am waxed old*, and past child-bearing in the course of nature; especially having been hitherto barren; and (which magnifies the difficulty) *My lord is old also*." Observe here, 1. Sarah calls Abraham her *lord*; it was the only good word in this saying, and the Holy Ghost takes notice of it to her honour, and recommends it to the imitation of all chaste wives, 1 Pet. 3. 6, *Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*, in token of respect and subjection. Thus must the wife reverence her husband, Eph. 5. 33. And thus must we be apt to take notice of what is spoken decently and well, to the honour of them that speak it, though it may be mixed with that which is amiss, over which we should cast a mantle of love. 2. Human improbability often sets up in contradiction to the divine promise. The objections of sense are very apt to stumble and puzzle the weak faith even of true believers. It is hard to cleave to the First Cause, when second causes frown. 3. Even there where is true faith, yet there are often sore conflicts with unbelief; Sarah could say, *Lord, I believe*, (Heb. 11. 11.) and yet must say, *Lord, help my unbelief*.

IV. The angel reproves the indecent expressions of her distrust, v. 13, 14. Observe, 1. Though Sarah was most kindly and generously entertaining these angels, yet, when she did amiss, they reproved her for it, as Christ reproved Martha in her own house, Luke 10. 40, 41. If our friends be kind to us, we must not therefore be so unkind to them as to suffer sin upon them. 2. God gave this reproof to Sarah by Abraham her husband; to him he said, *Why did Sarah laugh?* Perhaps, he had not told her of the promise that had been given him some time before to this purport; if he had communicated it to her with its ratifications, she would hardly have been so surprised at it now. Or, Abraham was told of it, that he might tell her of it; mutual reproof, when there is occasion for it, is one of the duties of that relation. 3. The reproof itself is plain, and backed with a good reason. *Wherefore did Sarah laugh?* Note, (1.) It is good to inquire into the reason of our laughter, that it may not be the laughter of a fool, Eccl. 7. 6. "Wherefore did I laugh?" (2.) Our unbelief and distrust are a great offence to the God of heaven. He justly takes it ill, to have the objections of sense set up in contradiction to his promise, as Luke 1. 18. Here is a question asked, which is enough to answer all the cavils of flesh and blood; *Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Heb. *too wonderful*; that is, [1.] Is any thing so secret as to escape his cognizance? No, not Sarah's laughing, though it was only *within herself*. Or, [2.] Is any thing so difficult as to exceed his power? No, not the giving of a child to Sarah in her old age.

V. Sarah foolishly endeavours to conceal her fault, v. 15, *She denied, saying, I did not laugh*; thinking nobody could disprove her: she told this lie, because *she was afraid*; but it was in vain to attempt concealing it from an all-seeing eye; she was told, to her shame, *Thou didst laugh*. Now, 1. There seems to be in Sarah a retraction of her distrust. Now that she perceived, by laying circumstances together, that it was a divine promise which had been made concerning her, she renounces all doubting distrustful thoughts about it. But, 2. There was withal a sinful attempt to cover a sin with a lie. It is a shame to do amiss, but a greater shame to deny it; for thereby we add iniquity to our iniquity. Fear of a rebuke often betrays us into this snare. See Isa. 57. 11, *Whom hast thou feared, that thou hast lied?* But we deceive ourselves, if we think to impose up-

on God; he can and will, bring truth to light, to our shame. *He that covers his sin, cannot prosper*; for the day is coming, which will discover it.

16. And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18. Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20. And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21. I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is to come unto me; and if not, I will know. 22. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

The messengers from heaven had now despatched one part of their business, which was an errand of grace to Abraham and Sarah, and which they delivered first; but now they have before them work of another nature: Sodom is to be destroyed, and they must do it, ch. 19. 13. Note, As with the LORD there is mercy, so he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. Pursuant to their commission, we here find, 1. That *they looked toward Sodom*, v. 16, they set their faces against it in wrath: as God is said to look unto the host of the Egyptians, Exod. 14. 24. Note, Though God has long seemed to connive at sinners, from which they have inferred that the LORD does not see, does not regard; yet, when the day of his wrath comes, he will look towards them. 2. That *they went toward Sodom*, v. 22, and accordingly, we find two of them at Sodom, ch. 19. 1. Whether the third was the LORD, before whom Abraham yet stood, and to whom he drew near, v. 23, as most think, or whether the third left them before they came to Sodom, and the LORD before whom Abraham stood, was the *Shechinah*, or that appearance of the Divine Glory which Abraham had formerly seen and conversed with, is uncertain. However, we have here, (1.) The honour Abraham did to his guests; *he went with them to bring them on the way*, as one that was loath to part with such good company, and was desirous to pay his utmost respects to them. This is a piece of civility, proper to be showed to our friends; but it must be done as the apostle directs, (3 John 6.) *after a godly sort*. (2.) The honour they did to him; for those that honour God, he will honour; God communicated to Abraham his purpose to destroy Sodom, and not only so, but entered into a free conference with him about it. Having taken him, more closely than before, into covenant with himself, ch. 17, he here admits him into more intimate communion with himself than ever, as the man of his counsel. Observe here,

1. God's friendly *thoughts concerning Abraham*, (v. 17. 19.) where we have his resolution to make known to Abraham his purpose concerning Sodom,

with the reasons of it. If Abraham had not brought them on their way, perhaps he had not been thus favoured; but he that loves to walk with wise men, shall be wise, Prov. 13. 20. See how God is pleased to argue with himself; *Shall I hide from Abraham* (or, as some read it, *Am I concealing from Abraham*) *that thing which I do?* "Can I go about such a thing, and not tell Abraham?" Thus does God, in his counsels, express himself, after the manner of men, with deliberation. But why must Abraham be of the cabinet council? The Jews suggest that because God had granted the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, therefore he would not destroy those cities which were a part of that land, without his knowledge and consent. But God here gives two other reasons.

1. Abraham must know, for he is a friend and a favourite, and one that God has a particular kindness for, and great things in store for. He is to become a great nation; and not only so, but in the Messiah which is to come from his loins, *All nations of the earth shall be blessed.* Note, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, Ps. 25. 14. Prov. 3. 32. Those that by faith live a life of communion with God, cannot but know more of his mind than other people, though not with a prophetic, yet with a prudential, practical, knowledge. They have a better *insight* than others into what is present, (Hos. 14. 9. Ps. 107. 43.) and a better *foresight* of what is to come, at least, so much as suffices for their conduct and for their comfort.

2. Abraham must know, for he will teach his household, v. 19, *I know Abraham very well, that he will command his children and his household after him.*

Consider this, (1.) As a very bright part of Abraham's character and example. He not only prayed with his family, but he taught them as a man of knowledge, nay, he commanded them as a man in authority, and was prophet and king, as well as priest, in his own house. Observe, [1.] God having made the covenant with him and his seed, and his household being circumcised, pursuant to that, he was very careful to teach and rule them well. Those that expect family-blessings, must make conscience of family-duty. If our children be the Lord's, they must be nursed for him; if they wear his livery, they must be trained up in his work. [2.] Abraham not only took care of his children, but of his household; his servants were catechised servants. Masters of families should instruct, and inspect the manners of, all under their roof. The poorest servants have precious souls that must be looked after. [3.] Abraham made it his care and business to promote practical religion in his family. He did not fill their heads with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation; but he taught them to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice, that is, to be serious and devout in the worship of God, and to be honest in their dealings with all men. [4.] Abraham, herein, had an eye to posterity, and was in care not only that his household *with* him, but that his household *after* him, should keep the way of the Lord; that religion might flourish in his family, when he was in his grave. [5.] His doing this, was the fulfilling of the conditions of the promises which God had made him. Those only can expect the benefit of the promises, that make conscience of their duty.

(2.) We may consider this as the reason why God would make known to him his purpose concerning Sodom, because he was communicative of his knowledge, and improved it for the benefit of those that were under his charge. Note, To him that hath, shall be given, Matth. 13. 12.—25. 29. Those that make a good use of their knowledge, shall know more.

II. God's friendly talk with Abraham; in which he makes known to him his purpose concerning Sodom, and allows him a liberty of application to him about that matter. 1. He tells him of the evidence there was against Sodom, v. 20, *The cry of Sodom is great.* Note, Some sins, and the sins of some sinners, cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance. The iniquity of Sodom was crying iniquity, that is, it was so very provoking, that it even urged God to punish. 2. The inquiry he would make upon this evidence, v. 21, *I will go down now and see.* Not as if there were any thing concerning which God is in doubt, or in the dark; but he is pleased thus to express himself after the manner of men, (1.) To show the incontestable equity of all his judicial proceedings. Men are apt to suggest that his way is not equal; but let them know that his judgments are the result of an eternal council, and are never rash or sudden resolves. He never punishes upon report, or common fame, or the information of others, but upon his own certain and infallible knowledge. (2.) To give example to magistrates, and those in authority, with the utmost care and diligence to inquire into the merits of a cause, before they give judgment upon it. (3.) Perhaps the decree is here spoken of as not yet peremptory, that room and encouragement might be given to Abraham to make intercession for them. Thus God looked if there were any to intercede, Isa. 59. 16.

23. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24. Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25. That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? 26. And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. 27. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes: 28. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. 29. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. 30. And he said unto him, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. 31. And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD: Peradventure there shall be found twenty there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. 32. And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. 33. And the LORD went his

way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer. In the *word*, God speaks to us; in *prayer*, we speak to him. God had spoken to Abraham his purposes concerning Sodom; now from thence Abraham takes occasion to speak to God on Sodom's behalf. Note, God's word *then* does us good, when it furnishes us with matter for prayer, and excites us to it. When God has spoken to us, we must consider what we have to say to him upon it.

Observe,

I. The solemnity of Abraham's address to God on this occasion, *v. 23, Abraham drew near*. The expression intimates, 1. A holy concern; *he engaged his heart* to approach to God, *Jer. 30. 21, "Shall Sodom be destroyed, and I not speak one good word for it?"* 2. A holy confidence; he drew near *with an assurance of faith*, drew near *as a prince*, *Job 31. 37*. Note, When we address ourselves to the duty of prayer, we ought to remember that we are drawing near to God, that we may be filled with a reverence of him, *Lev. 10. 3*.

II. The general scope of this prayer. It is the first solemn prayer we have upon record in the Bible: and it is a prayer for the sparing of Sodom. Abraham, no doubt, greatly abhorred the wickedness of Sodom, he would not have lived among them, as Lot did, if they would have given him the best estate in their country; and yet he prayed earnestly for them. Note, Though sin is to be hated, sinners are to be pitied and prayed for. God delights not in their death, nor should we desire, but deprecate, the woeful day. 1. He begins with a prayer that the righteous among them might be spared, and not involved in the common calamity; having an eye particularly to just Lot, whose disingenuous carriage toward him he had long since forgiven and forgotten; witness his friendly zeal to rescue him before by his sword, and now by his prayers. 2. He improves this into a petition, that all might be spared for the sake of the righteous that were among them, God himself countenancing this request, and in effect putting him upon it by his answer to his first address, *v. 26*. Note, We must pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also; for we are members of the same body, at least, of the same body of mankind. *All we are brethren*.

III. The particular graces eminent in this prayer.

1. Here is *great faith*; and it is the prayer of faith that is the prevailing prayer. His faith pleads with God, orders the cause, and fills his mouth with arguments. He acts faith especially upon the righteousness of God, and is very confident, (1.) *That God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked*, *v. 23*. No, *that be far from thee*, *v. 25*. We must never entertain any thought that derogates from the honour of God's righteousness. See *Rom. 3. 5, 6*. Note, [1.] The righteous are mingled with the wicked in this world. Among the best there are, commonly, some bad, and among the worst some good. Even in Sodom, one Lot. [2.] Though the righteous be among the wicked, yet the righteous God will not, certainly he will not *destroy the righteous with the wicked*. Though in this world they may be involved in the same common calamities, yet in the great day, a distinction will be made. (2.) *That the righteous shall not be as the wicked*, *v. 25*. Though they may suffer with them, yet they do not suffer like them. Common calamities are quite another thing to the righteous, than what they are to the wicked, *Isa. 27. 7*. (3.) *That the Judge of all the earth will do right*; undoubtedly he will, because he is the Judge of all the

earth; it is the apostle's argument, *Rom. 3. 5, 6*. Note, [1.] God is the Judge of all the earth; he gives charge to all, takes cognizance of all, and will pass sentence upon all. [2.] That God Almighty never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of the creatures, either by withholding that which is right, or by exacting more than is right, *Job 34. 10, 11*.

2. Here is *great humility*. (1.) A deep sense of his own unworthiness, *v. 27, Echoed now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes*; and again, *v. 31*, he speaks as one amazed at his own boldness, and the liberty God graciously allowed him, considering God's greatness,—he is the Lord; and his own meanness,—but dust and ashes. Note, [1.] The greatest of men, the most considerable and deserving, are but dust and ashes, mean and vile, before God; despicable, frail and dying. [2.] Whenever we draw near to God, it becomes us reverently to acknowledge the vast distance that there is between us and God. He is the Lord of glory, we are worms of the earth. [3.] The access we have to the throne of grace, and the freedom of speech allowed us, are just matter of humble wonder, *2 Sam. 7. 18*. (2.) An awful dread of God's displeasure. *O let not the Lord be angry*, *v. 30*, and again, *v. 32*. Note, [1.] The importunity which believers use in their addresses to God, is such, that if they were dealing with a man like themselves, they could not but fear that he would be angry with them. But he with whom we have to do, is *God and not man*; and, however he may seem, is not really, *angry with the prayers of the upright*, (*Ps. 80. 4*.) for they are *his delight*, (*Prov. 15. 8*.) and he is pleased when he is wrestled with. [2.] That even when we receive special tokens of the divine favour, we ought to be jealous over ourselves, lest we make ourselves obnoxious to the divine displeasure; and therefore we must bring the Mediator with us in the arms of our faith, to atone for the iniquity of our holy things.

3. Here is *great charity*. (1.) A charitable opinion of Sodom's character: as bad as it was, he thought there were several good people in it. It becomes us to hope the best of the worst places. Of the two, it is better to err in that extreme. (2.) A charitable desire of Sodom's welfare: he used all his interest at the throne of grace for mercy for them. We never find him thus earnest in pleading with God for himself and his family, as here for Sodom.

4. Here are *great boldness*, and believing confidence. (1.) He took the liberty to pitch upon a certain number of righteous ones which he supposed might be in Sodom. Suppose there be fifty, *v. 24*. (2.) He drew upon God's concessions, again and again. As God granted much, he still begged more, with the hope of gaining his point. (3.) He brought the terms as low as he could for shame, (having prevailed for mercy if there were but ten righteous ones in five cities,) and perhaps so low, that he concluded they would have been spared.

IV. The success of the prayer. He that thus wrestled, prevailed wonderfully; as a prince he had power with God: it was but to ask and have. 1. God's general good-will appears in this, that he consented to spare the wicked for the sake of the righteous. See how swift God is to show mercy; he even seeks a reason for it. See what great blessings good people are to any place, and how little those befriending themselves, that hate and persecute them. 2. His particular favour to Abraham appeared in this, that he did not leave off granting, till Abraham left off asking. Such is the power of prayer. Why then did Abraham leave off asking, when he had prevailed so far as to get the place spared, if there were but ten righteous in it? Either, (1.) Because he owned that they deserved to perish,

if there were not so many; *as the dresser of the vineyard*, who consented that the barren tree should be cut down, if one year's trial more did not make it fruitful, Luke 13. 9. Or, (2.) Because God restrained his spirit from asking any further. When God has determined the ruin of a place, he forbids it to be prayed for, Jer. 7. 16.—11. 14.—14. 11.

*Lastly*, Here is the breaking up of the conference, v. 33. 1. *The Lord went his way*. The visions of God must not be constant in this world, where it is by faith only that we are to set God before us. God did not go away, till Abraham had said all he had to say; for he is never weary of hearing prayer, Isa. 59. 1. 2. *Abraham returned unto his place*, not puffed up with the honour done him, nor by these extraordinary interviews taken off from the ordinary course of duty; he returned to his place, to observe what the event would be; and it proved that his prayer was heard, and yet Sodom not spared, because there were not ten righteous in it. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God.

### CHAP. XIX.

The contents of this chapter we have, 2 Pet. 2. 6, 8, where we find that *God, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, and delivered just Lot*. It is the history of Sodom's ruin, and Lot's rescue from that ruin. We read, ch. 18, of God's coming to take a view of the present state of Sodom; what its wickedness was, and what righteous persons there were in it: now here we have the result of that inquiry. I. It was found, upon trial, that Lot was very good, v. 1. 3, and it did not appear that there was one more of the same character. II. It was found that the Sodomites were very wicked, and vile, v. 4. 11. III. Special care was therefore taken for the securing of Lot and his family, in a place of safety, v. 12. 23. IV. Mercy having rejoiced therein, justice shows itself in the ruin of Sodom, and the death of Lot's wife, v. 24. 26, with a general repetition of the story, v. 27. 29. V. A foul sin that Lot was guilty of, in committing incest with his two daughters, v. 30. 38.

1. **AND** there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing *them* rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; 2. And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet; and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

These angels, it is likely, were two of the three that had just before been with Abraham; the two created angels that were sent to execute God's purpose concerning Sodom. Observe here,

I. There was but one good man in Sodom, and these heavenly messengers soon found him out. Wherever we are, we should inquire out those of the place that live in the fear of God, and should choose to associate ourselves with them; Matth. 10. 11, *Inquire who is worthy, and there abide*. Those of the same country, when they are in a foreign country, love to be together.

II. Lot sufficiently distinguished himself from the rest of his neighbours, at this time, which plainly set a mark upon him. He that did not act like the rest, must not fare like the rest. 1. Lot sat in the gate of Sodom at even; when the rest, it is likely,

were tippling and drinking, he sat alone, waiting for an opportunity to do good. 2. He was extremely respectful to men whose mien and aspect were sober and serious, though they did not come in state. He bowed himself to the ground, when he met them, as if, upon the first view, he discerned something divine in them. 3. He was hospitable, and very free and generous in his invitations and entertainments. He courted these strangers to his house, and to the best accommodations he had, and gave them all the evidences that he could of his sincerity: for, (1.) When the angels, to try whether he were hearty in the invitation, declined the acceptance of it, at first, (which is the common usage of modesty, and no reproach at all to truth and honesty,) their refusal did but make him more importunate; for he *pressed upon them greatly*, v. 3. Partly, because he would by no means have them to expose themselves to the inconveniences and perils of lodging in the street of Sodom; and partly, because he was desirous of their company and converse. He had not seen two such honest faces in Sodom this great while. Note, Those that live in bad places, should know how to value the society of those that are wise and good, and earnestly desire it. (2.) When the angels accepted his invitation, he treated them nobly; he made a feast for them, and thought it well-bestowed on such guests. Note, Good people should be (with prudence) generous people.

4. But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: 5. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him. 7. And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. 8. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. 9. And they said, Stand back. And they said *again*, This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, *even* Lot, and came near to break the door. 10. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11. And they smote the men that *were* at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Now it appeared, beyond contradiction, that the cry of Sodom was no louder than there was cause for. This night's work was enough to fill the measure. For we find here,

I. That they were all wicked, v. 4. Wickedness was grown universal, and they were unanimous in any vile design. Here were old and young, and all from every quarter, engaged in this riot; the old were not past it, and the young were soon come up to it; either they had no magistrates to keep the peace, and protect the peaceable; or their magis-



trates were themselves aiding and abetting. Note, When the disease of sin is become epidemical, it is fatal to any place, Isa. 1. 5. 7.

II. That they were arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness; they were *sinners before the Lord exceedingly*, ch. 13. 13, for,

1. It was the most unnatural and abominable wickedness that they were now set upon, a sin tht it still bears their name, and is called *Sodom*. They were carried headlong by those vile affections, (Rom. 1. 26, 27.) which are worse than brutish, and the eternal reproach of the human nature, and which cannot be thought of without horror, by those that have the least spark of virtue, and any remains of natural light and conscience. Note, Those that allow themselves in unnatural uncleanness, are marked for the vengeance of eternal fire. See Jude 7.

2. They were not ashamed to own it, and to prosecute their design by force and arms. The practice had been bad enough, if it had been carried on by intrigue and wheedling; but they proclaim war with virtue, and bid open defiance to it. Hence during sinners are said to *declare their sin as Sodom*, Isa. 3. 9. Note, Those that are become impudent in sin, generally prove impenitent in sin; and it will be their ruin. Those have hard hearts indeed, that sin with a high hand, Jer. 6. 15.

3. When Lot interposed, with all the mildness imaginable, to check the rage and fury of their lust, they were most insolently rude and abusive to him. He ventured himself among them, v. 6. He spoke civilly to them, called them *brethren*, v. 7, and begged of them not to do so wickedly; and, being greatly disturbed at their vile attempt, unadvisedly and unjustifiably offered to prostitute his two daughters to them, v. 8. It is true, of two evils we must choose the less; but of two sins we must choose neither, nor ever do evil, that good may come of it. He reasoned with them, pleaded the laws of hospitality, and the protection of his house which his guests were entitled to; but you had as good offer reason to a roaring lion and a raging bear, as to these headstrong sinners, who were governed only by lust and passion. Lot's arguing with them, does but exasperate them; and, to complete their wickedness, and fill up the measure of it, they fall foul upon him. (1.) They *ridicule* him, charge him with the absurdity of pretending to be a magistrate, when he was not so much as a free-man of their city, v. 9. Note, It is common for reprovers to be unjustly upbraided as usurpers; and while offering the kindness of a friend, to be charged with assuming the authority of a judge: as if a man might not speak reason, without taking too much upon him.

(2.) They *threaten* him, and lay violent hands upon him; and the good man is in danger of being pulled in pieces by this outrageous rabble. Note, [1.] Those that hate to be reformed, hate those that reprove them, though with ever so much tenderness. Presumptuous sinners do by their consciences as the Sodomites did by Lot, baffle their checks, stifle their accusations, press hard upon them, till they have scared them and quite stopped their mouths, and so made themselves ripe for ruin. [2.] Abuses offered to God's messengers and to faithful reprovers, soon fill the measure of a people's wickedness, and bring destruction without remedy. See Prov. 29. 1. and 2. Chron. 36. 16. If reproofs remedy not, there is no remedy. See 2 Chron. 25. 16.

III. That nothing less than the power of an angel could save a good man out of their wicked hands. It was now past dispute what Sodom's character was, and what course must be taken with it; and therefore the angels immediately give a specimen of what they further intended.

1. They rescue Lot, v. 10. Note, (1.) He that watereth, shall be watered also himself. Lot was solicitous to protect them, and now they take effectual care for his safety, in return for his kindness. (2.) Angels are employed for the special preservation of those that expose themselves to danger by well-doing. The saints, at death, are pulled like Lot into a house of perfect safety, and the door shut for ever against those that pursue them.

2. They chastise the insolence of the Sodomites, v. 11, *They smote them with blindness*. This was designed, (1.) To put an end to their attempt, and disable them to pursue it. Justly were they struck blind, who had been deaf to reason. Violent persecutors are often infatuated, so that they cannot push on their malicious designs against God's messengers, Job. 5. 14, 15. Yet these Sodomites, after they were struck blind, continued seeking the door, to break it down, till they were tired. No judgments will, of themselves, change the corrupt natures and purposes of wicked men. If their minds had not been blinded as well as their bodies, they would have said, as the magicians, *This is the finger of God*, and would have submitted. (2.) It was to be an earnest of their utter ruin the next day. When God, in a way of righteous judgment, blinds men, their condition is already desperate, Rom. 11. 8, 9.

12. And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring *them* out of this place: 13. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. 14. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

We have here the preparation for Lot's deliverance.

I. Notice is given him of the approach of Sodom's ruin, v. 13, *We will destroy this place*. Note, The holy angels are ministers of God's wrath for the destruction of sinners, as well as of his mercy for the preservation and deliverance of his people. In this sense, the good angels become *evil angels*, Ps. 78. 49.

II. He is directed to give notice to his friends and relations, that they, if they would, might be saved with him, v. 12, "*Hast thou here any besides, that thou art concerned for? If thou hast, go tell them what is coming.*" Now this implies, 1. The command of a great duty, which was, to do all he could for the salvation of those about him, to snatch them as brands out of the fire. Note, Those who through grace are themselves delivered out of a sinful state, should do what they can for the deliverance of others, especially their relations. 2. The offer of great favour. They do not ask whether he knew any righteous ones in the city fit to be spared; no, they knew there were none; but they ask what relations he had there; that, whether righteous or unrighteous, they might be saved with him. Note, Bad people often fare the better in this world for the sake of their good relations. It is good being akin to a godly man.

III. He applies himself accordingly to his sons in law, v. 14. Observe, 1. The fair warning that Lot gave them. *Up, get you out of this place*. The manner of expression is startling and quickening.

It was no time to trifle, when the destruction was just at the door. They had not forty days to turn them in, as the Ninevites had. Now or never, they must make their escape. At midnight this cry was made. Such as this, is our call to the unconverted, to turn and live. 2. The slight they put upon this warning, *He seemed to them as one that mocked*. They thought, perhaps, that the assault which the Sodomites had just now made upon his house, had disturbed his head, and put him into such a fright, that he knew not what he said; or they thought that he was not in earnest with them. They who lived a merry life, and made a jest of every thing, made a jest of that, and so they perished in the overthrow. Thus many who are warned of the misery and danger they are in by sin, make a light matter of it, and think their ministers do but jest with them; such will perish with their blood upon their own heads.

15. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. 18. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord. 19. Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die. 20. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. 21. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee, concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. 22. Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Here is,

I. The rescue of Lot out of Sodom. Though there were not ten righteous men in Sodom, for whose sakes it might be spared, yet that one righteous man that was among them, delivered his own soul, Ezek. 14. 14. Early in the morning, his own guests, in kindness to him, turned him out of doors, and his family with him, v. 15. His daughters that were married, perished with their unbelieving husbands; but those that continued with him, were preserved with him. Observe,

1. With what a gracious violence Lot was brought out of Sodom, v. 16. It seems, though he did not make a jest of the warning given, as his sons-in-law did, yet he lingered, he trifled, he did not make so

much haste as the case required. Thus many that are under some convictions about the misery of their spiritual state, and the necessity of a change, yet defer that needful work, and foolishly linger. Lot did so, and it might have been fatal to him, if the angels had not *laid hold on his hand and brought him forth*, and saved him with fear, Jude 25. Here in it is said, *The Lord was merciful to him*; other wise he might have justly left him to perish, since he was so loth to depart. Note, (1.) The salvation of the most righteous men must be attributed to God's mercy, not to their own merit. We are saved by grace. (2.) God's power also must be acknowledged in the bringing of souls out of a sinful state. If God had not brought us forth, we had never come forth. (3.) If God had not been merciful to us, our lingering had been our ruin.

2. With what a gracious vehemence he was urged to make the best of his way, when he was *brought forth*, v. 17. (1.) He must still apprehend himself in danger of being consumed, and be quickened by the law of self-preservation to flee for his life. Note, A holy fear and trembling are found necessary to the working out of our salvation. (2.) He must therefore mind his business with the utmost care and diligence. He must not hanker after Sodom, *Look not behind thee*; he must not loiter by the way, *Stay not in all the plain*, for it would all be made one dead sea; he must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him, *Escape to the mountain*. Such as these, are the commands given to those who through grace are delivered out of a sinful state and condition. [1.] Return not to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. [2.] Rest not in self and the world, for that is staying in the plain. And, [3.] Reach toward Christ and Heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain, short of which we must not take up.

II. The fixing of a place of refuge for him. The mountain was first appointed for him to flee to, but,

1. He begged for a city of refuge, one of the five that lay together, called *Bela*, ch. 14. 2, 18. 20. It was Lot's weakness to think a city of his own choosing safer than the mountain of God's appointing. And he argued against himself, when he pleaded, *Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain*; for could not he that had plucked him out of Sodom, when he lingered, carry him safe to the mountain, though he began to tire? Could not He that had saved him from greater evils, save him from the lesser? He insists much in his petition upon the smallness of the place. *It is a little one, is it not?* Therefore, it was to be hoped, not so bad as the rest. This gave a new name to the place; it was called *Zoar, a little one*. Intercessions for little ones are worthy to be remembered.

2. God granted him his request, though there was much infirmity in it, v. 21, 22. See what favour God showed a true saint, though weak. (1.) Zoar was spared, to gratify him. Though his intercession for it was not, as Abraham's for Sodom, from a principle of generous charity, but merely from self-interest, yet God granted him his request, to show how much the fervent prayer of a righteous man avails. (2.) Sodom's ruin was suspended, till he was safe. *I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither*. Note, The very presence of good men in a place helps to keep off judgments. See what care God takes for the preservation of his people. The winds are held, till God's servants are sealed, Rev. 7. 3. Ezek. 9. 4.

*Lastly*, It is taken notice of, that the sun was risen when Lot entered into Zoar. For when a good man comes into a place, he brings light along with him, or should do.

24. Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; 25. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Then, when Lot was got safe into Zoar, then this ruin came; for good men are taken away from the evil to come. Then, when the sun was risen bright and clear, promising a fair day, then this storm arose, to show that it was not from natural causes. Concerning this destruction, observe,

1. That God was the immediate Author of it. It was destruction from the Almighty, *The Lord rained,—from the Lord, v. 24*, that is, God from himself, by his own immediate power, and not in the common course of nature. Or, God the Son from God the Father; for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Note, He that is the Saviour, will be the Destroyer of those that reject the salvation.

2. That it was a strange punishment, Job 31. 3. Never was the like before or since. Hell was rained from Heaven upon them. *Fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this was the portion of their cup*, Ps. 11. 6; not a *flash* of lightning, which is destructive enough, when God gives it commission, but a *shower* of lightning. Brimstone was scattered upon their habitation, Job. 18. 15, and then the fire soon fastened upon them. God could have drowned them, as he did the old world; but he would show that he has many arrows in his quiver, fire as well as water.

3. That it was a judgment that laid all waste; *it overthrew the cities*, and destroyed all the inhabitants of them, the plain, and all that grew upon the ground, v. 25. It was an utter ruin, and irreparable; that fruitful valley remains to this day a great lake, or dead sea; it is called the *Salt Sea*, Numb. 34. 12. Travellers say that it is about thirty miles long, and ten miles broad; it has no living creature in it; it is not moved by the wind; the smell of it is offensive; things do not easily sink in it. The Greeks call it *Asphaltites*, for a sort of pitch which it casts up. Jordan falls into it, and is lost there.

4. That it was a punishment that answered to their sin. Burning lusts against nature were justly punished with this preternatural burning. They that went after strange *flesh*, were destroyed by strange *fire*, Jude 7. They persecuted the angels with their rabble, and made Lot afraid; and now God persecuted them with his tempest, and made them afraid with his storm, Ps. 83. 15.

5. That it was designed for a standing revelation of the wrath of God against sin and sinners in all ages; it is, accordingly, often referred to in the scripture, and made a pattern of the ruin of Israel, Deut. 29. 23, of Babylon, Isa. 13. 19, of Edom, Jer. 49. 18, of Moab and Ammon, Zeph. 2. 9. Nay, it was typical of the *vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7, and the ruin of all that *live ungodly*, 2 Pet. 2. 6. especially, that despise the gospel, Matt. 10. 15. It is in allusion to this destruction, that the place of the damned is often represented by a lake that burns, as Sodom did, with fire and brimstone. Let us learn from it, (1.) The evil of sin, and the hurtful nature of it. Iniquity tends to ruin. (2.) The terrors of the Lord. See what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!

26. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

This also is written for our admonition; our Saviour refers to it, Luke 17. 32, *Remember Lot's wife*. As by the example of Sodom, the wicked

are warned to turn from their wickedness; so by the example of Lot's wife, the righteous are warned not to turn from their righteousness. See Ezek. 3. 18, 20. We have here,

1. The sin of Lot's wife: *she looked back from behind him*. This seemed a small thing, but we are sure, by the punishment of it, that it was a great sin, and exceeding sinful. (1.) She disobeyed an express command, and so sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression which ruined us all. (2.) Unbelief was at the bottom of it; she questioned whether Sodom would be destroyed, and thought she still might have been safe in it. (3.) She looked back upon her neighbours whom she had left behind, with more concern than was fit, now that their day of grace was over, and Divine Justice was glorifying itself in their ruin. See Isa. 66. 24. (4.) Probably, she hankered after her house and goods in Sodom, and was loath to leave them. Christ intimates this to be her sin, Luke 17. 31, 32. she too much regarded her *stuff*. (5.) Her *looking back* bespoke an inclination to *go back*; and therefore our Saviour uses it as a warning against apostasy from our christian profession. We have all renounced the world and the flesh, and have set our faces heavenward; we are in the plain, upon our probation; and it is at our peril, if we return into the interests we profess to have abandoned. Drawing back is to perdition, and looking back is towards it. *Let us therefore fear*, Heb. 4. 1.

2. The punishment of Lot's wife for this sin. She was struck dead in the place; yet her body did not fall down, but stood fixed and erect like a pillar or monument, not liable to waste or decay as human bodies exposed to the air are, but metamorphosed into a metallic substance which would last perpetually. Come, behold the goodness and severity of God, Rom. 11. 22; toward Lot that went forward, goodness; toward his wife that looked back, severity. Though she was nearly related to a righteous man, though better than her neighbours, and though a monument of distinguishing mercy in her deliverance out of Sodom, yet God did not connive at her disobedience; for great privileges will not secure us from the wrath of God, if we do not carefully and faithfully improve them. This pillar of salt should season us. Since it is such a dangerous thing to look back, let us always press forward, Phil. 3. 13, 14.

27. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: 28. And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. 29. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

Our communion with God consists in our gracious regard to him, and his gracious regard to us; we have here therefore the communion that was between God and Abraham, in the *event* concerning Sodom, as before, in the *consultation* concerning it; for communion with God is to be kept up in providences as well as in ordinances.

1. Here is Abraham's pious regard to God in this event, in two things; (1.) A careful expectation of the event, v. 27, *He gat up early* to look toward Sodom; and, to intimate that his design herein was to see what became of his prayers, he went to the very place where he had stood before the Lord, and set himself there, as upon his watch-tower, Hab. 2.

1. Note, When we have prayed, we must look after our prayers, and observe the success of them; we must direct our prayer as a letter, and then look up for an answer; direct our prayer as an arrow, and then look up to see whether it reach the mark, Ps. 5. 3. Our inquiries after news must be in expectation of an answer to our prayers. (2.) An awful observation of it; *he looked toward Sodom*, (v. 28.) not as Lot's wife did, tacitly reflecting upon the divine severity: but humbly adoring it, and acquiescing in it. Thus the saints, when they see the smoke of Babylon's torment rising up for ever, (like Sodom's here,) will say again and again, *Alleluia*, Rev. 19. 3. Those that have, in the day of grace, most earnestly interceded for sinners, will, in the day of judgment, be content to see them perish, and will glorify God in it.

2. Here is God's favourable regard to Abraham, v. 29. As before, when Abraham prayed for Ishmael, God heard him for Isaac; so now, when he prayed for Sodom, he heard him for Lot. *He remembered Abraham, and, for his sake, sent Lot out of the overthrow.* Note, (1.) God will certainly give an answer of peace to the prayer of faith, in his own way and time; though, for a while, it seem to be forgotten, yet, sooner or later, it will appear to be remembered. (2.) The relations and friends of godly people fare the better for *their* interest in God, and intercessions with him; it was out of respect to Abraham that Lot was rescued: perhaps this word encouraged Moses long afterward to pray, Exod. 32. 13, *Lord, remember Abraham*; and see Isa. 53. 11.

30. And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

31. And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and *there is* not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. 32. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 33. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 34. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, *and* lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. 35. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. 36. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. 37. And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. 38. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

Here is,

I. The great trouble and distress that Lot was

brought into, after his deliverance, v. 30. 1. He was frightened out of Zoar, durst not dwell there; either, because he was conscious to himself that it was a refuge of his own choosing, and that therein he had foolishly prescribed to God, and therefore he could not but distrust his safety in it; or, because he found it as wicked as Sodom, and therefore concluded it could not long survive it; or, perhaps, he observed the rise and increase of those waters, which, after the conflagration, perhaps from Jordan, began to overflow the plain, and which, mixing with the ruins, by degrees made the Dead Sea; in those waters he concluded Zoar must needs perish (though it had escaped the fire,) because it stood upon the same flat. Note, Settlements and shelters of our own choosing, and in which we do not follow God, commonly prove uneasy to us. 2. He was forced to betake himself to the mountain, and to take up with a cave for his habitation there. Methinks, it was strange that he did not return to Abraham, and put himself under his protection, to whom he had once and again owed his safety: but the truth is, there are some good men, that are not wise enough to know what is best for themselves. Observe, (1.) He was now glad to go to the mountain, the place which God had appointed for his shelter. Note, It is well, if disappointment in *our* way drive us at last to *God's* way. (2.) He that, a while ago, could not find room enough for himself and his stock in the whole land, but must jostle with Abraham, and get as far from him as he could, is now confined to a hole in a hill, where he has scarcely room to turn him, and there he is solitary and trembling. Note, It is just with God to reduce those to poverty and restraint, who have abused their liberty and plenty. See also in Lot what those bring themselves to, at last, that forsake the communion of saints for secular advantages; they will be beaten with their own rod.

II. The great sin that Lot and his daughters were guilty of, when they were in this desolate place. It is a sad story:

1. His daughters laid a very wicked plot to bring him to sin; and their's was, doubtless the greater guilt. They contrived, under pretext of cheering up the spirits of their father in his present condition, to make him drunk; and then to lie with him, v. 31. 32. (1.) Some think that their pretence was plausible; their father had no sense, they had no husbands, nor knew they where to have any of the holy seed; or, if they had children by others, their father's name would not be preserved in them; some think that they had the Messiah in their eye, who they hoped, might descend from their father; for he came from Terah's elder son, was separated from the rest of Shem's posterity, as well as Abraham, and was now signally delivered out of Sodom. Their mother, and the rest of the family were gone, they might not marry with the cursed Canaanites; and therefore they supposed that the end they aimed at, and the extremity they were brought to, would excuse the irregularity. Thus the learned Monsieur Allix. Note, Good intentions are often abused to patronise bad actions. But, (2.) Whatever their pretence was, it is certain that their project was very wicked and vile, and an impudent affront to the very light and law of nature. Note, [1.] The sight of God's most tremendous judgments upon sinners, will not, of itself, without the grace of God, restrain evil hearts from evil practices: one would wonder how the fire of lust could possibly kindle upon them, who had so lately been the eye-witnesses of Sodom's flames. [2.] Solitude has its temptations as well as company, and particularly to uncleanness. When Joseph was alone with his mistress, he was in danger, ch. 39. 11. Relations that dwell together, especially if solitary, have

need carefully to watch against the least evil thought of this kind, lest Satan get an advantage.

2. Lot himself, by his own folly and unweariness, was wretchedly overcome, and suffered himself so far to be imposed upon by his own children, as, two nights together, to be drunk, and to commit incest, *v. 33, &c. Lord, what is man!* What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves! See here, (1.) The peril of security; Lot, who not only kept himself sober and chaste in Sodom, but was a constant mourner for the wickedness of the place, and a witness against it, is yet, in the mountain, where he was alone, and, as he thought, quite out of the way of temptation, thus shamefully overtaken: let him therefore that thinks he stands, stands high, and stands firm, *take heed lest he fall.* No mountain, on this side the holy hill above, can set us out of the reach of Satan's fiery darts. (2.) The peril of drunkenness; it is not only a great sin itself, but it is the inlet of many sins; it may prove the inlet of the worst and most unnatural sins, which may be a perpetual wound and dishonour. Excellently does Mr. Herbert describe it,

"He that is drunken, may his Mother kill  
"Big with his Sister."—————

A man may do that without reluctance, when he is drunken, which, when he is sober, he could not think of without horror. (3.) The peril of temptation from our dearest relations and friends, whom we love and esteem, and expect kindness from. Lot, whose temperance and chastity were impregnable against the batteries of foreign force, was surprised into sin and shame by the base treachery of his own daughters; we must dread a snare wherever we are, and be always upon our guard.

In the close, we have an account of the birth of the two sons, or grandsons, (call them which you will,) of Lot—Moab and Ammon, the fathers of two nations, neighbours to Israel, and which we often read of in the Old Testament; both together are called the *children of Lot*, Ps. 83. 8. Note, Though prosperous births may attend incestuous conceptions, yet they are so far from justifying them, that they rather perpetuate the reproach of them, and entail infamy upon posterity; yet the tribe of Judah, of which our Lord sprang, descended from such a birth, and Ruth, a Moabitess, has a name in his genealogy, Matth. 1. 3, 5.

Lastly, Observe that, after this, we never read any more of Lot, nor what became of him: no doubt he repented of his sin; and was pardoned; but from the silence of the scripture concerning him henceforward, we may learn that drunkenness, as it makes men forgetful, so it makes them forgotten; and many a name, which otherwise might have been remembered with respect, is buried by it in contempt and oblivion.

## CHAP. XX.

We are here returning to the story of Abraham; yet that part of it which is here recorded, is not to his honour. The fairest marbles have their flaws, and while there are spots in the sun, we must not expect any thing spotless under it. The scripture, it should be remarked, is impartial in relating the blemishes even of its most celebrated characters. We have here, I. Abraham's sin in denying his wife, and Abimelech's sin thereupon in taking her, *v. 1, 2.* II. God's discourse with Abimelech in a dream, upon this occasion, wherein he shows him his error, *v. 3*, accepts his plea, *v. 4*., and directs him to make restitution, *v. 7.* III. Abimelech's discourse with Abraham, wherein he chides him for the cheat he had put upon him, *v. 8*., 10, and Abraham excuses it as well as he can, *v. 11*., 13. IV. The good issue of the story, in which Abimelech restores Abraham his wife, *v. 14*., 16, and Abraham, by prayer, prevails with God for the removal of the judgment Abimelech was under, *v. 17, 18.*

1. **A**ND Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. 2. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

Here is,

1. Abraham's remove from Mamre, where he had lived near twenty years, into the country of the Philistines, *v. 1, He sojourned in Gerar.* We are not told upon what occasion he removed, whether terrified by the destruction of Sodom; or, because the country round was, for the present, prejudiced by it; or as some of the Jewish writers say, because he was grieved at Lot's incest with his daughters, and the reproach which the Canaanites cast upon him and his religion, for his kinsman's sake: doubtless, there was some good cause for his removal. Note, (1.) In a world where we are strangers and pilgrims, we cannot expect to be always in the same place. (2.) Wherever we are, we must look upon ourselves but as sojourners.

2. His sin in denying his wife; as before, *ch. 12, 13*, which was not only in itself such an equivocation as bordered upon a lie, and which, if admitted as lawful, would be the ruin of human converse, and an inlet to all falsehood; but was also an exposing of the chastity and honour of his wife, which he ought to have been the protector of. But beside this, it had here a two-fold aggravation, (1.) That he had been guilty of the same sin before, and had been reprobated for it, and convinced of the folly of the suggestion which induced him to it; yet he returns to it. Note, It is possible that a good man may not only fall into sin, but relapse into the same sin, through the surprize and strength of temptation, and the infirmity of the flesh. Let backsliders repent then, but not despair, Jer. 3. 22. (2.) That Sarah, as it should seem, was now the child of the promised seed, or, at least, in expectation of being so quickly, according to the word of God; he ought therefore to have taken particular care of her now, as Judg. 13. 4.

3. The peril that Sarah was brought into by this means; *The king of Gerar sent, and took her* to his house, in order to take her to his bed. Note, The sin of one often occasions the sin of others; he that breaks the hedge of God's commandments, opens a gap to he knows not how many; the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water.

3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4. But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation! 5. Said he not unto me, She is my sister! And she, even she herself, said, He is my brother: In the integrity of my heart, and innocence of my hands, have I done this. 6. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou re

store *her* not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that *are* thine.

It appears by this, that God revealed himself by dreams, (which evidenced themselves to be divine and supernatural,) not only to his servants, the prophets, but even to those who were out of the pale of the church and covenant; but then, usually it was with some regard to God's own people, as in Pharaoh's dream, to Joseph, in Nebuchadnezzar's, to Daniel, and here in Abimelech's, to Abraham and Sarah, for he reproved this king for the *r* sake, Ps. 105. 14, 15.

I. God gives him notice of his danger, (v. 3.) his danger of *sin*; telling him that the woman was a man's wife, so that if he take her, he wrongs her husband; his danger of *death* for this sin, *Thou art a dead man*; and God's saying so of a man, makes him so. Note, Every wilful sinner ought to be told that he is a dead man. As the condemned malefactor, and the patient whose disease is mortal, are said to be so: If thou art a bad man, certainly thou art a dead man.

II. He pleads ignorance, (v. 4, 5.) that Abraham and Sarah had agreed to impose upon him, and not to let him know that they were any more than *brother and sister*. See what confidence a man may have toward God, when his heart *condemns him not*, 1 John 3. 21. If our consciences witness to our integrity, and that, however we may have been cheated into a snare, we have not, knowingly and wittingly sinned against God, it will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. He pleads with God as Abraham had done, *ch. 18. 23, Wilt thou slay a righteous nation?* Not such a nation as Sodom, which was indeed justly destroyed, but a nation which, in this matter, was innocent.

III. God gives a very full answer to what he had said.

1. He allows his plea, and admits that what he did, he did in the integrity of his heart, *v. 6, Yea, I know it*. Note, It is matter of comfort to those that are honest, that God knows their honesty, and will acknowledge it, though perhaps men that are prejudiced against them, either cannot be convinced of it, or will not own that they are.

2. He lets him know that he was kept from proceeding in the sin, merely by the good hand of God upon him. *I withheld thee from sinning against me*. Abimelech was hereby kept from doing wrong, Abraham from suffering wrong, and Sarah from both. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of sin devised and designed, that is never executed. As bad as things are in the world, they are not so bad as the Devil and wicked men would have them. (2.) It is God that restrains men from doing the ill they would do; it is not from him that there is sin, but it is from him that there is *not more* sin, either by his influence upon men's minds, checking their inclination to sin, or by his providence, taking away the opportunity to sin. (3.) It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory, whoever is the instrument, 1 Sam. 25. 32, 33.

3. He charges him to make restitution, *v. 7, Now therefore*, now that thou art better informed, *restore the man his wife*. Note, Ignorance will excuse no longer than it continues; if we ignorantly did wrong, that will not excuse us, if we knowingly persist in it, Lev. 5. 3..5. The reasons why he must be just and kind to Abraham, are, (1.) Because *he is a prophet*; near and dear to God, for whom God does in a particular manner concern himself. God highly resents the injuries done to his prophets, and takes them as done to himself. (2.) Being a prophet, *he shall pray for thee*; that is a prophet's reward, and a good reward it is. It is intimated that there was

great efficacy in the prayers of a prophet, and that good men should be ready to help those with their prayers, that stand in need of them, and should make, at least, this return for the kindnesses that are done them. Abraham was accessory to Abimelech's trouble, and therefore was obliged in justice to pray for him. (3.) It is at thy peril, if thou do not restore her; *know thou that thou shalt surely die*. Note, He that does wrong, whoever he is, prince or peasant, shall certainly receive for the wrong which he has done, unless he repent and make restitution, Col. 3. 25. No injustice can be made passable with God, no not by Cæsar's image stamped upon it.

3. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. 9. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? And what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me, and on my kingdom, a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11. And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12. And yet indeed *she is* my sister; *she is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This *is* thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He *is* my brother.

Abimelech, being thus warned of God in a dream, takes the warning, and, as one truly afraid of sin and its consequences, he rises early to pursue the directions given him.

I. He has a caution for his servants, (v. 8.) Abraham himself could not be more careful than he was, to command his household in this matter. Note, Those whom God has convinced of sin and danger, ought to tell others what God has done for their souls, that they also may be awakened, and brought to a like holy fear.

II. He has a chiding for Abraham. Observe,

1. The serious reproof which Abimelech gave to Abraham, v. 9, 10. His reasoning with Abraham upon this occasion was strong, and yet very mild. Nothing could be said better; he does not reproach him, nor insult over him; does not say, "Is this your profession? I see, though you will not swear, you will lie. If these be prophets, I will beg to be freed from the sight of them;" but he fairly represents the injury Abraham had done him, and calmly signifies his resentment of it. (1.) He calls that sin which he now found that he had been in danger of, *a great sin*. Note, Even the light of nature teaches men that the sin of adultery is a very great sin: be it observed, to the shame of many who call themselves Christians, and yet make a light matter of it. (2.) He looks upon it, that both himself and his kingdom would have been exposed to the wrath of God, if he had been guilty of that sin, though ignorantly. Note, The sins of kings often prove the plagues of kingdoms; rulers should therefore, for their people's sake, dread sin. (3.) He charges



Abraham with doing that which was not justifiable, in disowning his marriage; this he speaks of justly, and yet tenderly; he does not call him a *liar* and *cheat*; but tells him he had done *deeds that ought not to be done*. Note, Equivocation and dissimulation, however they may be palliated, are very bad things, and by no means to be admitted in any case. (4.) He takes it as a very great injury to himself and his family, that Abraham had thus exposed them to sin; "*What have I offended thee?* If I had been thy worst enemy, thou couldest not have done me a worse turn, nor taken a more effectual course to be avenged on me." Note, We ought to reckon that those do us the greatest unkindness in the world, that any ways tempt or expose us to sin, though they may pretend friendship, and offer that which is grateful enough to the corrupt nature. (5.) He challenges him to assign a cause for his suspecting them as a dangerous people for an honest man to live among, v. 10, "*What savest thou, that thou hast done this thing?* What reason hadst thou to think that if we had known her to be thy wife, thou wouldest have been exposed to any danger by it?" Note, A suspicion of our goodness is justly reckoned a greater affront than a slight upon our greatness.

2. The poor excuse that Abraham made for himself.

(1.) He pleaded the had opinion he had of the place, v. 11. He thought within himself, (though he could not give any good reason for his thinking so,) "*Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and then they will slay me.*" [1.] Little good is to be expected there, where no fear of God is: see Ps. 36. 1. [2.] There are many places and persons, that have more of the fear of God in them, than we think they have: perhaps they are not called by our dividing name, they do not wear our badges, they do not tie themselves to that which we have an opinion of; and therefore we conclude they have not the fear of God in their hearts, which is very injurious both to Christ and Christians, and makes us obnoxious to God's judgment, Matt. 7. 1. [3.] Uncharitableness and censoriousness are sins that are the cause of many other sins. When men have once persuaded themselves concerning such and such, that they have not the fear of God, they think that will justify them in the most unjust and unchristian practices toward them. Men would not do ill, if they did not first *think* ill.

(2.) He excused it from the guilt of a downright lie, by making it out, that, in a sense, she was his sister, v. 12. Some think she was own sister to Lot, who is called his *brother Lot*, ch. 14. 16, though he was his *nephew*; so Sarah is called his *sister*. But they to whom he said, *She is my sister*, understood that she was *so* his sister, as not to be capable of being his wife; so that it was an equivocation, with an intent to deceive.

(3.) He clears himself from the imputation of an affront designed to Abimelech in it, by alleging that it had been his practice before, according to an agreement between him and his wife, when they first became sojourners, v. 13, "*When God caused me to wander from my father's house, then we settled this matter.*" Note, [1.] God is to be acknowledged in all our wanderings. [2.] Those that travel abroad, and converse much with strangers, as they have need of the wisdom of the serpent, so it is requisite that that wisdom be ever tempered with the innocence of the dove. It may, for aught I know, be suggested, that God denied to Abraham and Sarah the blessing of children so long, to punish them for this sinful compact which they had made, to deny one another; if they will not own their marriage, why should God own it? But we may suppose that, after this reproof which Abimelech gave

them, they agreed never to do so again, and then presently we read, ch. 21. 1, 2, that *Sarah conceived*.

14. And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and women servants, and gave *them* unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife. 15. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee. 16. And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand *pieces* of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all *other*: thus she was reproved. 17. So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid servants; and they bare *children*. 18. For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

Here is,

1. The kindness of a *prince*, which Abimelech showed to Abraham. See how unjust Abraham's jealousies were; he fancied that if they knew that Sarah was his wife, they would kill him; but, instead of that, when they did know, they were kind to him, frightened at least to be so, by the divine rebukes they were under. (1.) He gives him his royal licence to dwell where he pleased in his country; courting his stay, because he saw that God was with him, v. 15. (2.) He gives him his royal gifts, v. 14, *sheep and oxen*, and v. 16, *a thousand pieces of silver*. This he gave when he restored Sarah, either, [1.] By way of satisfaction for the wrong he had offered to do, in taking her to his house; when the Philistines restored the Ark, being plagued for detaining it, they sent a present with it. The law appointed, that when restitution was made, something should be added to it, Lev. 6. 5. Or, [2.] To engage Abraham's prayers for him; not as if prayers should be bought and sold; but these, whose spiritual things we reap of, we should endeavour to be kind to, 1 Cor. 9. 11. Note, It is our wisdom to get and keep an interest with those that have an interest in heaven; and to make these our friends, who are the friends of God. (3.) He gives to Sarah good instruction, tells her that her husband (her *brother*, he calls him, to upbraid her with calling him so) must be to her for a *covering of the eyes*, that is, she must look at no other, nor desire to be looked at by any other. Note, Yekefellows must be to each other for a covering of the eyes. The marriage-covenant is a *covenant with the eyes*, like Job's, ch. 31. 1.

2. The kindness of a *prophet*, which Abraham showed to Abimelech; he *prayed for him*, v. 17, 18. This honour God would put upon Abraham, that though Abimelech had restored Sarah, yet the judgment he was under should be removed upon the prayer of Abraham, and not before. Thus God healed Miriam, when Moses, whom she had most affronted, prayed for her, Numb. 12. 13, and was reconciled to Job's friends, when Job, whom they had grieved, prayed for them. (Job 44. 8. 10.) and so did, as it were, give it under his hand, that he was reconciled to them. Note, The prayers of good men may be a kindness to great men, and ought to be valued.

## CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Isaac, the child of promise, born into Abraham's family, v. 1. . 8. II. Ishmael, the

son of the bond-woman, cast out of it, v. 9. 21. III. Abraham's league with his neighbour Abimelech, v. 22 ... 32. IV. His devotion to his God, v. 33, 34.

1. **AND** the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. 7. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born *him* a son in his old age. 8. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned.

Long looked for comes at last. The vision concerning the promised seed is for an appointed time, and now at an end, it speaks, and does not lie; few under the Old Testament were brought into the world with such expectation as Isaac was; not for the sake of any great personal eminence at which he was to arrive, but because he was to be, in this very thing, a type of Christ, that Seed which the holy God so long promised, and holy men so long expected. In this account of the first days of Isaac, we may observe,

I. The fulfilling of God's promise in the conception and birth of Isaac, v. 1, 2. Note, God's providences look best and brightest, when they are compared with his word, and when we observe how God in them all, acts as he has said, as he has *spoken*. 1. Isaac was born according to the promise. The Lord *visited* Sarah in mercy, as he had said. Note, No word of God shall fall to the ground; for he is faithful that has promised, and God's faithfulness is the stay and support of his people's faith. He was born at the *set time* which God had *spoken* to him, v. 2. Note, God is always punctual to his time; though his promised mercies come not at the time we set, they will certainly come at the time that He sets, and that is the best time. 2. He was born by virtue of the promise; *Sarah by faith received strength to conceive*, Heb. 11. 11. God therefore, by promise, gave that strength. It was not by the power of common providence, but by the power of a special promise, that Isaac was born. A sentence of death, as it were, passed upon the second causes; Abraham was old, and Sarah old, and both as good as dead; and then the word of God took place. Note, True believers, by virtue of God's promises, are enabled to do that which is above the power of human nature, for *by them they partake of a divine nature*, 2 Pet. 1. 4.

II. Abraham's obedience to God's precept concerning Isaac. 1. He *named* him, as God commanded him, v. 3. God directed him to name him for a memorial, *Isaac, laughter*; and Abraham, whose office it was, gave him that name, though he might have designed him some other name of a more pompous signification. Note, It is fit that the luxury of human invention should always yield

to the sovereignty and plainness of divine institution; yet there was good reason for the name. (1.) When Abraham received the promise of him, he laughed for joy, ch. 17. 17. Note, When the sun of comfort is risen upon the soul, it is good to remember how welcome the dawning of the day was, and with what exultation we embraced the promise. (2.) When Sarah received the promise, she laughed with distrust and diffidence. Note, When God gives us the mercies we began to despair of, we ought to remember with sorrow and shame our sinful distrusts of God's power and promise, when we were in pursuit of them. (3.) Isaac was himself, afterward, laughed at by Ishmael, v. 9, and perhaps his name bid him expect it. Note, God's favourites are of the world's laughing-stocks. (4.) The promise which he was, not only the son, but the heir of, was to be the joy of all the saints in all ages, and that which would fill their mouths with laughter. 2. He *circumcised* him, v. 4. The covenant being established with him, the seal of the covenant was administered to him: and though a bloody ordinance, and he a darling, yet it must not be omitted; no, nor deferred beyond the eighth day. God had kept time in performing the promise, and therefore Abraham must keep time in obeying the precept.

III. The impressions which this mercy made upon Sarah.

1. It filled her with joy, v. 6, "*God has made me to laugh*; he has given me both cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice." Thus the mother of our Lord, Luke 1. 46, 47. Note, (1.) God bestows mercies upon his people to encourage their joy in his work and service: and whatever is the matter of our joy, God must be acknowledged as the Author of it, unless it be the *laughter of the fool*. (2.) When mercies have been long deferred, they are the more welcome when they come. (3.) It adds to the comforts of any mercy, to have our friends *rejoice with us* in it. See Luke 1. 58. *They that hear us, will laugh with me*: for laughing is catching. Others would rejoice in this instance of God's power and goodness, and be encouraged to trust in him. See Ps. 119. 74.

2. It filled her with *wonder*, v. 7. Observe here, (1.) What it was she thought so wonderful, that *Sarah should give children suck*, that she should not only bear a child, but be so strong and hearty at that age, as to give it suck. Note, Mothers, if they be able, ought to be nurses to their own children. Sarah was a person of quality; was aged; nursing might be prejudicial either to herself, or to the child, or to both; she had choice of nurses, no doubt, in her own family; and yet she would do her duty in this matter; and her daughters the good wives are, while they thus *do well*, 1 Pet. 3. 5, 6. See Lam. 4. 3. (2.) How she expressed her wonder, "*Who would have said it?*" The thing was so highly improbable, so near to impossible, that if any one but God had said it, we could not have believed it." Note, God's favours to his covenant people are such as surpass both their own and other's thoughts and expectations; who could imagine that God should do so much for these that deserve so little, nay, for those that deserve so ill? See Eph. 3. 20. 2 Sam. 7. 18, 19. Who would have said that God should send his Son to die for us, his Spirit to sanctify us, his angels to attend us? Who would have said that such great sins should be pardoned, such mean services accepted, and such worthless worms taken into covenant and communion with the great and holy God?

IV. A short account of Isaac's infancy, v. 8, *The child grew*; special notice is taken of this, though a thing of course, to intimate that the children of the promise are growing children: See Luke 1. 80. 2. 40. They that are born of God, shall increase

more and more with the increase of God, Col. 2. 19. He grew so as not always to *need milk*, and then he *was weaned*: See Heb. 5. 13, 14. And then it was that Abraham made a *great feast* for his friends and neighbours, in thankfulness to God for his mercy to him. He made this feast, not on the day that Isaac *was born*, that would have been too great a disturbance to Sarah; nor on the day that he was *circumcised*, that would have been too great a diversion from the ordinance; but on the day that he was *weaned*, because God's blessing upon the nursing of children, and the preservation of them through the perils of the infant-age, are signal instances of the care and tenderness of the Divine Providence, which ought to be acknowledged, to its praise: see Ps. 22. 9, 10. Hos. 11. 1, 2.

9. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bond-woman, and her son: for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, *even* with Isaac. 11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bond-woman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13. And also of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed.

The casting out of Ishmael is here considered of, and resolved on.

I. Ishmael himself gave the occasion, by some affronts he gave to Isaac his little brother; some think, on the day that Abraham made the feast, for joy that Isaac was safely weaned, which, the Jews say, was not till he was three years old; others say, five. Sarah herself was an eye-witness of the abuse; *she saw the son of the Egyptian, mocking*, v. 9, mocking Isaac, no doubt, for it is said, with reference to this, Gal. 4. 29, that *he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit*. Ishmael is here called the *son of the Egyptian*, because, as some think, the 400 years' affliction of the seed of Abraham by the Egyptians began now, and was to be dated from hence, *ch. 15. 13*. She saw him *playing with Isaac*, so the LXX. and, in play, *mocking him*. Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac; and when children are together, the elder should be careful and tender of the younger: but it argued a very base and sordid disposition in Ishmael, to be abusive to a child that was no way a match for him. Note, 1. God takes notice of what children say and do in their play: and will reckon with them, if they say or do amiss, though their parents do not. 2. Mocking is a great sin, and very provoking to God. 3. There is a rooted remaining enmity in the seed of the serpent against the Seed of the woman. The children of promise must expect to be mocked. This is *persecution* which *they that live godly*, must count upon. 4. None are rejected and cast out from God, but those who have first deserved it; Ishmael is continued in Abraham's family, till he becomes a disturbance, grief, and scandal to it.

II. Sarah made the motion, v. 10, *Cast out this bond-woman*. This seems to be spoken in some heat, yet it is quoted, Gal. 4. 30, as if it had been

spoken by a spirit of prophecy; and it is the sentence passed on all hypocrites and carnal people, though they have a place and name in the visible church; all that are born after the flesh and not born again, that rest in the law and reject the gospel-promise, shall certainly be cast out. It is made to point particularly at the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, who, though they were the seed of Abraham, yet because they submitted not to the gospel-covenant, were uncircumcised and disfranchised: and that which, above any thing, provoked God to cast them off, was, their mocking and persecuting of the gospel-church, God's Isaac, in its infancy, 1 Thess. 2. 16. Note, There are many who are familiarly conversant with the children of God in this world, and yet shall not partake with them in the inheritance of sons. Ishmael might be Isaac's play-fellow and school-fellow, yet not his fellow-heir.

III. Abraham was averse to it, v. 11, *The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight*. 1. It grieved him that Ishmael had given such a provocation. Note, Children ought to consider that the more their parents love them, the more they are grieved at their misconduct, and particularly their quarrels among themselves. 2. It grieved him that Sarah insisted upon such a punishment. "Might it not suffice to correct him; would nothing less serve than to expel him?" Note, Even the needful extremities which must be used with wicked and incorrigible children, are very grievous to tender parents, who cannot thus afflict willingly.

IV. God determined it, v. 12, 13. We may well suppose Abraham to be greatly agitated about this matter; loath to displease Sarah, and yet loath to expel Ishmael; in this difficulty, God tells him what his will was, and then he is satisfied. Note, A good man desires no more in doubtful cases than to know his duty, and what God would have him do; and when he is clear in that, he is, or should be, easy. To make Abraham so, God sets this matter before him in a true light, and shows him, 1. That the casting out of Ishmael was necessary to the establishment of Isaac in the rights and privileges of the covenant. *In Isaac shall thy seed be called*: both Christ and the church must descend from Abraham through the loins of Isaac; this is the entail of the promise upon Isaac, and is quoted by the apostle, (Rom. 9. 7.) to show that not all who came from Abraham's loins, were the heirs of Abraham's covenant. Isaac, the promised son, must be the father of the promised seed; therefore, "Away with Ishmael, send him far enough, lest he corrupt the manners, or attempt to invade the rights of Isaac." It will be his security to have his rival banished. The covenant-seed of Abraham must be a peculiar people, a people by themselves, from the very first distinguished, not mingled with those that were out of covenant, for this reason, Ishmael must be separated. Abraham was *called alone*, and so must Isaac be. See Isa. 51. 2. It is probable that Sarah little thought of this, (John 11. 51.) but God took what she said, and turned it into an oracle, as afterward, *ch. 27. 10*. 2. That the casting out of Ishmael should not be his ruin, v. 13, *He shall be a nation, because he is thy seed*. We are not sure that it was his *eternal* ruin; it is presumption to say that all those who are left out of the eternal dispensation of God's covenant, are therefore excluded from all his mercies: those may be saved, who are not thus honoured. However, we are sure it was not his *temporal* ruin. Though he was chased out of the church, he was not *chased out of the world*. *I will make him a nation*. Note, (1.) Nations are of God's making; he founds them, he forms them, he fixes them. (2.) Many are full of the blessings of God's providence, that are strangers to the blessings of his covenant. (3.) The children of this

world often fare the better, as to outward things, for their relation to the children of God.

14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15. And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. 17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

¶ Here is,

I. The casting out of the bond-woman and her son from the family of Abraham, *v.* 14. Abraham's obedience to the divine command in this matter was *speedy, early in the morning*, we may suppose immediately after he had, in the night's visions, received orders to do this. It was also *submissive*; it was contrary to his judgment, at least, to his own inclination, to do it; yet as soon as he perceives that it is the mind of God, he makes no objections, but silently does as he is bidden, as one trained up to an implicit obedience. In sending them away without any attendants, on foot, and slenderly provided for, it is probable that he observed the directions given him. If Hagar and Ishmael had conducted themselves well in Abraham's family, they might have continued there; but they threw themselves out by their own pride and insolence, which were thus justly chastised. Note, By abusing our privileges, we forfeit them. Those that know not when they are well off in such a desirable place as Abraham's family, deserve to be cashiered, and to be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them.

II. Their wandering in the wilderness, missing their way to the place Abraham designed them for a settlement.

1. They were reduced to great distress there; their provisions were spent, and Ishmael was sick; he that used to be full fed in Abraham's house, where he waxed fat and kicked, now fainted and sunk, when he was brought to short allowance. Hagar is in tears, and sufficiently mortified; now she wishes for the crumbs she had wasted, and made light of, at her master's table; like one under the power of the spirit of bondage, she despairs of relief, counts upon nothing but *the death of the child*, (*v.* 15, 16.) though God had told her, before he was born, that he should live to be a man, a

great man. We are apt to forget former promises, when present providences seem to contradict them; for we live by sense.

2. In this distress, God graciously appeared for their relief; he heard *the voice of the lad*, *v.* 17. We read not of a word he said; but his sighs, and groans, and calamitous state, cried loud in the ears of mercy. An angel was sent to comfort Hagar, and it was not the first time that she had met with God's comforts in a wilderness; she had thankfully acknowledged the former kind visit which God made her in such a case, *ch.* 16. 13, and therefore God now visited her again with seasonable succours. (1.) The angel assures her of the cognizance God took of her distress; *God has heard the voice of the lad where he is*, though he is in a wilderness: for wherever we are, there is a way open heavenward; therefore *lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand*, *v.* 18. Note, God's readiness to help us when we are in trouble, must not slacken, but quicken, our endeavours to help ourselves. (2.) He repeats the promise concerning her son, that he should be a *great nation*, as a reason why she should bestir herself to help him. Note, It should engage our care and pains about children and young people, to consider that we know not what God has designed them for, nor what great use Providence may make of them. (3.) He directs her to a present supply, *v.* 19, *he opened her eyes*, which were swollen, and almost blinded, with weeping; and then *she saw a well of water*. Note, Many that have reason enough to be comforted, go mourning from day to day, because they do not see the reason they have for comfort. There is a well of water by them in the covenant of grace, but they are not aware of it; they have not the benefit of it, till the same God that opened their eyes to see their wound, opens them to see their remedy, *John* 16. 6, 7. Now the apostle tells us, that those things concerning Hagar and Ishmael are *αλληγορημα*, *Gal.* 4. 24, they are to be allegorized; this then will serve to illustrate the folly of these, [1.] Who like the unbelieving Jews, seek for righteousness by the law and the carnal ordinances of it, and not by the promise made in Christ, thereby running themselves into a wilderness of want and despair. Their comforts are soon exhausted, and if God save them not by his special prerogative; and by a miracle of mercy open their eyes, and undeceive them, they are undone. [2.] Their folly also, who seek for satisfaction and happiness in the world and the things of it. Those that forsake the comforts of the covenant and communion with God, and choose their portion in this earth, take up with a bottle of water, poor and slender provision, and that, soon spent; they wander endlessly in pursuit of satisfaction, and, at length, sit down short of it.

III. The settlement of Ishmael, at last, in the wilderness of Paran, *v.* 20, 21, a wild place, fittest for a wild man; and such an one he was, *ch.* 16. 12. They that are born after the flesh, take up with the wilderness of this world, while the children of the promise aim at the heavenly Canaan, and cannot be at rest till they are there. Observe, 1. He had some tokens of God's presence, *God was with the lad*; his outward prosperity was owing to this. 2. By trade he was an archer, which intimates that craft was his excellency, and spent his business; rejected Esau was a cunning hunter. 3. He matched among his mother's relations; she took him a wife out of Egypt; as great an archer as he was, he did not think he took his aim well in the business of marriage, if he proceeded without his mother's advice and consent.

22. And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech, and Phichol the chief captain

of his host, spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest. 23. Now therefore swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: *but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.* 24. And Abraham said, I will swear. 25. And Abraham reproved Abimelech, because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26. And Abimelech said, I wot not what thou hast done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it but to-day. 27. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech: and both of them made a covenant. 28. And Abraham set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves. 29. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe-lambs, which thou hast set by themselves? 30. And he said, For *these* seven ewe-lambs, shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba: because there they sware both of them. 32. Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines.

We have here an account of the treaty between Abimelech and Abraham, in which appears the accomplishment of that promise, *ch. 12. 2*, that God would *make his name great*. His friendship is valued, is courted, though a stranger, though a tenant at will to the Canaanites and Perizzites.

I. The league is proposed by Abimelech, and Phichol his prime-minister of state, and general of his army. 1. The inducement to it was God's favour to Abraham, *v. 22*, "*God is with thee in all thou doest*, and we cannot but take notice of it." Note, (1.) God in his providence sometimes shows his people such tokens for good, that their neighbours cannot but take notice of it, *Ps. 86. 17*. Their affairs do so visibly prosper, and they have such remarkable success in their undertakings, that a confession is extorted from all about them, of God's presence with them. (2.) It is good being in favour with those that are in favour with God, and having an interest in them that have an interest in heaven, *Zech. 8. 23*, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you*. We do well for ourselves, if we have fellowship with those that have fellowship with God, *1 John 1. 3*. 2. The tenor of it was, in general, that there should be a firm and constant friendship between the two families, which should not upon any account be violated. This bond of friendship must be strengthened by the bond of an oath, in which the true God was appealed to, both as a Witness of their sincerity, and an Avenger, in case either side were treacherous, *v. 23*. Observe, (1.) He desires the entail of this league upon his posterity, and the extent of it to his people. He would have his son, and his son's son, and his land likewise, to have the benefit of it. Good men should secure an alliance and communion with the favourites of heaven, not for themselves

only, but for their's also. (2.) He reminds Abraham of the fair treatment he had found among them, *according to the kindness I have done unto thee*. As those that have received kindness, must return it, so those that have showed kindness, may expect it.

II. It is consented to by Abraham, with a particular clause inserted about a well. In Abraham's part of this transaction, 1. He was ready to enter into this league with Abimelech, finding him to be a man of honour and conscience, and that had the fear of God before his eyes, *v. 24*, *I will swear*. Note, (1.) Religion does not make men morose and unconvertible; I am sure it *ought* not; we must not, under colour of shunning bad company, be sour to all company, and jealous of every body. (2.) An honest mind does not startle at giving assurances: if Abraham say that he will be true to Abimelech, he is not afraid to swear it: an oath is for confirmation. 2. He prudently settled the matter concerning a well, which Abimelech's servants had quarrelled with Abraham about. Wells of water, it seems, were choice goods in that country: thanks be to God, that they are not so scarce in our's. (1.) Abraham mildly told Abimelech of it, *v. 25*. Note, If our brother trespass against us, we must, with the meekness of wisdom, tell him his fault, that the matter may be fairly accommodated, and an end made of it, *Matt. 18. 15*. (2.) He acquiesced in Abimelech's justification of himself in this matter, *v. 26*, *I wot not who has done this thing*. Many are suspected of injustice and unkindness, that are perfectly innocent, which we ought to be glad to be convinced of: the faults of servants must not be imputed to their masters, unless they know of them, and justify them; and no more can be expected from an honest man, than that he be ready to do right, as soon as he knows that he has done wrong. (3.) He took care to have his title to the well cleared and confirmed, to prevent any disputes or quarrels for the future, *v. 30*. It is justice, as well as wisdom, to do thus, *in perpetuum rei memoriam—that the circumstance may be perpetually remembered*. 3. He made a very handsome present to Abimelech, *v. 27*. It was not any thing curious or fine that he presented to him, but that which was valuable and useful, *sheep and oxen*, in gratitude for Abimelech's kindness to him, and in token of hearty friendship between them: the interchanging of kind offices is the improving of love; that which is mine, is my friend's. 4. He ratified the covenant by an oath, and registered it by giving a new name to the place, *v. 31*. *Beer-sheba, the well of the oath*, in remembrance of the covenant they sware to, that they might be ever mindful of it; or, *the well of seven*, in remembrance of the *seven lambs* given to Abimelech, as a consideration for his confirming Abraham's title to that well. Note, Bargains made, must be remembered, that we may make them good, and may not break our word through oversight.

33. And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God. 34. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

Observe, 1. Abraham, being got into a good neighbourhood, knew when he was well off, and continued a great while there: there he planted a grove for a shade to his tent, or perhaps an orchard for fruit trees; and there, though we cannot say he *settled*, for God would have him, while he lived, to be a stranger and a pilgrim; yet he *sojourned* many days, as many as would consist with his character, as Abraham the *Hebrew, or passenger*.

2. There he made not only a constant practice, but an open profession of his religion. *There he called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God*, probably, in the grove he planted, which was his oratory or house of prayer. Christ prayed in a garden, on a mountain. (1.) Abraham kept up public worship, to which, probably, his neighbours resorted, that they might join with him. Note, Good men should not only retain their goodness wherever they go, but do all they can to propagate it, and make others good. (2.) In calling on the Lord, we must eye him as the *everlasting God, the God of the world*; so some. Though God had made himself known to Abraham as his God in particular, and in covenant with him, yet he forgets not to give glory to him as the Lord of all: the *everlasting God*, who was before all worlds, and will be when time and days shall be no more. See Isa. 40. 28.

## CHAP. XXII.

We have here that famous story of Abraham's offering up his son Isaac, that is, his offering to offer him, which is justly looked upon as one of the wonders of the church. Here is, I. The strange command which God gave to Abraham concerning it, v. 1, 2. II. Abraham's strange obedience to this command, v. 3. .10. III. The strange issue of this trial. 1. The sacrificing of Isaac was countermanded, v. 11, 12. 2. Another sacrifice was provided, v. 13, 14. 3. The covenant was renewed with Abraham, hereupon, v. 15. .19. Lastly, An account of some of Abraham's relations, v. 20. .24.

I. **AND** it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Behold *here I am*. 2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Here is the trial of Abraham's faith, whether it continued so strong, so vigorous, so victorious, after a long settlement in communion with God, as it was at first, when by it he left his country: *then*, it was made to appear that he loved God better than his father: *now*, that he loved him better than his son. Observe here,

I. The time when Abraham was thus tried; (v. 1.) *after these things*; after all the other exercises he had had, all the hardships and difficulties he had gone through: now, perhaps, he was beginning to think the storms were all blown over; but after all this encounter comes, which is sharper than any yet. Note, Many former trials will not supersede, or secure us from further trials; we have not yet put off the harness, 1 Kings 20. 11. See Ps. 30. 6, 7.

II. The Author of the trial; God tempted him, not to draw him to sin, so Satan tempts: if Abraham had sacrificed Isaac, he had not sinned; his orders would have justified him, and borne him out; God tempted him, to discover his graces, how strong they were, that they might be *found to praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. 1. 7. Thus God tempted Job, that he might appear not only a good man, but a great man. God did tempt Abraham; he did *lift up Abraham*, so some read it; as a scholar that improves well, is lifted up when he is put into a higher form. Note, Strong faith is often exercised with strong trials, and put upon hard services.

III. The trial itself; God appeared to him as he had formerly done, called him by name, *Abraham*, that name which had been given him in ratification of the promise. Abraham, like a good servant, readily answered, "*Here am I*"; what says my Lord unto his servant?" Probably, he expected some renewed promise like those, *ch. 15. 1*, and

17. 1. But, to his great amazement, that which God has to say to him, is, in short, *Abraham, go, kill thy son*; and this command is given him in such aggravating language, as makes the temptation abundantly more grievous. When God speaks, Abraham, no doubt, takes notice of every word, and listens attentively to it; and every word here is a sword in his bones; the trial is steeled with trying phrases. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict? No, it is not; yet when Abraham's faith is to be tried, God seems to take pleasure in the aggravation of the trial, v. 2. Observe,

1. The person to be offered; (1.) *Take thy son*, not thy bullocks and thy lambs; how willingly would Abraham have parted with them by thousands to redeem Isaac! No, *I will take no bullock out of thy house*, Ps. 50. 9. "I must have thy son: not thy servant, no, not the steward of thine house, that shall not serve the turn; I must have thy son." Jephthah, in pursuance of a vow, offered a daughter; but Abraham must offer his son, in whom the family was to be built up. "Lord let it be an *adopted son*;" No, (2.) "*Thine only son*"; thine only son by Sarah." Ishmael was lately cast out to the grief of Abraham; and now Isaac only was left, and must he go too? Yes, (3.) "*Take Isaac*, him, by name, *thy laughter*, that son indeed," *ch. 17. 19*, not "*Send for Ishmael back*, and offer him; no, it must be Isaac." "But, Lord, I love Isaac, he is to me as my own soul; Ishmael is not, and wilt thou take Isaac also? All this is against me:" Yes, (4.) "That son *whom thou lovest*." It was a trial of Abraham's love to God, and therefore it must be in a beloved son, and that string must be touched most upon: in the Hebrew it is expressed more emphatically, and, I think, might very well be read thus, *Take now that son of thine, that only one of thine, whom thou lovest, that Isaac*. God's command must over-rule all these considerations.

2. The place; *in the land of Moriah*, three days' journey off; so that he might have time to consider it, and, if he did it, might do it deliberately, that it might be a service the more reasonable, and the more honourable.

3. The manner; *offer him for a burnt-offering*; he must not only kill his son, but kill him as a sacrifice, kill him devoutly, kill him by rule, kill him with all that pomp and ceremony, with all that sedateness and composure of mind, with which he used to offer his burnt-offerings.

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4. Then on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. 6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son: and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am I*, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? 8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-



offering: so they went both of them together. 9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and he laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took a knife to slay his son.

We have here Abraham's obedience to this severe command: *Being tried, he offered up Isaac*, Heb. 11. 17. Observe,

1. The difficulties which he brake through in this act of obedience; much might have been objected against it. As,

1. It seemed directly against an antecedent law of God, which forbids murder, under a severe penalty, *ch.* 9. 5, 6. Now can the unchangeable God contradict himself? He that hates *robbery* for burnt-offering, (*Isa.* 61. 8.) cannot delight in *murder* for it.

2. How would it consist with natural affection to his own son? It would be not only murder, but the worst of murders. Cannot Abraham be obedient, but he must be unnatural? If God insist upon a human sacrifice, is there none but Isaac to be the offering; and none but Abraham to be the offerer? Must the father of the faithful be the monster of all fathers?

3. God gave him no reason for it. When Ishmael was to be cast out, a just cause was assigned, which satisfied Abraham; but here Isaac must die, and Abraham must kill him, and neither the one nor the other must know on what account. If Isaac had been to die a martyr for the truth, or his life had been the ransom of some other life more precious, it had been another matter; or if he had died as a criminal, a rebel against God or his parents, as in the case of the idolater, (*Deut.* 13. 8, 9.) or the stubborn son, (*Deut.* 21. 18, 19.) it might have passed as a sacrifice to justice; but the case is not so: he is a dutiful, obedient, hopeful, son; "Lord, what profit is there in his blood?"

4. How would this consist with the promise? Was it not said that in *Isaac shall thy seed be called*? But what comes of that seed, if this pregnant bud be broken off so soon?

5. How should he ever look Sarah in the face again? With what face can he return to her and his family, with the blood of Isaac sprinkled on his garments, and staining all his raiment? *Surely a bloody husband hast thou been unto me*, would Sarah say, as *Exod.* 4. 25, 26, and it would be likely to alienate her affections forever both from him and from his God.

6. What would the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites and Perizzites which dwell then in the land? It would be an eternal reproach to Abraham, and to his altars. "Welcome *nature*, if this be *grace*," These, and many the like objections, might have been made; but he was infallibly assured that it was indeed a command of God, and not a delusion; and that was sufficient to answer them all. Note, God's commands must not be disputed, but obeyed: we must not consult with flesh and blood about them, (*Gal.* 1. 15. 16.) but with gracious obstinacy persist in our obedience to them.

II. The several steps of this obedience: all which help to magnify it, and to show that he was guided by prudence, and governed by faith, in the whole transaction.

1. He rises early, *v.* 3. Probably, the command was given in the visions of the night, and early the next morning, he set himself about the execution of it, did not delay, did not demur, did not take time to deliberate; for the command was peremptory, and

would not admit a debate. Note, Those that do the will of God heartily, will do it speedily: while we delay, time is lost, and the heart hardened.

2. He gets things ready for a sacrifice, and as if he himself had been a Gibeonite, it should seem, with his own hands he cleaves the wood for the burnt-offering, that that might not be to seek, when the sacrifice was to be offered; spiritual sacrifices must be thus prepared for.

3. It is very probable that he said nothing of it to Sarah; this is a journey which she must know nothing of, lest she prevent it. There is so much in our own hearts to hinder our progress in duty, that we have need, as much as may be, to keep out of the way of other hindrances.

4. He carefully looked about him, to discover the place appointed for the sacrifice, which God had promised by some sign to direct him to. Probably the direction was given by an appearance of the Divine Glory in the place, some pillar of fire reaching from heaven to earth, visible at a distance, and to which he pointed, when he said, (*v.* 5.) "We will go yonder, where you see the light, and worship."

5. He left his servants at some distance off, (*v.* 5.) lest they should have interposed, and created him some disturbance in his strange oblation; for Isaac was, no doubt, the darling of the whole family. Thus, when Christ was entering upon his agony in the garden, he took only three of his disciples with him, and left the rest at the garden door. Note, It is our wisdom and duty, when we are going to worship God, to lay aside all those thoughts and cares which may divert us from the service, leave them at the bottom of the hill, that we may attend on the Lord without distraction.

6. He obliged Isaac to carry the wood, (both to try his obedience in a lesser matter, first, and that he might typify Christ, who carried his own cross, *John* 19. 17.) while he himself, though he knew what he did, with a steady and undaunted resolution, carried the fatal knife and fire, *v.* 6. Note, Those that through grace are resolved upon the substance of any service or suffering for God, must overlook the little circumstances which make it doubly difficult to flesh and blood.

7. Without any ruffle or disorder, he talks it over with Isaac, as if it had been but a common sacrifice that he was going to offer, *v.* 7, 8. (1.) It was a very affecting question that Isaac asked him, as they were going together: *My father*, said Isaac; it was a melting word, which, one would think, should strike deeper in the breast of Abraham, than his knife could in the breast of Isaac. He might have said, or thought at least, "Call me not thy father, who am now to be thy murderer; can a father be so barbarous, so perfectly lost to all the tenderness of a father?" Yet he keeps his temper, and keeps his countenance, to admiration; he calmly waits for his son's question, and this is it, *Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?* See how expert Isaac was in the law and custom of sacrifices: this it is to be well-catechised. This is, [1.] *A trying question to Abraham*. How could he endure to think that Isaac is himself the lamb? So it is, but Abraham, as yet, dares not tell him so: where God knows the faith to be armour of proof he will laugh at the trial of the innocent, *Job.* 9. 23. [2.] It is a teaching question to us all; that when we are going to worship God, we should seriously consider whether we have every thing ready, especially the *Lamb for a burnt-offering*; behold, the fire is ready, that is, the Spirit's assistance, and God's acceptance; the wood is ready, the instituted ordinances designed to kindle our affections, (which indeed, without the Spirit, are but like wood without fire, but the Spirit works by them,) *all things are now ready; but where is the lamb?* Where is

the heart? Is that ready to be offered up to God, to ascend to him as a burnt-offering? (2.) It was a very *prudent answer* which Abraham gave him, *v. 8, My son, God will provide himself a lamb.* This was the language, either [1.] Of his *obedience*; "We must offer the lamb which God has appointed now to be offered;" thus giving him this general rule of submission to the divine will, to prepare him for the application of it to himself very quickly. Or, [2.] Of his *faith*; whether he meant it so or not, this proved to be the meaning of it; a sacrifice was provided instead of Isaac. Thus, *First*, Christ, the great Sacrifice of atonement, was of God's providing; when none in heaven or earth could have found a lamb for that burnt-offering, God himself found the ransom, *Ps. 89. 20. Secondly*, All our sacrifices of acknowledgment are of God's providing too. It is he that prepares the heart, *Ps. 10. 17.* The broken and contrite spirit is a sacrifice of God, *Ps. 51. 17*, of his providing.

8. With the same resolution and composedness of mind, after many thoughts of heart, he applies himself to the completing of the sacrifice, *v. 9. 10.* He goes on with a holy wilfulness, after many a weary step, and with a heavy heart he arrives, at length, at the fatal place, builds the altar, *an altar of earth*, we may suppose, the saddest that ever he built, (and he had built many an one,) *lays the wood in order* for his Isaac's funeral pile, and now tells him the amazing news; "Isaac, thou art the lamb which God has provided." Isaac, for aught that appears, is as willing as Abraham; we do not find that he made any objection against it, any petition for his life, that he attempted to make his escape, much less that he struggled with his aged father, or made any resistance: Abraham does it, God will have it done, and Isaac has learned to submit to both; Abraham, no doubt, comforting him with the same hopes, with *which he himself* by faith was comforted. Yet it is necessary that a sacrifice be bound. The great Sacrifice, which, in the fulness of time, was to be offered up, must be bound, and therefore so must Isaac. But with what heart could tender Abraham tie those guiltless hands, that perhaps had often been lifted up to ask his blessing, and stretched out to embrace him, and were now the more straitly bound with the cords of love and duty! However, it must be done. Having bound him, he *lays him upon the altar*, and his hand upon the head of his sacrifice; and now, we may suppose, with floods of tears, he gives and takes, the final farewell of a parting kiss, perhaps he takes another for Sarah, from her dying son. This being done, he resolutely forgets the bowels of a father, and puts on the awful gravity of a sacrificer; with a fixed heart, and an eye lifted up to heaven, he takes the knife, and stretches out his hand to give the fatal cut to Isaac's throat. Be astonished, O heavens, at this; and wonder, O earth! Here is an act of faith and obedience, which deserves to be a spectacle to God, angels, and men. Abraham's darling, Sarah's laughter, the church's hope, the heir of promise, lies ready to bleed and die by his own father's hand, who never shrinks at the doing of it. Now this obedience of Abraham in offering up Isaac, is a lively representation, (1.) Of the love of God to us, in delivering up his only-begotten Son to suffer and die for us, as a sacrifice; *it pleased the Lord himself to bruise him.* See *Isa. 53. 10. Zech. 13. 7.* Abraham was obliged, both in duty and gratitude, to part with Isaac, and parted with him to a friend; but God was under no obligations to us, for we were enemies. (2.) Of our duty to God, in return of that love; we must tread in the steps of this faith of Abraham. God, by his word, calls us to part with all for Christ; all our sins, though they have been as a right hand, or a right

eye, or an Isaac; all those things that are competitors and rivals with Christ for the sovereignty of the heart; (*Luke 14. 26.*) and we must cheerfully let them all go. God, by his providence, which is truly the voice of God, calls us to part with an Isaac sometimes, and we must do it with a cheerful resignation and submission to his holy will, *1 Sam. 3. 18.*

11. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am I.* 12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. 13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. 14. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day. In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Hitherto this story has been very melancholy, and seems to hasten towards a most tragical period; but here the sky, of a sudden, clears up, the sun breaks out, a bright and pleasant scene opens; the same hand that had wounded and cast down, here heals and lifts up; for though he cause grief, he will have compassion. *The angel of the Lord*, that is, God himself, the eternal Word, the Angel of the covenant, who was to be the great Redeemer and Comforter, he interposed, and gave a happy issue to this trial.

I. Isaac is rescued, *v. 11, 12.* The command to offer him was intended only for trial, and it appearing, upon trial, that Abraham did indeed love God better than he loved Isaac, the end of the command was answered; and therefore the order is countermanded, without any reflection at all upon the unchangeableness of the divine councils; *Lay not thine hand upon the lad.* Note, 1. Our creature-comforts are *then* most likely to be continued to us, when we are most willing to resign them up to God's will. 2. God's time to help and relieve his people, is, when they are brought to the greatest extremity. The more imminent the danger is, and the nearer to be put into execution, the more wonderful, and the more welcome is the deliverance.

II. Abraham is not only approved, but applauded. He obtains an honourable testimony, that he is righteous. *Now I know that thou fearest God*: God knew it before, but now, Abraham had given a most memorable evidence of it. He needed do no more; what he had done, was sufficient to prove the religious regard he had to God and his authority. Note, 1. When God, by his providence, hinders the performance of our sincere intentions in his services, he graciously accepts the will for the deed, and the honest endeavour, though it come short of finishing. 2. The best evidence of our fearing God, is, our being willing to serve and honour him with that which is dearest to us, and to part with all to him, or for him.

III. Another sacrifice is provided instead of Isaac, *v. 13.* Now that the altar was built, and the wood laid in order, it was necessary that something should be offered. For, 1. God must be acknowledged with thankfulness for the deliverance of Isaac; and the sooner the better, when here is an altar ready. 2. Abraham's words must be made:

good, God will provide himself a lamb. God will not disappoint those expectations of his people, which are of his own raising; but, according to their faith, it is to them. *Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established.* 3. Reference must be had to the promised Messiah, the blessed Seed. (1.) Christ was sacrificed in our stead, as this ram instead of Isaac, and his death was our discharge; '*Here am I*, (said he) *let these go their way.*' (2.) I though that blessed seed was lately promised, and now typified by Isaac, yet the offering of him up should be suspended till the latter end of the world: and, in the mean time, the sacrifice of beasts should be accepted, as this ram was, as a pledge of that expiation which should one day be made by that great Sacrifice. And it is observable, that the temple, the place of sacrifice, was afterward built upon this mount Moriah, (2 Chron. 3. 1.) and mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, was not far off.

IV. A new name was given to that place, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world, cheerfully to trust in God in the way of obedience; *Jehovah-jireh, The Lord will provide*, v. 14. probably alluding to what he had said, v. 8, *God will provide himself a lamb.* It was not owing to any contrivance of Abraham, nor was it in answer to his prayer, though he was a distinguished intercessor; but it was purely the Lord's doing. Let it be recorded for generations to come, 1. *That the Lord will see*; he will always have his eye upon his people, in their straits and distresses, that he may come in with seasonable succour in the critical juncture. 2. *That he will be seen*, be seen *in the mount*, in the greatest perplexities of his people; he will not only manifest, but *magnify*, his wisdom, power, and goodness in their deliverance; where God *sees* and *provides*, he should be *seen* and *praised*; and, perhaps, it may refer to *God manifest in the flesh*.

15. And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16. And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17. That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. 19. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up, and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

Abraham's obedience was graciously accepted, but that was not all; here we have it recompensed, abundantly recompensed, before he stirred from the place; probably, while the ram he had sacrificed, was yet burning, God sent him this gracious message, renewed and ratified his covenant with him. All covenants were made by sacrifice, so was this by the typical sacrifices of Isaac and the ram; very high expressions of God's favour to Abraham are employed in this confirmation of the covenant with him, expressions exceeding any he had yet been blessed with. Note, Extraordinary services shall be crowned with extraordinary honours and comforts; and favours in the promise, though not yet performed, ought to be accounted real and valuable recompenses.

I. God is pleased to make mention of Abraham's obedience as the consideration of the covenant; and he speaks of it with an encomium, v. 1, *Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thy only son*; he lays a strong emphasis upon that, and, v. 18, praises it as an act of obedience; in it thou hast obeyed *my voice*, and to obey is better than sacrifice. Not that this was a proportionable consideration; but God graciously put this honour upon that by which Abraham had honoured God.

II. God now confirmed the promise with an oath. It was said and sealed *before*; but *now*, it is sworn. *By myself have I sworn*; for he could swear by no greater, Heb. 6. 13. Thus he interposed himself by an oath, as the apostle expresses it there, v. 17; he did (to speak with reverence) even pawn his own life and being upon it, *As I live*: that by all those immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, he and his might have strong consolation. Note, If we exercise faith, God will encourage it. Improve the promises, and God will ratify them.

III. The particular promise here renewed, is that of a numerous offspring, v. 17, *Multiplying, I will multiply thee*. Note, Those that are willing to part with any thing for God, shall have it made up to them with unspeakable advantage. Abraham has but one son, and is willing to part with that one, in obedience to God; "Well," said God, "thou shalt be recompensed with the sands and millions." What a figure does the seed of Abraham make in history! How numerous, how illustrious were his known descendants, who, to this day, triumph in this, that they have Abraham to their father! Thus he receives a thousand-fold in this life, Matt. 19. 29.

IV. The promise, doubtless, points to the Messiah, and the grace of the gospel. This is the oath sworn to our father Abraham, which Zecharias refers to, Luke 1. 73, &c. And so here is a promise, 1. Of the great blessing of the Spirit; *In blessing I will bless thee*, namely, with that best of blessings, the gift of the holy Ghost; the promise of the Spirit was that blessing of Abraham, which was to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Gal. 3. 14. 2. Of the increase of the church; that believers, his spiritual seed, should be as many as the stars of heaven. 3. Of spiritual victories; *Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies*. Believers, by their faith, overcome the world, and triumph over all the powers of darkness, and are more than conquerors. Probably, Zecharias refers to this part of the oath, Luke 1. 74, *That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear*. But the crown of all, is, the last promise, 4. Of the incarnation of Christ. *In thy Seed*, one particular person that shall descend from thee (for he speaks not of many, but of one, as the apostle observes, Gal. 3. 16.) *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, or shall *bless themselves*, as the phrase is, Isa. 65. 16. In him all may be happy if they will, and all that belong to him, shall be so, and shall think themselves so. Christ is the great Blessing of the world. Abraham was ready to give up his son for a sacrifice to the honour of God, and on that occasion God promised to give his son a sacrifice for the salvation of man.

20. And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor; 21. Huz his first-born, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, 22. And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. 23

And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nabor Abraham's brother. 24. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maachah.

This is recorded here, 1. To show that though Abraham saw his own family highly dignified with peculiar privileges, admitted into covenant, and blessed with the entail of the promise; yet he did not look with contempt and disdain upon his relations, but was glad to hear of the increase and prosperity of their families. 2. To make way for the following story of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah, a daughter of this family.

### CHAP. XXIII.

Here is, I. Abraham a mourner for the death of Sarah, v. 1, 2. II. Abraham a purchaser of a burying-place for Sarah. 1. The purchase humbly proposed by Abraham, v. 3, 4. 2. Fairly treated of, and agreed to, with a great deal of mutual civility and respect, v. 5, 15. The purchase-money paid, v. 16. 3. The premises conveyed and secured to Abraham, v. 17, 18, 20. 5. Sarah's funeral, v. 19.

1. **AND** Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. 2. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

We have here, 1. Sarah's age, v. 1. Almost 40 years before, she had called herself old, *ch.* 18. 12. Old people will die never the sooner; but may die the better, for reckoning themselves old. 2. Her death, v. 2. The longest liver must die at last. Abraham and Sarah had lived comfortably together many years; but death parts those whom nothing else could part. The special friends and favourites of heaven are not exempted from the stroke of death. She died in the land of Canaan, where she had been above 60 years a sojourner. 3. Abraham's mourning for her; and he was a true mourner. He did not only perform the ceremonies of mourning, according to the custom of those times, as the mourners that go about the streets; but he did sincerely lament the great loss he had of a good wife, and gave proof of the constancy of his affection to her to the last. Two words are used; he came both to *mourn* and to *weep*. His sorrow was not counterfeited, but real. He came to her tent, and sat down by the corpse, there to pay the tribute of his tears, that his eye might affect his heart, and that he might pay the greater respect to the memory of her that was gone. Note, it is not only lawful, but it is a duty, to lament the death of our near relations, both in compliance with the providence of God who thus calls to weeping and mourning, and in honour of those to whom honour is due. Tears are a tribute due to our deceased friends; when the body is sown, it must be watered; but we must not sorrow as those that have no hope; for we have a good hope through grace both concerning them, and concerning ourselves.

3. And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, 4. *I am* a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. 5. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

6. Hear us, my lord; thou *art* a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. 7. And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, *even* to the children of Heth. 8. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9. That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which *is* in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth, he shall give it me for a possession of a burying-place among you. 10. And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, *even* of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11. Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee; and the cave that *is* therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead. 12. And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land. 13. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou *wilt* give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. 14. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, 15. My lord, hearken unto me: the land *is* worth four hundred shekels of silver; what *is* that betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead.

Here is,

I. The humble request which Abraham made to his neighbours the Hittites, for a burying-place among them, v. 3, 4. It was strange he had this to do now; but we are to impute it rather to God's providence than to his improvidence, as appears Acts 7. 5, where it is said *God gave him no inheritance in Canaan*. It were well, if all those who take care to provide burying-places for their bodies after death, were as careful to provide a resting-place for their souls. Observe here,

1. The convenient diversion which this affair gave, for the present, to Abraham's grief; he *stood up from before his dead*. Those that find themselves in danger of over-grieving for their dead relations, and are entering into that temptation, must take heed of poring upon their loss, and of sitting alone and melancholy. There must be a time of standing up from before their dead, and ceasing to mourn. For, thanks be to God, our happiness is not bound up in the life of any creature. Care of the funeral may be improved to divert grief for the death, as here, at first, when it is most in danger of tyrannising. Weeping must not hinder sowing.

2. The argument he used with the children of Heth; which was this, "*I am a stranger and a sojourner with you*, therefore I am unprovided, and must become a humble suitor to you for a burying-place." This was one occasion which Abraham took to confess that he was a stranger and a pilgrim

upon earth; he was not ashamed to own it thus publicly, Heb. 11. 13. / Note, The death of our relations should effectually remind us that we are not at home in this world. When they are gone, say, "We are going."

3. His uneasiness, till this affair was settled, intimated in that word, *that I may bury my dead out of my sight*. Note, Death will make those unpleasant to our sight, who, while they lived, were the desire of our eyes. The countenance that was fresh and lively becomes pale and ghastly, and fit to be removed into the land of darkness. While she was in his sight, it renewed his grief, which he would prevent.

II. The generous offer which the children of Heth made to him, v. 5, 6. They compliment him, 1. With a title of respect; *Thou art a prince of God among us*. So the word is, not only great, but good. He called himself a *stranger and a sojourner*; they call him a *great prince*; for those that humble themselves, shall be exalted. God had promised to make Abraham's name great. 2. With a tender of the best of their burying-places. Note, Even the light of nature teaches us to be civil and respectful towards all, though they be strangers and sojourners. The noble generosity of these Canaanites shames and condemns the closeness, and selfishness, and ill-humour, of many that call themselves Israelites. Observe, These Canaanites would be glad to mingle their dust with Abraham's, and to have their last end like his.

III. The particular proposal which Abraham made to them, v. 7..9. He returns them his thanks for their kind offer, with all possible decency and respect; though a great man, an old man, and now a mourner, yet he stands up, and bows himself humbly before them, v. 7. Note, Religion teaches good manners; and those abuse it, that place it in rudeness and clownishness. He then pitches upon the place he thought most convenient, namely, the cave of Machpelah, which probably, lay near him, and had not yet been used for a burying-place. The present owner was *Ephron*; Abraham cannot pretend to any interest in him, but he desires that they would improve their's with him, to get the purchase of that cave, and the field in which it was. Note, A moderate desire to obtain that which is convenient for us, by fair and honest means, is not such a coveting of that which is our neighbour's, as is forbidden in the tenth commandment.

IV. The present which Ephron made to Abraham of his field, v. 10, 11. *The field give I thee*. Abraham thought he must be entreated to *sell* it; but, upon the first mention of it, without entreaty, he freely *gives* it. Some men have more generosity than they are thought to have. Abraham, no doubt, had taken all occasions to oblige his neighbours, and do them any service that lay in his power; and now they return his kindness: for *he that watereth, shall be watered also himself*. Note, If those that profess religion, adorn their profession by eminent civility and serviceableness to all, they shall find it will redound to their own comfort and advantage, as well as to the glory of God.

V. Abraham's modest and sincere refusal to Ephron's kind offer, v. 12, 13. Abundance of thanks he returns him for it, v. 12; makes his obedience to him before the people of the land, that they might respect Ephron the more, for the respect they saw Abraham give him, 1 Sam. 15. 30; but resolves to give him money for the field, even the full value of it. It was not in pride that Abraham refused the gift, because he scorned to be beholden to Ephron; but, 1. In *justice*. Abraham was rich in silver and gold, ch. 13. 2, and was able to pay for the field, and therefore would not take advantage

of Ephron's generosity. Note, Honesty, as well as honour, forbids us to sponge upon our neighbours, and to impose upon those that are free. Job reflected upon it with comfort, when he was poor, that he had not *eaten the fruits of his land without money*, Job 31. 39. 2. In *prudence*, He would pay for it, lest Ephron, when this good humour was over, should upbraid him with it, and say, *I have made Abraham rich*, ch. 14. 23. Or, lest the next heir should question Abraham's title, (because that grant was made without any consideration,) and claim back the field. Thus David afterward refused Araunah's offer, 2 Sam. 24. 24. We know not what affronts we may hereafter receive from those that are now most kind and generous.

VI. The price of the land ascertained by Ephron, but not insisted on, v. 14, 15. *The land is worth 400 shekels of silver*, about 50 pounds of our money; *but what is that between me and thee?* He would rather oblige his friend than have so much money in his pocket. Herein Ephron discovers, 1. A great contempt of worldly wealth. "What is that between me and thee? It is a small matter, not worth speaking of." Many a one would have said, "It is a deal of money, it will go far in a child's portion;" but Ephron says, "What is that?" Note, It is an excellent thing for people to have low and mean thoughts of this world and the wealth of it; it is that which is not, and in the abundance of which a man's life does not consist, Luke 12. 15. 2. Great courtesy and obligingness to his friend and neighbour. Ephron was not jealous of Abraham as a foreigner and an inmate, nor envious at him as a man likely to thrive and grow rich; he bore him no ill-will for his singularity in religion, but was much kinder to him than most people now-a-days are to their own brothers. *What is that between me and thee?* Note, No little thing should occasion denials and differences between true friends. When we are tempted to be hot in resenting affronts, high in demanding our rights, or hard in denying a kindness, we should answer the temptation with this question, "What is that between me and my friend?"

16. And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. 17. And the field of Ephron, which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field, and the cave which *was* therein, and all the trees that *were* in the field, that *were* in all the borders round about, were made sure. 18. Unto Abraham for a possession, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of his city. 19. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre: the same *is* Hebron in the land of Canaan. 20. And the field, and the cave that *is* therein, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession of a burying place by the sons of Heth.

We have here the conclusion of the treaty between Abraham and Ephron about the burying-place. The bargain was publicly made before all the neighbours, in the *presence and audience of the sons of Heth*, v. 16, 17. Note, Prudence, as well as justice, directs us to be fair, and open, and above board, in our dealings; fraudulent contracts hate the

light, and choose to be clandestine; but they that design honestly in their bargains, care not who are witnesses to them. Our law countenances sales made in market-overt, and by deed enrolled.

I. Abraham, without fraud, covin, or further delay, pays the money: v. 16. he pays it readily, without hesitation; pays it in full, without diminution; and pays it by weight, current money with the merchant, without deceit. See how anciently money was used for the help of commerce; and see how honestly money should be paid where it is due. Observe, Though all the land of Canaan was Abraham's by promise, yet the time of his possessing being not come, what he had now occasion for, he bought and paid for. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. The saints' title to an eternal inheritance does not entitle them to the possessions of this world, nor justly y them in doing wrong.

II. Ephron honestly and fairly makes him a good title to the land, v. 17, 18, 20. The field, with all its appurtenances, is conveyed to Abraham and his heirs for ever, in open court, (not by writing, it does not appear that writing was then used,) by such a public solemn declaration before witnesses as was sufficient to pass it. Note, As that which is bought must be honestly paid for; so that which is sold, must be honestly delivered and secured.

III. Abraham, thereupon, takes possession, and buries Sarah in the cave or vault, (whether framed by nature or art, is not certain,) which was in the purchased field. It is probable that Abraham had buried servants out of his family, since he came to Canaan, but the *graves of the common people* (2 Kings 23. 6.) might suffice for them; now that Sarah was dead, a peculiar place must be found for her remains. It is worth noting, 1. That a burying-place was the first spot of ground Abraham was possessed of in Canaan. Note, When we are entering into the world, it is good to think of our going out of it; for as soon as we are born, we begin to die. 2. That it was the only piece of land he was ever possessed of, though it was all his own in reversion. These that have least of this earth find a grave in it. Abraham provided, not cities, as Cain and Nimrod, but a sepulchre, (1.) To be a constant memorandum of death to himself and his posterity, that he and they might learn to die daily. This sepulchre is said to be *at the end of the field*, v. 9, for, whatever our possessions are, there is a sepulchre at the end of them. (2.) To be a token of his belief and expectation of the resurrection; for why should such care be taken of the body, if it be thrown away for ever, and must not rise again? Abraham, in this, said plainly that *he sought a better country*, that is, a *heavenly*. Abraham is content to be still flitting, while he lives, but secures a place where, when he dies, his flesh may rest in hope.

## CHAP. XXIV.

Marriages and funerals are the changes of families, and the common news among the inhabitants of the villages. In the foregoing chapter, we had Abraham burying his wife, here, we have him marrying his son. These stories concerning his family, with their minute circumstances, are largely related, while the histories of the kingdoms of the world then in being, with their revolutions, are buried in silence; for the Lord knows them that are his. The subjoining of Isaac's marriage to Sarah's funeral (with a particular reference to it, v. 67.) shows us, that as *one generation passes away, another generation comes*; and thus the entail both of the human nature, and of the covenant, is preserved. Here is, I. Abraham's care about the marrying of his son, and the charge he gave to his servant about it, v. 1. . 9. II. His servant's journey into Abraham's country, to seek a wife for his young master among his own relations, v. 10. . 14. III. The kind providence which brought him acquainted with Rebekah, whose father was Isaac's cousin-german,

v. 15. . 28. IV. The treaty of marriage with her relations v. 29. . 49. V. Their consent obtained, v. 50. . 60. VI. The happy meeting and marriage between Isaac and Rebekah, v. 61. . 67.

1. **A**ND Abraham was old, *and well-stricken in age*; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. 2. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3. And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: 4. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac. 5. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6. And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again. 7. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. 8. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. 9. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

Three things we may observe here concerning Abraham.

I. The care he took of a good son, to get him married, well-married. It was high time to think of it now, for Isaac was about 40 years old, and it had been customary with his ancestors to marry at 30, or sooner, *ch. 11. 14, 18, 22, 24*. Abraham believed the promise of the building up of his family, and therefore did not make haste; not more haste than good speed. Two considerations moved him to think of it now, (v. 1.) 1. That he himself was likely to leave the world quickly, for he was *old, and well-stricken in age*, and it would be a satisfaction to him to see his son settled, before he died: and, 2. That he had a good estate to leave behind him, for *the Lord had blessed him in all things*; and the blessing of the Lord, *that makes rich*. See how much religion and piety befriended outward prosperity. Now Abraham's pious care concerning his son, was, (1.) That he should not marry with a daughter of Canaan, but with one of his kindred; because he saw by observation that the Canaanites were degenerating into great wickedness, and knew by revelation that they were designed for ruin; and therefore he would not marry his son among them, lest they should be either a snare to his soul, or, at least, a blot to his name. (2.) That yet he should not leave the land of Canaan, to go himself among his kindred, nor even for the purpose of choosing a wife, lest he should be tempted to settle there. This caution is given, v. 6, and repeated, v. 8,



"*Bring not my son thither again*, whatever comes of it. Let him rather want a wife than expose himself to that temptation." Note, Parents, in disposing of their children, should carefully consult the welfare of their souls, and their furtherance in the way to heaven. Those who through grace have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and have brought up their children accordingly, should take heed of doing any thing by which they may be again entangled therein, and overcome, 2 Pet. 2. 20. Beware that you *bring them not thither again*, Heb. 11. 15.

II. The charge he gave to a good servant; probably, Eliezer of Damascus, one whose conduct, fidelity, and affection to him and his family, he had long experience of. He trusted him with this great affair, and not Isaac himself; because he would not have Isaac go at all into that country, but marry there by proxy; and no proxy so fit as this *steward of his house*. The matter is settled between the master and the servant with a great deal of care and solemnity. 1. The servant must be bound by an oath to do his utmost to get a wife for Isaac, from among his relations, v. 2..4. Abraham swears him to it, both for his own satisfaction, and for the engagement of his servant to all possible care and diligence in this matter. Thus God swears his servants to their work, that, having sworn, they may perform it. Honour is here done to the eternal God; for he it is, that is sworn by, to whom alone those appeals ought to be made. And some think honour is done to the covenant of circumcision, by the ceremony here used of *putting his hand under his thigh*. Note, Swearing, being an ordinance, not peculiar to the church, but common to mankind, is to be performed by such signs as are the appointments and common usages of our country, for binding the person sworn. 2. He must be clear of his oath, if, when he had done his utmost, he could not prevail. This proviso the servant prudently inserted, v. 5, putting the case, that the woman would not follow him; and Abraham allowed the exception, v. 8. Note, Oaths are to be taken with great caution, and the matter sworn to should be rightly understood and limited, because it is a *snare to devour that which is holy, and, after vows, to make the inquiry* which should have been made before.

III. The confidence he put in a good God, who, he doubts not, will give his servant success in this undertaking, v. 7. He remembers that God had wonderfully brought him out of the land of his nativity, by the effectual call of his grace; and therefore doubts not but he will succeed him in his care not to *bring his son thither again*. He remembers also the promise God had made and confirmed to him, that he would give Canaan to his seed; and thence infers that God would own him in his endeavour to match his son, not among those devoted nations, but to one that was fit to be the mother of such a seed. "Fear not, therefore, he shall send his angel before thee to make thy way prosperous." Note, 1. Those that carefully keep in the way of duty, and govern themselves by the principles of their religion in their designs and undertakings, have good reason to expect prosperity and success in them. God will cause that to issue in our comfort, in which we sincerely aim at his glory. 2. God's promises, and our own experiences, are sufficient to encourage our dependence upon God, and our expectations from him, in all the affairs of this life. 3. God's angels are ministering spirits, sent forth, not only for the protection, but for the guidance, of the heirs of promise, Heb. 1. 14, "*He shall send his angel before thee*, and then thou wilt speed well."

10. And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed; for

all the goods of his master *were* in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. 11. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water, at the time of the evening, *even* the time that women go out to draw *water*. 12. And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. 13. Behold, I stand *here* by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: 14. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: *let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac*; and thereby shall I know thou hast showed kindness unto my master. 15. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. 16. And the damsel *was* very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. 17. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. 18. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. 19. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw *water* for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20. And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. 21. And the man, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous, or not. 22. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten *shekels* weight of gold; 23. And said, Whose daughter *art* thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? 24. And she said unto him, I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. 25. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. 26. And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. 27. And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I *being* in the

way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren. 28. And the damsel ran, and told *them* of her mother's house these things.

Abraham's servant now begins to make a figure in this story; and though he is not named, yet much is here recorded, to his honour, and for an example to all servants, who shall be honoured, if, by faithfully serving God and their masters, they adorn the doctrine of Christ. Compare Prov. 27. 18, with Titus 2. 10, for there is no respect of persons with God, Col. 3. 24, 25. A good servant that makes conscience of the duty of his place, and does it in the fear of God, though he make not a figure in the world, nor have praise of men, yet shall be owned and accepted of God, and have praise of him. Observe here,

I. How faithful Abraham's servant approved himself to his master. Having received his charge, with all expedition he took his journey, putting himself into an equipage fit for his negotiation, *v. 10, and he had all the goods of his master*, that is, a schedule or particular account of them, *in his hand*, to show to those with whom he was to treat; for, from first to last, he consulted his master's honour. Isaac being a type of Christ, some make this fetching of a wife for him to signify the espousing of the church, by the agency of his servants the ministers. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. 21. 9. Christ is the Bridegroom, and ministers the friends of the Bridegroom, (John 3. 29.) whose work it is to persuade souls to consent to him, 2 Cor. 11. 2. The spouse of Christ must not be of the Canaanites, but of his own kindred, born again from above. Ministers, like Abraham's servant, must lay out themselves with the utmost wisdom and care to serve their master's interest herein.

II. How devoutly he acknowledged God in this affair, like one of that happy household which Abraham had *commanded to keep the way of the Lord*, &c. *ch. 18. 19*. He arrived early in the evening (after many days' journeying) at the place he designed for, and reposed himself by a well of water, to consider how he might manage his business for the best. And,

1. He acknowledged God by a particular prayer, *v. 12. 14*, wherein, (1.) He petitions for prosperity and good success in this affair; *Send me good speed, this day*. Note, We have leave to be particular in recommending our affairs to the conduct and care of the Divine Providence. Those that would have good speed, must pray for it, *this day, in this affair*; thus we must in all our ways, acknowledge God, Prov. 3. 6. And if we thus look up to God in every undertaking which we are in care about, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty, whatever the issue be. (2.) He pleads God's covenant with his master Abraham; *O God of my master Abraham, show kindness to him*. Note, As the children of good parents, so the servants of good masters, have peculiar encouragement in the prayers they offer to God for prosperity and success. (3.) He proposes a sign, *v. 14*, not by it to limit God, or with a design to proceed no further, if he were not gratified in it; but it is a prayer, [1.] That God would provide a good wife for his young master; and that was a good prayer. He knew that a *prudent wife is from the Lord*, (Prov. 19. 14.) and therefore that for this he will be inquired of. He desires that his master's wife might be a humble and industrious woman, bred up to care and labour, and willing to put her hand to any work that was to be done; and that she might be of a courteous disposition, and charitable to strangers. When he came to seek a wife for his master, he did not go to the

playhouse or the park, and pray that he might meet one there, but to the *well of water*, expecting to find one there well-employed. [2.] That he would please to make his way, in this matter, plain and clear before him, by the concurrence of minute circumstances in his favour. Note, *First*, It is the comfort, as well as the belief, of a good man, that God's providence extends itself to the smallest occurrences, and admirably serves its own purposes by them. Our times are in God's hand; not only events themselves, but the times of them. *Secondly*, It is our wisdom, in all our affairs, to follow Providence; and folly to force it. *Thirdly*, It is very desirable, and that which we may lawfully pray for, while in the general we set God's will before us as our rule, that he will, by hints of providence, direct us in the way of our duty, and give us indications what his mind is. Thus he guides his people with his eye, (Ps. 32. 8.) and leads them in a plain path, Ps. 27. 11.

2. God owned him by a particular providence. He decreed the thing, and it was established to him, Job 22. 28. According to his faith, so was it unto him. The answer to this prayer, was, (1.) *Speedy, before he had made an end of speaking*, *v. 15*, as it is written, (Isa. 65. 24.) *While they are yet speaking, I will hear*. Though we are backward to pray, God is forward to hear prayer. (2.) *Satisfactory*: the first that came to draw water, was, and did, in every thing, according to his own heart. [1.] She was so well qualified, that in all respects she answered the characters he wished for in the woman that was to be his master's wife, handsome and healthful, humble and industrious, very courteous and obliging to a stranger, and having all the marks of a good disposition: when she came to the well, (*v. 16*.) she went down, and *filled her pitcher, and came up* to go home with it; she did not stand to gaze upon the strange man and his camels, but minded her business, and would not have been diverted from it but by an opportunity of doing good; she did not curiously or confidently enter into discourse with him, but modestly answered him with all the decorum that became her sex. What a degenerate age do we live in, in which appear all the instances of pride, luxury, and laziness, the reverse of Rebekah's character, whose daughters few are. Those instances of goodness which were then in honour, are now in contempt. [2.] Providence so ordered it, that she did that which exactly answered to his sign, and was wonderfully the counterpart of his proposal; she not only gave him drink, but, which was more than could have been expected, she offered her service to give his camels drink, which was the very sign he proposed.

Note, *First*, God, in his providence, does sometimes wonderfully own the prayer of faith, and gratify the innocent desires of his praying people, even in little things; that he may show the extent of his care, and may encourage them at all times to seek to him, and trust in him; yet we must take heed of being over bold in prescribing to God, lest the event should weaken our faith rather than strengthen it. *Secondly*, It is good to take all opportunities of showing a humble, courteous, charitable disposition, because, some time or other, it may turn more to our honour and benefit than we think of; some hereby have entertained angels, and Rebekah hereby, quite beyond her expectation at this time, was brought into the line of Christ and the covenant. *Thirdly*, There may be a great deal of obliging kindness in that which costs but little: our Saviour has promised a reward for a cup of cold water, like this here, Matt. 10. 42. *Fourthly*, The concurrence of providences and their minute circumstances, for the furtherance of our success in any business, ought to be particularly observed, with won

der and thankfulness, to the glory of God; *the man wondered*, v. 21. We have been wanting to ourselves, both in duty and in comfort, by neglecting to observe Providence. [3.] Upon inquiry, he found, to his great satisfaction, that she was a near relation to his master, and that the family she was of, was considerable, and able to give him entertainment, v. 23. 25. Note, Providence sometimes, wonderfully directs those that by faith and prayer seek direction from heaven in the choice of suitable yoke-fellows: happy marriages those are likely to be, that are made in the fear of God; and those, we are sure, are made in heaven.

3. Abraham's servant acknowledges God in a particular thanksgiving. He first paid his respects to Rebekah, in gratitude for her civility, (v. 22.) obliging her with such ornaments and attire as a maid, especially a bride, cannot forget, (Jer. 2. 32.) which yet, we should think, ill-suited the *pitcher of water*; but the ear-rings and bracelets she sometimes wore, did not make her think herself above the labours of a virtuous woman, (Prov. 31. 13.) who *works willingly with her hands*; nor the services of a child, who while under age, differs nothing from a servant, Gal. 4. 1. Having done this, he turns his wonder (v. 21.) into worshipping, v. 26, 27, *Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham*. Observe here, (1.) He had prayed for good speed, (v. 12.) and now that he had sped well, he gives thanks. Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise; for mercies, in answer to prayer, lay us under particular obligations. (2.) He had as yet but a comfortable prospect of mercy, and was not certain what the issue might prove; yet he gives thanks. Note, When God's favours are coming towards us, we must meet them with our praises. (3.) He blesses God for success, when he was negotiating for his master. Note, We should be thankful for our friends' mercies as for our own. (4.) He gives thanks that, being in the way, at a less what course to steer, the Lord had led him. Note, In doubtful cases, it is very comfortable to see God leading us, as he led Israel in the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire. (5.) He thinks himself very happy, and owns God in it, that he was led to the house of his master's brethren, those of them that were come out of Ur of the Chaldees, though they were not come to Canaan, but remained in Haran. They were not idolaters, but worshippers of the true God, and inclinable to the religion of Abraham's family. Note, God is to be acknowledged in providing suitable yoke-fellows, especially such as are agreeable in religion. (6.) He acknowledges that God, herein, had not left his master destitute of his mercy and truth. God had promised to build up Abraham's family, yet it seemed destitute of the benefit of that promise; but now, Providence is working toward the accomplishment of it. Note, [1.] God's faithful ones, how destitute soever they may be of worldly comforts, shall never be left destitute of God's mercy and truth; for God's mercy is an inexhaustible fountain, and his truth an inviolable foundation. [2.] It adds much to the comfort of any blessing, to see in it the continuance of God's mercy and truth.

29. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. 30. And it came to pass, when he saw the car-ring, and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. 31. And he said,

Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. 32. And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. 33. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. 34. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. 35. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses. 36. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. 37. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: 38. But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son. 39. And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. 40. And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house. 41. Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred, and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath. 42. And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: 43. Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; 44. And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman, whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son. 45. And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water; and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. 46. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. 47. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ear-ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon

her hands, 48. And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son. 49. And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. 50. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. 51. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken. 52. And it came to pass, that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth. 53. And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

We have here the making up of the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah; it is related very largely and particularly, even to the minute circumstances, which, we should think, might have been spared, while other things of great moment and mystery (as the story of Melchizedek) are related in few words. Thus God conceals that which is curious from the wise and prudent, reveals to babes that which is common, and level to their capacity, (Matt. 11. 25.) and rules and *saves the world by the foolishness of preaching*, 1 Cor. 1. 21. Thus also we are directed to take notice of God's providence in the little common occurrences of human life, and in them also to exercise our own prudence and other graces; for the scripture was not intended only for the use of philosophers and statesmen, but to make us all wise and virtuous in the conduct of ourselves and families.

Here is,

1. The very kind reception given to Abraham's servant by Rebekah's relations. Her brother Laban went to invite and conduct him in, but not till he saw the *ear-ring, and bracelets upon his sister's hands*, v. 30. "O," thinks Laban, "here is a man that there is something to be got by, a man that is rich and generous; we will be sure to give him welcome!" We know so much of Laban's character, by the following story, as to think that he would not have been so free of his entertainment, if he had not hoped to be well paid for it, as he was, v. 53. Note, *A man's gift maketh room for him*; (Prov. 18. 16.) *which way soever it turneth, it prospereth*, Prov. 17. 8. 1. The invitation was kind; v. 31, *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord*. They saw he was rich, and therefore pronounced him *blessed of the Lord*; or, perhaps, because they heard from Rebekah, (v. 28.) of the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, they concluded him a good man, and therefore, *blessed of the Lord*. Note, Those that are blessed of God, should be welcome to us. It is good owning those whom God owns. 2. The entertainment was kind; v. 32, 33. Both the house and stable were well furnished, and Abraham's servant was invited to the free use of both. Particular care was taken of the camels; for a *good man regardeth the life of his beast*, Prov. 12. 10. If the ox knows his owner to serve him, the owner should know his ox to provide for him that which is fitting for him.

II. The full account which he gave them of his errand, and the court he makes to them for their consent respecting Rebekah. Observe, 1. How in-

tent he was upon his business; though he was come off a journey, and come to a good house, he would *not eat till he had told his errand*, v. 32. Note, The doing of our work, and the fulfilling of our trust, either for God or man, should be preferred by us before our necessary food: it was our Saviour's meat and drink, John 4. 34. 2. How ingenious he was in the management of it: he approved himself, in this matter, both a prudent man, and a man of integrity, faithful to his master by whom he was trusted, and just to those with whom he now treated.

(1.) He gives a short account of the state of his master's family, v. 34. . 36. He was welcome before, but we may suppose him doubly welcome, when he said, *I am Abraham's servant*; Abraham's name, no doubt, was well-known among them, and respected, and we may suppose them not altogether ignorant of his state, for Abraham knew their's, *ch.* 22. 20. . 24. Two things he suggests, to recommend his proposal. [1.] That his master Abraham, through the blessing of God, had a very good estate; and, [2.] That he had settled it all upon Isaac, for whom he was now a suitor.

(2.) He tells them the charge his master had given him, to fetch a wife for his son from among his kindred, with the reason of it, v. 37, 38. Thus he insinuates a pleasing hint, that though Abraham was removed to a country at so great a distance, yet he still retained the remembrance of, and a respect for his relations that he had left behind. The highest degrees of divine affection must not divest us of natural affection. He likewise obviates an objection, That if Isaac were deserving, he need not send so far off for a wife: why did he not marry nearer home? "For a good reason," (says he;) "my master's son must not match with a Canaanite." He further recommends his proposal, [1.] From the faith his master had, that it would succeed, v. 40. Abraham took encouragement from the testimony of his conscience, that he *walked before God* in a regular course of holy living, and thence inferred that God would prosper him; probably, he refers to that covenant which God had made with him, *ch.* 17. 1. *I am God all-sufficient, walk before me*. Therefore, (says he,) *the God before whom I walk, will send his angel*. Note, While we make conscience of our part of the covenant, we may take the comfort of God's part of it; and we should learn to apply general promises to particular cases, as there is occasion. [2.] From the care he himself had taken to preserve their liberty of giving or refusing their consent, as they should see cause, without incurring the guilt of perjury, v. 39. . 41. which showed him, in general, to be a cautious man, and particularly careful that their consent might not be forced, but be either free, or not at all.

(3.) He relates to them the wonderful concurrence of providences, to countenance and further the proposal, plainly showing the finger of God in it. [1.] He tells them how he had prayed for direction by a sign, v. 42. . 44. Note, It is good dealing with those, who by prayer take God along with them in their dealings. [2.] How God had answered his prayer in the very letter of it. Though he did but *speak in his heart*, (v. 45.) which perhaps he mentions, lest it should be suspected that Rebekah had overheard his prayer, and designedly humoured it; "No," says he, "*I spake it in my heart*, so that none heard it but God, to whom thoughts are words, and from him the answer came," v. 46, 47. [3.] How he had immediately acknowledged God's goodness to him therein, *leading him*, as he expresses it here, *in the right way*. Note, God's way is always the *right way*, Ps. 107. 7, and those are well-led, whom he leads.

(4.) He fairly refers the matter to their consideration, and waits their resolution, v. 49, "*If you*

*you deal kindly and truly with my master*, well and good; if you will be sincerely kind, you will accept the proposal, and I have what I come for; if not, do not hold me in *suspense*." Note, Those who deal fairly, have reason to expect fair dealing.

(5.) They freely and cheerfully close with the proposal, upon a very good principle, *v. 50*, "*The thing proceedeth from the Lord*. Providence smiles upon it, and we have nothing to say against it." They do not object distance of place; Abraham's forsaking them; his having no land in possession, but personal estate only: they do not question the truth of what this man said; but, [1.] They trust much to his integrity. It were well, if honesty did so universally prevail among men, that it might be as much an act of prudence, as it is of good nature, to take a man's word. [2.] They trust more to God's providence, and therefore by silence give consent, because it appears to be directed and disposed by infinite wisdom. Note, A marriage is likely *then* to be comfortable, when it appears to proceed from the Lord.

(6.) Abraham's servant makes a thankful acknowledgment of the good success he had met with, [1.] To God, *v. 52*, *he worshipped the Lord*. Observe, *First*, As his good success went on, he went on to bless God. Those that *pray without ceasing*, should in every thing give thanks, and own God in every step of mercy. *Secondly*, God sent his angel before him, and so gave him success, *v. 7, 40*. But when he has the desired success, he worships God, not the angel. Whatever benefit we have by the ministration of angels, all the glory must be given to the Lord of the angels, *Rev. 22. 9*. [2.] He pays his respects to the family also, and particularly to the bride, *v. 53*. He presented her, and her mother, and brother, with many *precious things*: both to give a real proof of his master's riches and generosity, and in gratitude for their civility to him, and further to ingratiate himself with them.

51. And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. 55. And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least, ten; after that she shall go. 56. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away, that I may go to my master. 57. And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. 58. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. 59. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. 60. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister; be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. 61. And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Rebekah is here taking leave of her father's house.

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I. Abraham's servant presses for a dismissal; though he and his company were very welcome, and very cheerful there, yet he said, *send me away*, *v. 54*, and again, *v. 56*. He knew his master would expect him home with some impatience; he had business to do at home, which wanted him, and therefore, as one that preferred his work before his pleasure, he was for hastening home. Note, Linger and loitering no way become a wise and good man; when we have despatched our business abroad, we must not delay our return to our business at home, nor be longer from it than needs must: for as the bird that wanders from his nest, so is he that wanders from his place, *Prov. 27. 8*.

II. Rebekah's relations, from natural affection, and according to the usual expression of kindness in that case, solicit for her stay some time among them, *v. 55*. They could not think of parting with her, on a sudden, especially as she was about to remove so far off, and it was not likely that they would ever see one another again; *Let her stay a few days, at least, ten*, which makes it as reasonable a request, as the reading in the margin seems to make it unreasonable, *a year, or, at least ten months*. They had consented to the marriage, and yet were loath to part with her. Note, It is an instance of the vanity of this world, that there is nothing in it so agreeable, but it has its alloy, *Nulla est sincera voluptas—There is no unmingled pleasure*. They here were pleased that they had matched a daughter of their family so well; and yet, when it came to the last, it was with great reluctance that they sent her away.

III. Rebekah herself determined the matter; to her they appealed, as it was fit they should, *v. 57*, *Call the damsel*, (who was retired to her apartment with a modest silence,) and *inquire at her mouth*. Note, As children ought not to marry without their parents' consent, so parents ought not to marry them without their own. Before the matter is resolved on, "Ask at the damsel's mouth;" she is a party principally concerned, and therefore ought to be principally consulted. Rebekah consented, not only to go, but to go immediately, *v. 58*, *I will go*. We may hope that the notice she had taken of the servants' piety and devotion, gave her such an idea of the prevalence of religion and godliness in the family she was to go to, as made her desirous to hasten thither, and willing to forget her own people and her father's house, where religion had not so much the ascendant.

IV. Hereupon, she is sent away with Abraham's servant; not, we may suppose, the very next day after, but very quickly: her friends see that she puts a good heart on it, and so they dismiss her, 1. With suitable attendants; her nurse, *v. 59*, her damsels, *v. 61*. It seems then, that when she went to the well for water, it was not because she had not servants at command, but because she took a pleasure in exemplifying humility and industry. Now that she was going among strangers, it was fit to take those with her whom she was acquainted with. Here is nothing said of her portion; her personal merits were a portion in her; she needed none with her, nor did it ever come into the treaty of marriage. 2. With hearty good wishes; (*v. 60*.) *they blessed Rebekah*. Note, When our relations are entering into a new condition, we ought by prayer to recommend them to the blessing and grace of God. Now that she was going to be a wife, they prayed that she might be a mother both of a numerous and of a victorious progeny. Perhaps Abraham's servant had told them of the promise God had lately made his master, which, it is likely, Abraham acquainted his household with, that God would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and that they should possess the gate of their enemies,

ch. 22. 17, to which promise they had an eye in this blessing, *Be thou the mother of that seed.*

62. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country. 63. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels *were* coming. 64. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. 65. For she *had* said unto the servant, What man *is* this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant *had* said, it *is* my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. 66. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. 67. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.

Isaac and Rebekah are, at length, happily brought together.

I. Isaac was well employed, when he met Rebekah, v. 62, 63, *He went out to meditate, or pray in the field at even-tide.* Some think he expected the return of his servants about this time, and went out on purpose to meet them. But it should seem, he went out on another errand, to take the advantage of a silent evening, and a solitary field, for meditation and prayer, those divine exercises by which we converse with God and our own hearts. Note, 1. Holy souls love retirement; it will do us good to be often left alone, walking alone, and sitting alone; and if we have the art of improving solitude, we shall find we are never less alone than when alone. 2. Meditation and prayer ought to be both our business and our delight, when we are alone; while we have a God, a Christ, and a Heaven, to acquaint ourselves with, and to secure our interests in, we need not want matter either for meditation or prayer, which, if they go together, will mutually benefit each other. 3. Our walks in the field are then truly pleasant, when in them we apply ourselves to meditation and prayer; we there have a free and open prospect of the heavens above us, and the earth around us, and the hosts and riches of both, by the view of which we should be led to the contemplation of the Maker and Owner of all. 4. The exercises of devotion should be the refreshment and entertainment of the evening, after the care and business of the day, to relieve the fatigue of that, and before the repose and sleep of the night, to prepare us for that. Merciful providences are then doubly comfortable, when they find us well-employed, and in the way of our duty. Some think Isaac was now praying for good success in this affair that was depending, and meditating upon that which was proper to encourage his hope in God concerning it; and now, when he sets himself, as it were, upon his watch-tower, to see what God would answer him, as the prophet, Hab. 2. 1, *he sees the camels coming*; sometimes God sends in the mercy prayed for, immediately, Acts 12. 12.

II. Rebekah behaved herself very becomingly, when she met Isaac: understanding who he was, she *lighted off her camel*, v. 64, and *took a veil, and covered herself*, v. 65, in token of humility, modesty, and subjection; she did not reproach Isaac for not coming himself to fetch her, or at least to meet her a day's journey or two; did not complain

of the tediousness of her journey, or the difficulty of leaving her relations, to come into a strange place; but having seen Providence going before her in the affair, she accommodates herself with cheerfulness to her new relation. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ, and would be presented as chaste virgins to him, must, in conformity to his example, humble themselves, as Rebekah, who lighted, when she saw Isaac on foot, and must put themselves into subjection to him who is their head, Eph. 5. 24, as Rebekah, signifying it by the veil she put on, 1 Cor. 11. 10.

III. They were brought together, (probably, after some further acquaintance,) to their mutual comfort, v. 67. Observe here, 1. What an affectionate son he was to his mother: it was about three years since she died, and yet he was not, till now, comforted concerning it; the wound which that affliction gave to his tender spirit, bled so long, it was never healed, till God brought him into this new relation: thus crosses and comforts are balances to each other, (Ecc. 7. 14.) and help to keep the scale even. 2. What an affectionate husband he was to his wife. Note, Those that have approved themselves well in one relation, it may be hoped, will do so in another. *She became his wife, and he loved her*; there was all the reason in the world why he should, for *so ought men to love their wives even as themselves*. The duty of the relation is then done, and the comfort of the relation is then enjoyed, when mutual love governs; for *there the Lord commands the blessing*.

## CHAP. XXV.

The sacred historian, in this chapter, I. Takes his leave of Abraham, with an account, 1. Of his children by another wife, v. 1. .4. 2. Of his last will and testament, v. 5. 6. 3. Of his age, death, and burial, v. 7. .10. II. He takes his leave of Ishmael, with a short account, 1. Of his children, v. 12. .16. 2. Of his age and death, v. 17, 18. III. He enters upon the history of Isaac. 1. His prosperity, v. 11. 2. The conception and birth of his two sons, with the oracle of God concerning them, v. 19. .26. 3. Their different characters, v. 27, 28. 4. Esau's selling his birth-right to Jacob, v. 29. .34.

1. **THEN** again Abraham took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. 2. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephraim, and Hanoth, and Abidath, and Eldath. All these *were* the children of Keturah. 5. And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east-country. 7. And these *are* the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years. 8. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. 9. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10. The field which Abraham purchased of the



sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

Abraham lived, after the marriage of Isaac, 35 years, and all that is recorded concerning him during that time, lies here in a very few verses; we hear no more of God's extraordinary appearances to him, or trials of him; for all the days, even of the best and greatest saints, are not eminent days, some slide on silently, and neither come nor go with observation; such were these last days of Abraham. We have here,

I. An account of his children by Keturah, another wife, which he married after the death of Sarah. He had buried Sarah, and married Isaac, the two dear companions of his life, and was now solitary; he wanted a nurse, his family wanted a governess, and it was not good for him to be thus alone; he therefore marries Keturah, probably the chief of his maid-servants, born in his house, or bought with money. Marriage is not forbidden to old age. By her he had six sons, in whom the promise made to Abraham, concerning the great increase of his posterity, was in part fulfilled, which, it is likely, he had an eye to in this marriage. The strength he received by the promise, still remained in him, to show how much the virtue of the promise exceeds the power of nature.

II. The disposition which Abraham made of his estate, v. 5, 6. After the birth of these sons, he set his house in order, with prudence and justice.

1. He made Isaac his heir, as he was bound to do, in justice to Sarah his first and principal wife, and to Rebekah who married Isaac upon the assurance of it, ch. 24. 36. In this *all* which he settled upon Isaac, are included, perhaps the promise of the land of Canaan, and the entail of the covenant. Or, God having already made him the heir of the promise, Abraham therefore made him heir of his estate. Our affection and gifts should attend God's. 2. He gave portions to the rest of his children, both to Ishmael, though at first he was sent empty away, and to his sons by Keturah. It was justice to provide for them; parents that do not imitate him here are worse than infidels. It was prudence to settle them in places distant from Isaac, that they might not pretend to divide the inheritance with him, nor be any way a care or expense to him. Observe, He did this *while he yet lived*, lest it should not have been done, or not so well done, afterward. Note, In many cases, it is wisdom for men to make their own hands their executors, and what they find to do, to do it while they live, as far as they can. The *sons of the concubines* were sent into the country that lay east from Canaan, and their posterity were called the *children of the east*, famous for their numbers, Judg. 6. 5, 33. Their great increase was the fruit of the promise made to Abraham, that God would multiply his seed. God, in dispensing his blessings, does as Abraham did; common blessings he gives to the children of this world, as to the sons of the bond-woman; but, covenant blessings he reserves for the heirs of promise. All that he has, is their's, for they are his Isaac's, from whom the rest shall be for ever separated.

III. The age and death of Abraham, v. 7, 8. He lived 175 years; just 100 years after he came to Canaan; so long he was a sojourner in a strange country. Though he lived long, and lived well, though he did good, and could be ill-spared, yet he died at last. Observe how his death is here described. 1. He *gave up the ghost*. His life was not extorted from him, but he cheerfully resigned it: into the hands of the Father of spirits he committed his spirit. 2. He *died in a good old age, an old man*; so God had promised him. His death was his discharge from the burthens of his age; an old

man would not *so* live, always: it was also the crown of the glory of his old age. 3. He was *full of years*; or full of *life*, (as it might be supplied,) including all the conveniences and comforts of life. He did not live till the world was weary of him, but till he was weary of the world; he had had enough of it, and desired no more, *Vixi quantum satis est—I have lived long enough. Seneca.* A good man, though he should not die old, dies full of days, satisfied with living here, and longing to live in a better place. 4. He *was gathered to his people*. His body was gathered to the congregation of the dead, and his soul to the congregation of the blessed. Note, Death gathers us to our people. Those that are our people while we live, whether the people of God, or the children of this world, are the people to whom death will gather us.

IV. His burial, v. 9, 10. Here is nothing recorded of the pomp or ceremony of his funeral; only we are told, 1. Who buried him; *His sons Isaac and Ishmael*. It was the last office of respect they had to pay to their good father. Some distance there had formerly been between Isaac and Ishmael; but it seems either that Abraham had himself brought them together while he lived, or, at least, that his death reconciled them. 2. Where they buried him; in his own burying-place, which he had purchased, and in which he had buried Sarah. Note, Those that in life have been very dear to each other, may not only innocently, but laudably desire to be buried together, that in their deaths they may not be divided, and in token of their hopes of rising together.

11. And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi. 12. Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's hand-maid, bare unto Abraham. 13. And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam. 14. And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15. Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16. These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. 17. And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. 18. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

Immediately after the account of Abraham's death, Moses begins the story of Isaac, (v. 11.) and tells us where he dwelt, and how remarkably God blessed him. Note, The blessing of Abraham did not die with him, but survived to all the children of the promise. But he presently digresses from the story of Isaac, to give a short account of Ishmael, forasmuch as he also was a son of Abraham, and God had made some promises concerning him, which it was requisite we should know the accomplishment of.

Observe here what is said,

1. Concerning his children; he had twelve sons,

*twelve princes* they are called, (v. 16.) heads of families, which, in process of time, became nations, distinct tribes, numerous, and very considerable. They peopled a very large continent that lay between Egypt and Assyria, called *Arabia*. The names of his twelve sons are recorded. Midian and Kedar we often read of in scripture. And some very good expositors have taken notice of the signification of those three names which are put together, (v. 14.) as containing good advice to us all, *Mishma, Dumah, and Massa*, that is, *hear, keep silence, and bear*; we have them together in the same order, Jam. 1. 19, *Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*. The posterity of Ishmael had not only tents in the fields, wherein they grew rich in times of peace; but they had towns and castles, (v. 16.) wherein they fortified themselves in time of war. Now the number and strength of this family were the fruit of the promise made to Hagar concerning Ishmael, ch. 16. 10. and to Abraham, ch. 17. 20. and 21. 13. Note, Many that are strangers to the covenants of promise, yet are blessed with outward prosperity for the sake of their godly ancestors. *Wealth and riches shall be in their house*.

2. Concerning himself; here is an account of his age; he *lived 137 years*, (v. 17.) which is recorded, to show the efficacy of Abraham's prayer for him, ch. 17. 18. *O that Ishmael might live before thee!* Here is an account too of his death; he also was *gathered to his people*; but it is not said that he was *full of days*, though he lived to so great an age: he was not so weary of the world, nor so willing to leave it, as his good father was. Those words, *he fell in the presence of all his brethren*, whether they mean, as we take them, *he died*, or as others, *his lot fell*, are designed to show the fulfilling of that word to Hagar, ch. 16. 12, *He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren*, that is, he shall flourish and be eminent among them, and shall hold his own to the last. Or, he died with his friends about him, which is comfortable.

19. And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. 21. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, *If it be so, why am I thus?* And she went to inquire of the Lord. 23. And the Lord said unto her, *Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger*. 24. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were twins* in her womb. 25. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. 27. And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning

hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. 28. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

We have here an account of the birth of Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah: their entrance into the world was (which is not usual) one of the most considerable parts of their story; nor is much related concerning Isaac, but what had reference to his father while he lived, and to his sons afterward. For Isaac seems not to have been a man of action, nor much tried, but to have spent his days in quietness and silence.

Now concerning Jacob and Esau we are told,

I. That they were prayed for; their parents, after they had been long childless, obtained them by prayer, v. 20, 21, *Isaac was 40 years old when he was married*; though he was an only son, and the person from whom the promised seed was to come, yet he made no haste to marry. He was 60 years old when his sons were born, (v. 26.) so that, after he was married, he had no child for 20 years. Note, Though the accomplishment of God's promise is always sure, yet it is often slow, and seems to be crossed and contradicted by Providence; that the faith of believers may be tried, their patience exercised, and mercies long waited for may be the more welcome when they come. While this mercy was delayed, Isaac did not approach to a hand-maid's bed, as Abraham had done, and Jacob afterward; for he loved Rebekah, ch. 24. 67. But, 1. He prayed: he entreated the Lord for his wife; though God had promised to multiply his family, he prayed for it. For God's promises must not supersede, but encourage our prayers, and be improved as the ground of our faith. Though he had prayed for this mercy very often, and had continued his supplication many years, and it was not granted, yet he did not leave off praying for it: for men ought always to pray, and not to faint, (Luke 18. 1.) to pray without ceasing, and knock till the door be opened. He prayed for his wife; some read it, *with his wife*. Note, Husbands and wives should pray together, which is intimated in the apostle's caution, that their *prayers be not hindered*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. The Jews have a tradition, that Isaac, at length, took his wife with him to Mount Moriah, where God had promised that he would multiply Abraham's seed, ch. 22. 17, and there in his prayer with her, and for her, pleaded the promise made in that very place. 2. God heard his prayer, and was entreated of him. Note, Children are the gift of God. These that continue instant in prayer, as Isaac did, shall find at last that they did not *seek in vain*, Isa. 45. 19.

II. That they were prophesied of before they were born; and great mysteries were wrapt up in the prophecies which went before of them, v. 22, 23. Long had Isaac prayed for a son; and now his wife is with child of two, to recompense him for his long waiting. Thus God often outdoes our prayers, and gives more than we are able to ask or think. Now Rebekah being with child of these two sons, observe here,

1. How she was perplexed in her mind concerning her present case: *the children struggled together within her*. The commotion she felt, was altogether extraordinary, and made her very uneasy; whether she was apprehensive that the birth would be her death, or that she was weary of the intestine tumult, or that she suspected it to be an ill omen, it seems she was ready to wish that either she had not been with child, or that she might die immediately, and not bring forth such a struggling brood. *If it be so, or, since it is so, Why am I*

*thus?* Before, the want of children was her trouble, now, the struggle of the children is no less so. Note, (1.) The comforts we are most desirous of, are sometimes found to bring along with them more occasion of trouble and uneasiness than we thought of; vanity being written upon all things under the sun, God thus teaches us to read it. (2.) We are too apt to be discontented with our comforts, because of the uneasiness that attends them. We know not when we are pleased; we know neither how to want, nor how to abound. This struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb, represents the struggle that is between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, [1.] In the world; the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, have been contending ever since the enmity was put between them, *ch.* 3. 15. and it has occasioned a constant uneasiness among men. Christ himself came to *send fire on earth, and this division*, Luke 12. 49, 51. But let not this be an offence to us. A holy war is better than the peace of the Devil's palace. [2.] In the hearts of believers; no sooner is Christ formed in the soul, than immediately there begins a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, Gal. 5. 17. The stream is not turned without a mighty struggle, which yet ought not to discourage us. It is better to have a conflict with sin, than tamely to submit to it.

2. What course she took for her relief. *She went to inquire of the Lord.* Some think Melchizedek was now consulted as an oracle, or, perhaps some *Urim* or *Tetraphim* were now used to inquire of God by, as afterward in the breast-plate of judgment. Note, The word and prayer, by both which we now inquire of the Lord, give great relief to those that are, upon any account, perplexed. It is an ease to the mind to spread our case before the Lord, and ask counsel at his mouth, *Go into the sanctuary*, Ps. 73. 17.

3. The information given her upon her inquiry, which expounded the mystery. *Two nations are in thy womb, v. 23.* She was now big, not only with two children, but two nations, which should not only in their manners and dispositions greatly differ from each other, but in their interests, clash and contend with each other; and the issue of the contest should be, that the elder should serve the younger, which was fulfilled in the subjection of the Edomites for many ages, to the house of David, till they revolted, 2 Chron. 21. 8. Observe here, (1.) That God is a free Agent in dispensing his grace; it is his prerogative to make a difference between those who have not as yet themselves done either good or evil. This the Apostle infers from hence, Rom. 9. 12. (2.) That in the struggle between grace and corruption in the soul, grace, the younger, shall certainly get the upper hand at last.

III. That when they were born, there was a great difference between them, which served to confirm what had been foretold, (*v. 23.*) was a preface of the accomplishment of it, and served greatly to illustrate the type.

1. There was a great difference in their bodies, *v. 25.* Esau, when he was born, was rough and hairy, as if he had been already a grown man; whence he had his name *Esau*, *made*, reared already. This was an indication of a very strong constitution, and gave cause to suspect that he would be a very robust, daring, active, man. But Jacob was smooth and tender, as other children. Note, (1.) The difference of men's capacities, and consequently of their condition in the world, arises very much from the difference of their natural constitution; some are plainly designed by nature for activity and honour, others as manifestly marked for obscurity. This instance of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of providence, may perhaps help to reconcile us to the

doctrine of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of grace. (2.) It is God's usual way to choose the weak things of the world, and to pass by the mighty, 1. Cor. 1. 26, 27.

2. There was a manifest contest in their births; Esau, the stronger, came out first; but Jacob's hand *took hold on his heel, v. 26.* This signified, (1.) Jacob's pursuit of the birth-right and blessing; from the first, he reached forth to have caught hold of it, and if possible, to have prevented his brother. (2.) His prevailing for it at last; that, in process of time, he should undermine his brother, and gain his point. This passage is referred to, Hos. 12. 3, and from hence he had his name *Jacob*, a *supplanter*.

3. They were very unlike in the temper of their minds, and the way of living they chose, *v. 27.* They soon appeared to be of very different dispositions. (1.) Esau was a man for *this* world; a man addicted to his sports, for he was a *hunter*, and a man that knew how to live by his wits, for he was a *cunning* hunter; recreation was his business, he studied the art of it, and spent all his time in it. He never loved a book, nor cared for being within doors, but he was a man of the field; like Nimrod and Ishmael, all for the game, and never well but when he was upon the stretch in pursuit of it; in short, he set up for a gentleman, and a soldier. (2.) Jacob was a man for the *other* world; he was not cut out for a statesman, nor did he affect to look great, but he was a *plain* man, *dwelling in tents*; an honest man that always meant well, and dealt fairly, that preferred the true delights of solitude and retirement, to all the pretended pleasure of busy noisy sports: he dwelt in tents, [1.] As a shepherd. He was attached to that safe and silent employment of keeping sheep, to which also he bred up his children, *ch.* 46. 34. Or, [2.] as a student. He frequented the tents of Melchizedek, or Heber, as some understand it, to be taught by them divine things. And this was that son of Isaac, on whom the covenant was entailed.

4. Their interest in the affections of their parents was likewise different. They had but these two children, and it seems, one was the father's darling, and the other the mother's, *v. 28.* (1.) Isaac, though he was not a stirring man himself, (for when he went into the fields, he went to meditate and pray, not to hunt,) yet he loved to have his son active. Esau knew how to please him, and showed a great respect for him, by treating him often with venison, which gained him the affections of the good old man, and won upon him more than one would have thought. (2.) Rebekah was mindful of the oracle of God, which had given the preference to Jacob, and therefore she preferred him in her love. And if it be lawful for parents to make a difference between their children upon any account, doubtless Rebekah was in the right, that loved him whom God loved.

29. And Jacob sold pottage: And Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint: 30. And Esau said to Jacob, feed me, I pray thee, with that same red *pottage*; for I *am* faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right. 32. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right do to me? 33. And Jacob said, Swear to me this day, and he swore unto him: and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. 34. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birth-right.

We have here a bargain made between Jacob and Esau about the birth-right, which was Esau's by providence, but Jacob's by promise. It was a spiritual privilege, including the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, as well as the double portion, *ch.* 49. 3. It seemed to be such a birth-right as had then the blessing annexed to it, and the entail of the promise. Now see,

I. Jacob's pious desire of the birth-right, which yet he sought to obtain by indirect courses, not agreeable to his character as a plain man. It was not out of pride or ambition that he coveted the birth-right, but with an eye to spiritual blessings, which he had got well-acquainted with in his tents, while Esau had lost the scent of them in the field. For this, he is to be commended, that he coveted earnestly the best gifts; yet in this he cannot be justified, that he took advantage of his brother's necessity, to make him a very hard bargain, *v.* 31, *Sell me this day thy birth-right*. Probably, there had formerly been some communication between them about this matter, and then it was not so great a surprise upon Esau as here it seems to be; and, it may be, Esau had sometimes spoken slightly of the birth-right and its appurtenances, which encouraged Jacob to make this proposal to him. And if so, Jacob is in some measure, excusable in what he did to gain his point. Note, plain men, that have their conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity, and without worldly wisdom, are often found wisest of all for their souls and eternity. These are wise indeed, that are wise for another world. Jacob's wisdom appeared in two things. 1. That he chose the exact time; took the opportunity when it offered itself, and did not let it slip. 2. That having made the bargain, he made it sure, and got it confirmed by Esau's oath, *Swear to me this day*, *v.* 33. He took Esau when he was in the mind, and would not leave him a power of revocation. In a case of this nature, it is good to be sure.

II. Esau's profane contempt of the birth-right, and the foolish sale he made of it. He is called *profane Esau* for, *Heb.* 12. 16, because, *for one morsel of meat, he sold his birth-right*; as dear a morsel as ever was eaten since the forbidden fruit; and he lived to regret it, when it was too late. Never was there such a foolish bargain as that which Esau now made; and yet he valued himself upon his policy, and had the reputation of a cunning-man; and perhaps had often bantered his brother Jacob as a weak and simple man. Note. 1. There are those that are penny-wise and pound-foolish, cunning hunters that can out-wit others and draw them into their snares, and yet are themselves imposed upon by Satan's wiles, and led captive by him at his will. 2. God often chooses the foolish things of the world, by them to confound the wise. Plain Jacob makes a fool of cunning Esau. Observe the instances of Esau's folly.

(1.) His appetite was very strong, *v.* 29, 30. Poor Jacob had got some bread and pottage (*v.* 34,) for his dinner, and was sitting down to it contentedly enough, without venison; when Esau came from hunting, hungry and weary, and perhaps had caught nothing. And now Jacob's pottage pleased his eye better than ever his game had done. Give me (says he) some of that red, that red, as it is in the original; it suited his own colour, *v.* 25, and, in reproach to him, for this he was ever afterward called *Edom*, *Red*. Nay, it should seem, he was so faint, that he could not feed himself, nor had he a servant at hand to help him, but entreats his brother to feed him. Note, [1.] Those that addict themselves to sport, *weary themselves for very vanity*, *Hab.* 2. 13. They might do the most needful business, and gain the greatest advantages, with half the pains they take, and half the perils they run, in pursuit of their

foolish pleasures. [2.] Those that work with quietness, are more constantly and comfortably provided for, than those that hunt with noise: bread is not always to the wise, but they that trust in the Lord and do good, verily they shall be fed, fed with daily bread; not as Esau, sometimes feasting, and sometimes fainting. [3.] The gratifying of the sensual appetite, is that which ruins thousands of precious souls: surely if Esau was hungry and faint, he might have got a meal's meat cheaper than at the expense of his birth-right; but he was unaccountably fond of the colour of this pottage, and could not deny himself the satisfaction of a mess of it, whatever it cost him. Never better can come of it, when men's hearts walk after their eyes, *Job* 31. 7, and when they serve their own bellies: therefore, Look not thou upon the wine, or, as Esau, upon the pottage, when it is red, when it gives that colour in the cup, in the dish, which is most inviting, *Prov.* 23. 31. If we use ourselves to deny ourselves, we break the force of most temptations.

(2.) His reasoning was very weak, *v.* 32, *Behold I am at the point to die*; and if he were, would nothing serve to keep him alive but this pottage? If the famine were now in the land, (*ch.* 26. 1.) as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, we cannot suppose Isaac so poor, or Rebekah so bad a house-keeper, but that he might have been supplied with food convenient, other ways, and might have saved his birth-right; but his appetite has the mastery of him, he is in a longing condition, nothing will please him but this red, this red pottage, and to palliate his desire, he pretends he is at the point to die; if it had been so, was it not better for him to die in honour than to live in disgrace; to die under a blessing than to live under a curse? The birth-right was typical of spiritual privileges, those of the church of the first-born. Esau was now tried how he would value them, and he shows himself sensible only of present grievances; may he but get relief against them, he cares not for his birth-right. Naboth was better principled, who would lose his life rather than sell his vineyard, because his part in the earthly Canaan signified his part in the heavenly, *1 Kings* 21. 3. [1.] If we look on Esau's birth-right as only a temporal advantage, what he said, had something of truth in it, namely, that our worldly enjoyments, even those that we are most fond of, will stand us in no stead in a dying hour, *Psa.* 49. 6. . 8. They will not put by the stroke of death, nor ease the pangs, nor remove the sting; yet Esau, who set up for a gentleman, should have had a greater and more noble spirit, than to sell even such an honour a cheap bargain. [2.] But being of a spiritual nature, his undervaluing of it was the greatest profaneness imaginable. Note, It is egregious folly to part with our interest in God, and Christ, and Heaven, for the riches, honours and pleasures of this world; as bad a bargain as he that sold a birth-right for a dish of broth.

(3.) Repentance was hid from his eyes, *v.* 34, *He did eat and drink*, pleased his palate, satisfied his cravings, blessed himself when he thought what a good meal's meat he had had, and then carelessly rose up and went his way, without any serious reflections upon the bad bargain he had made, or any show of regret: thus Esau despised his birth-right; he used no means at all to get the bargain revoked; made no appeal to his father about it, nor proposed to his brother to compound the matter; but the bargain which his necessity had made, (supposing it were so,) his profaneness confirmed *ex post facto*—after the deed; and by his subsequent neglect and contempt, he did, as it were, acknowledge a fine, and by justifying himself in what he had done, he put the bargain past recall. Note, People are ruined, not so much by doing what is amiss, as by doing it and not repenting of it, doing it and standing to it

CHAP. XXVI.

In this chapter, we have, 1. Isaac in adversity, by reason of a famine in the land, which 1. Obliges him to change his quarters, v. 1. But, 2. God visits him with direction and comfort, v. 2. . 3. He foolishly denies his wife, being in distress, and is reprov'd for it by Abimelech, v. 6. . 11. II. Isaac in prosperity, by the blessing of God upon him, v. 12. . 14. And 1. The Philistines were envious at him, v. 14. . 17. 2. He continued industrious in his business, v. 18. . 23. 3. God appeared to him, and encouraged him, and he devoutly acknowledged God, v. 24, 25. 4. The Philistines, at length, made court to him, and made a covenant with him, v. 26. . 33. 5. The disagreeable marriage of his son Esau was an allay to the comfort of his prosperity, v. 34, 35.

1. **AND** there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. 2. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: 3. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; 4. And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5. Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Here,

I. God tried Isaac by providence; Isaac had been trained up in a believing dependence upon the divine grant of the land of Canaan to him and his heirs; yet now that there is a *famine in the land*, v. 1, what shall he think of the promise, when the promised land will not find him bread? Is such a grant worth accepting, upon such terms, and after so long a time? Yes, Isaac will still cleave to the covenant; and the less valuable Canaan in itself seems to be, the better he is taught to value it. 1. As a token of God's everlasting kindness to him; and 2. As a type of heaven's everlasting blessedness. Note, The intrinsic worth of God's promises cannot be lessened in a believer's eye by any cross providences.

II. He directed him under this trial by his word. Isaac finds himself straitened by the scarcity of provisions; somewhither he must go for supply; it should seem, he intends for Egypt, whither his father went in the like strait, but he takes Gerar in his way, full of thoughts, no doubt, which way he had best steer his course, till God graciously appeared to him, and determined him, abundantly to his satisfaction.

1. God bid him stay where he was, and *not go down into Egypt*, v. 2, 3. *Sojourn in this land*: there was a famine in Jacob's days, and God bid him *go down into Egypt*, ch. 46. 3, 4; a famine in Isaac's days, and God bid him *not to go down*; a famine in Abraham's days, and God left him to his liberty, directing him neither way; this variety in the divine procedure (considering that Egypt was always a place of trial and exercise to God's people) some ground upon the different characters of these three patriarchs. Abraham was a man of very high attainments, and intimate communion with God; and to him all places and conditions were alike. Isaac was a very good man, but not cut out for hardship; therefore he is forbidden to go to

Egypt. Jacob was inured to difficulties, strong, and patient; and therefore he must go down into Egypt, that *the trial of his faith might be to praise, and honour, and glory*. Thus God proportion's his people's trials to their strength.

2. He promised to be *with him, and bless him*, v. 3. As we may go any-whither with comfort, when God's blessing goes with us; so we may stay any where contentedly, if that blessing rest upon us.

3. He renewed the covenant with him, which had so often been made with Abraham, repeating and ratifying the promises of the land of Canaan, a numerous issue, and the Messiah, v. 3, 4. Note, Those that must live by faith, have need often to review, and repeat to themselves, the promises they are to live upon, especially when they are called to any instance of suffering or self-denial.

4. He recommended to him the good example of his father's obedience, as that which had preserved the entail of the covenant in his family, v. 5, *Abraham obeyed my voice*, "Do thou do so too, and the promise shall be sure to thee." Abraham's obedience is here celebrated, to his honour; for by it he obtained a good report both with God and men. A great variety of words is here used to express the divine will, to which Abraham was obedient, *my voice, my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*, which may intimate that Abraham's obedience was universal; he obeyed the original laws of nature, the revealed laws of divine worship, particularly that of circumcision, and all the extraordinary precepts God gave him, as that of quitting his country, and that (which some think is more especially referred to) of the offering up of his son, which Isaac himself had reason enough to remember. Note, Those only shall have the benefit and comfort of God's covenant with their godly parents, that tread in the steps of their obedience.

6. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7. And the men of the place asked *him* of his wife: and he said, *She is my sister*: for he feared to say, *She is my wife*; lest, *said he*, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she *was* fair to look upon. 8. And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines, looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac *was* sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she *is* thy wife: and how saidst thou, *She is my sister*? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, lest I die for her. 10. And Abimelech said, What *is* this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. 11. And Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death.

Isaac had now laid aside all thoughts of going into Egypt, and in obedience to the heavenly vision, sets up his staff in Gerar, the country in which he was born, v. 6. yet there he enters into temptation, the same temptation that his good father had been once and again surprised and overcome by, namely, to deny his wife, and to give out that she was his sister. Observe,

1. How he *sinned*, v. 7. Because his wife was handsome, he fancied the Philistines would find



some way or other to take him off, that some of them might marry her; and therefore she must pass for his sister. It is an unaccountable thing, that both these great and good men should be guilty of so strange a piece of dissimulation, by which they so much exposed both their own and their wives' reputation. But we see, (1.) That very good men have sometimes been guilty of very great faults and follies. Let those therefore that stand, take heed lest they fall, and those that are fallen, not despair of being helped up again. We see, (2.) That there is an aptness in us to imitate even the weaknesses and infirmities of those we have a value for; we have need therefore to keep our foot, lest, while we aim to tread in the steps of good men, we sometimes tread in their *by-steps*.

2. How he was *detected*, and the cheat discovered by the king himself. Abimelech (not the same that was in Abraham's days, *ch.* 20, for this was near 100 years after that) was the common name of the Philistine kings, as Cæsar of the Roman emperors: he saw Isaac more familiar and pleasant with Rebekah than he knew he would be with his sister; (*v.* 8.) he saw him sporting with her, or *laughing*; it is the same word with that from which Isaac had his name; he was *rejoicing with the wife of his youth*, *Prov.* 5. 18. It becomes those in that relation to be pleasant with one another, as those that are pleased with one another. No where, may a man more allow himself to be innocently merry, than with his own wife and children. Abimelech charged him with the fraud, (*v.* 9.) showed him how frivolous his excuse was, and what might have been the bad consequences of it; (*v.* 10.) and then, to convince him how groundless and unjust his jealousy of them was, took him and his family under his particular protection, forbidding any injury to be done to him or his wife, upon pain of death, *v.* 11. Note, (1.) A lying tongue is but for a moment. Truth is the daughter of time; and in time, it will out. (2.) One sin is often the inlet to many, and therefore the beginnings of sin ought to be avoided. (3.) The sins of professors shame them before those that are without. (4.) God can make those that are incensed against his people, though there may be some colour of cause for it, to know that it is at their peril, if they do them any hurt. See *Ps.* 105. 14, 15.

12. Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred fold: and the LORD blessed him: 13. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great. 14. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. 15. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. 16. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 18. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19. And Isaac's

servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is our's: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. 21. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. 23. And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. 24. And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake. 25. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Here we have,

I. The tokens of God's good will to Isaac; he *blessed him*, and prospered him, and made all that he had, to thrive under his hands. 1. His corn multiplied strangely, *v.* 12. He had no land of his own, but took land of the Philistines, and sowed it; and (be it observed for the encouragement of poor tenants, that occupy other people's lands, and are honest and industrious) God blessed him with a great increase. He reaped an *hundred fold*; and there seems to be an emphasis laid upon the time; it was *that same year*, when there was a famine in the land; while others scarcely reaped at all, he reaped thus plentifully. See *Isa.* 65. 13, *My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry*, *Isa.* 37. 19. *In the days of famine, they shall be satisfied*. 2. His cattle also increased, *v.* 14. And then, 3. He had *great store of servants*, whom he employed and maintained. Note, *As goods are increased, they are increased that eat them*, *Ecc.* 5. 11.

II. The tokens of the Philistines' ill-will to him: they *envied him*, *v.* 14. It is an instance, 1. Of the vanity of the world, that the more men have of it, the more they are envied, and exposed to censure and injury. *Who can stand before envy?* *Prov.* 27. 4. See *Ecc.* 4. 4. 2. Of the corruption of nature; for that is a bad principle indeed, which makes men *grieve at the good of others*; as if it must needs be ill with me, because it is well with my neighbour. (1.) They had already showed their ill-will to his family, by stopping up the wells which his father had digged, *v.* 15. This was *spitefully* done; because they had not flocks of their own to water at these wells, they would not leave them for the use of others; so absurd a thing is malice. And it was *perfidiously* done; contrary to the covenant of friendship they had made with Abraham, *ch.* 21. 31, 32. No bonds will hold ill-nature. (2.) They expelled him out of their country, *v.* 16, 17. The king of Gerar began to look upon him with a jealous eye. Isaac's house was like a court, and his riches and retinue eclipsed Abimelech's; and therefore he must go further off: they were weary of his neighbourhood, because they saw that the Lord blessed him; whereas, for that reason, they should the rather have courted his stay, that they also might



be blessed for his sake. Isaac does not insist upon the bargain he had made with them for the lands he held, nor upon his occupying and improving of them, nor does he offer to contest with them by force, though he was become very great; but very peaceably departs thence further from the royal city, and perhaps to a part of the country less fruitful. Note, We should deny ourselves both in our rights and in our conveniences, rather than quarrel: a wise and a good man will rather retire into obscurity, like Isaac here into a valley, than sit high, to be the butt of envy and ill-will.

III. His constancy and continuance in his business still.

1. He kept up his husbandry, and continued industrious to find wells of water, and to fit them for his use, v. 18, &c. Though he was grown very rich, yet he was as solicitous as ever about the state of his flocks, and still looked well to his herds; when men grow great, they must take heed of thinking themselves too big and too high for their business. Though he was driven from the conveniences he had had, and could not follow his husbandry with the same ease and advantage as before, yet he set himself to make the best of the country he was come into, which it is every man's prudence to do. Observe, (1.) He opened the wells that his father had digged, (v. 18.) and, out of respect to his father, called them by the same names that he had given them. Note, In our searches after truth, that fountain of living water, it is good to make use of the discoveries of former ages, which have been clouded by the corruptions of later times. Inquire for the old way, the wells which our fathers digged, which the adversaries of truth have stopped up; *Ask thine elders, and they shall teach thee.* (2.) His servants digged new wells, v. 19. Note, Though we must use the light of former ages, it does not therefore follow that we must rest in it, and make no advances; we must still be building upon their foundation, *running to and fro, that knowledge may be increased*, Dan. 12. 4.

In digging his wells, [1.] He met with much opposition, v. 20, 21. Those that open the fountains of truth, must expect contradiction. The two first wells they digged, were called *Esek* and *Sitnah*, *Contention* and *Hatred*. See here, *First*, What is the nature of worldly things; they are make-bates, and occasions of strife. *Secondly*, What is often the lot even of the most quiet and peaceable men in this world; those that avoid striving, yet cannot avoid being striven with, Ps. 120. 7. In this sense, Jeremiah was a *man of contention*, (Jer. 15. 10.) and Christ himself, though he is the Prince of peace. *Thirdly*, What a mercy it is to have plenty of water, to have it without striving for it! The more common this mercy is, the more reason we have to be thankful for it. [2.] At length he removed to a quiet settlement, cleaving to his peaceable principle, rather to fly than fight, and unwilling to dwell with them that hated peace, Ps. 120. 6. He preferred quietness to victory. He *digged a well, and for that they strove not*, v. 22. Note, Those that follow peace, sooner or later, shall find peace; those that study to be quiet, seldom fail of being so. How unlike was Isaac to his brother Ishmael, who, right or wrong, would hold what he had, against all the world! ch. 16. 12. And which of these would we be found the followers of? This well they called *Rehoboth*, *Enlargements*, room enough: in the two former wells we may see what the earth is, *straitness and strife*; men cannot thrive, for the throng of their neighbours; this well shows us what heaven is; it is *enlargement and peace*, room enough there, for there are many mansions.

2. He continued firm to his religion, and kept up his communion with God. (1.) God graciously ap-

peared to him, v. 24. When the Philistines expelled him, forced him to remove from place to place, and gave him continual molestation, then God visited him, and gave him fresh assurances of his favour. Note, When men are found false and unkind, we may comfort ourselves that God is faithful and gracious; and his time to show himself so, is when we are most disappointed in our expectations from men. When Isaac came to Beer-sheba, (v. 23.) it is probable that it troubled him to think of his unsettled condition, and that he could not be suffered to stay long in a place; and, in the multitude of these thoughts within him, that same night that he came weary and uneasy to Beer-sheba, God brought him his comforts to delight his soul. Probably, he was apprehensive that the Philistines would not let him rest there? *Fear not*, says God to him, *I am with thee, and will bless thee*. Those may remove with comfort, that are sure of God's presence with them whithersoever they go. (2.) He was not wanting in his returns of duty to God; *for there he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord*, v. 25. Note, [1.] Whithersoever we go, we must take our religion along with us. Probably, Isaac's altars and his religious worship gave offence to the Philistines, and provoked them to be the more troublesome to him: yet he kept up his duty, whatever ill-will he might be exposed to by it. [2.] The comforts and encouragements God gives us by his word, should excite and quicken us to all instances of devotion, by which God may be honoured, and our intercourse with heaven maintained.

26. Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phicol the chief captain of his army. 27. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28. And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; 29. That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD. 30. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. 31. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. 33. And he called it Sheba: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

We have here the contests that had been between Isaac and the Philistines issuing in a happy peace and reconciliation.

1. Abimelech makes a friendly visit to Isaac, in token of the respect he had for him, v. 26. Note, *When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*, Prov. 16. 7. King's hearts are in his hands, and when he pleases, he can turn them to favour his people.

2. Isaac prudently and cautiously questions his sincerity in this visit, v. 27. Note, In settling

friendships and correspondences, there is need of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove. Nor is it any transgression of the law of meekness and love, fairly to signify our strong perception of injuries received, and to stand upon our guard in dealing with those that have acted unfairly.

3. Abimelech professes his sincerity, in this address to Isaac, and earnestly courts his friendship, *v. 28, 29*. Some suggest that Abimelech pressed for this league with him, because he feared lest Isaac growing rich, should some time or other, avenge himself upon them for the injuries he had received. However, he professes to do it from a principle of love rather. (1.) He makes the best of their behaviour toward him. Isaac complained that they had *hated him and sent him away*; No, said Abimelech, *we sent thee away in peace*. They turned him off from the land he held of them; but they suffered him to take away his stock, and all his effects with him. Note, The lessening of injuries is necessary to the preserving of friendship; for the aggravating of them exasperates and widens breaches. The unkindness done to us might have been worse. (2.) He acknowledges the tokens of God's favour to him, and makes that the ground of their desire to be in league with him. *The Lord is with thee, and thou art the blessed of the Lord*, as if he had said, "Be persuaded to overlook and pass by the injuries offered thee; for God has abundantly made up to thee the damage thou receivedst." Note, Those whom God blesses and favours, have reason enough to forgive those who hate them, since the worst enemy they have, cannot do them any real hurt. Or, "For this reason, we desire thy friendship, because *God is with thee*." Note, It is good to be in covenant and communion with those who are in covenant and communion with God, 1 John 1. 3. Zech 8. 23. (3.) He assures him that their present address to him was the result of mature deliberation. *We said, let there be an oath betwixt us*; whatever some of his peevish envious subjects might mean otherwise, he, and his prime-ministers of state whom he had now brought with him, designed no other than a cordial friendship. Perhaps Abimelech had received by tradition, the warning God gave to his predecessor not to hurt Abraham, (*ch. 20. 7.*) and that made him stand in such awe of Isaac, who appeared to be as much the favourite of Heaven as Abraham was.

4. Isaac entertains him and his company, and enters into a league of friendship with him, *v. 30, 31*. Here see how generous the good man was, (1.) In *giving*; he made them a feast, and bid them welcome; (2.) In *forgiving*; he did not insist upon the unkindnesses they had done him, but freely entered into a covenant of friendship with them, and bound himself never to do them any injury. Note, Religion teaches us to be neighbourly, and as much as in us lies, to *live peaceably with all men*.

5. Providence smiled upon what Isaac did: for the same day that he made this covenant with Abimelech, his servants brought him the tidings of a well of water they had found, *v. 32, 33*. He had not insisted upon the restitution of the wells which the Philistines had unjustly taken from him, lest that should have broken off the treaty, but sat down silent under the injury; and, to recompense him for that, immediately he is enriched with a new well, which, because it suited so well to the occurrence of the day, he called by an old name, *Beer-sheba*, *The well of the oath*.

34. And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35. Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

Here is, 1. Esau's foolish marriage; foolish, some think, in marrying two wives together, for which perhaps he is called a *fornicator*, Heb. 12. 16. or rather in marrying Canaanites, who were strangers to the blessing of Abraham, and subject to the curse of Noah, for which he is called *profane*; for hereby he intimated that he neither desired the blessing, nor dreaded the curse, of God. 2. The grief and trouble it created to his tender parents. (1.) It grieved them, that he married without asking, or at least, without taking, their advice and consent: see whose steps those children tread in, who either condemn or contradict their parents in disposing of themselves. (2.) It grieved them, that he married among those who had no religion among them; for Esau knew what were his father's care and mind concerning him, that he should by no means marry a Canaanite. (3.) It should seem, the wives he married, were provoking in their conduct towards Isaac and Rebekah: those children have little reason to expect the blessing of God, who do that which is a grief of mind to their good parents.

## CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter, we return to the typical story of the struggle between Esau and Jacob. Esau had profanely sold the birth-right to Jacob; but Esau hopes he shall be never the poorer, nor Jacob the richer, for that bargain; while he preserves his interest in his father's affections, and so secures the blessing. Here therefore we find how he was justly punished for his contempt of the birth-right, (which he foolishly deprived himself of,) with the loss of the blessing, which Jacob fraudulently deprives him of. Thus this story is explained Heb. 12. 16, 17, *Because he sold the birth-right, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected*. For they that make light of the name and profession of religion, and throw it away for a trifle, thereby forfeit the powers and privileges of it. We have here, I. Isaac's purpose to entail the blessing upon Esau, *v. 1. 4*. II. Rebekah's plot to procure it for Jacob, *v. 6. 17*. III. Jacob's successful management of the plot, and his obtaining of the blessing, *v. 18. 29*. IV. Esau's resentment of this: in which, 1. His great importunity with his father to obtain a blessing, *v. 30. 40*. 2. His great enmity to his brother for defrauding him of the first blessing, *v. 41. 46*.

1. **AND** it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: And he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*. 2. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: 3. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me *some venison*; 4. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. 5. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for venison, and to bring it*.

Here is,

1. Isaac's design to make his will, and to declare Esau his heir. The promise of the Messiah and the land of Canaan, was a great trust, first committed to Abraham, inclusive and typical of spiritual and eternal blessings; this, by divine direction, he transmitted to Isaac. Isaac, being now old, and either not knowing, or not understanding, or not duly considering, the divine oracle concerning his two sons, that *the elder should serve the younger*, resolves to entail all the honour and power that were wrapped up in the promise, upon Esau his eldest son. In this, he was governed more by natural affection, and

the common method of settlements, than he ought to have been, if he knew (as it is probable he did) the intimations God had given of his mind in this matter. Note, We are very apt to take our measures rather from our own reason than from divine revelation, and thereby often miss our way; we think the wise and learned, the mighty and noble, should inherit the promise; but God sees not as man sees. See 1 Sam. 16. 6, 7.

2. The directions he gave to Esau, pursuant to this design: he calls him to him, *v. 1.* For Esau, though married, was not yet removed; and though he had greatly grieved his parents by his marriage, yet they had not expelled him, but, it seems, were pretty well reconciled to him, and made the best of it. Note, parents that are justly offended at their children, yet must not be implacable towards them.

(1.) He tells him upon what considerations he resolved to do this now, *v. 2.* "*I am old, and therefore must die shortly, yet I know not the day of my death, nor when I must die; I will therefore do that at this time, which must be done some time.*" Note, [1.] Old people should be reminded by the growing infirmities of age, to do quickly, and with all the little might they have, what their hand finds to do. See J. sh. 13. 1. [2.] The consideration of the uncertainty of the time of our departure out of the world, (which God has wisely kept us in the dark about,) should quicken us to do the work of the day in its day. The heart and the house should both be set, and kept, in order, because *at such an hour as we think not, the Son of man comes*; because we *know not the day of our death*, we are concerned to mind the business of life. (2.) He bid him to get the things ready for the solemnity of executing his last will and testament, by which he designed to make him his heir, *v. 3, 4.* Esau must go a hunting, and bring some venison, which his father will eat of, and then bless him. In this, he designed, not so much the refreshment of his own spirits, that he might give the blessing in a lively manner, as it is commonly taken, but rather the receiving of a fresh instance of his son's filial duty and affection to him, before he bestowed this favour upon him; Perhaps Esau, since he was married, had brought his venison to his wives, and seldom to his father, as formerly, (*ch. 25. 28.*) and therefore Isaac, before he would bless him, would have him show this piece of respect to him. Note, It is fit, if the *less be blessed of the greater*, that the greater should be served and honoured by the less. Observe, he says, *That my soul may bless thee before I die.* Note, [1.] Prayer is the work of the soul, and not of the lips only; as the soul must be employed in blessing God, (*Ps. 103. 1.*) so it must be in blessing ourselves and others: the blessing will not come to the heart, if it do not come from the heart. [2.] The work of life must be done before we die, for it cannot be done afterward; (*Ecc. 9. 10.*) and it is very desirable, when we come to die, to have nothing else to do but to die. Isaac lived about 40 years after this; let none therefore think that they shall die the sooner, for making their wills, and getting ready for death.

6. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7. Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD, before my death. 8. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he lov-

eth: 10. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. 11. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is an hairy man, and I am a smooth man: 12. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver: and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 14. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. 15. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her youngest son: 16. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck. 17. And she gave the savoury meat, and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

Rebekah is here contriving to procure for Jacob the blessing which was designed for Esau. And here,

I. The end was good, for she was directed in this intention by the oracle of God, by which she had been governed in dispensing her affections. God had said it should be so, that *the elder shall serve the younger*; and therefore Rebekah resolves it shall be so, and cannot bear to see her husband designing to thwart the oracle of God. But,

II. The means were bad, and no way justifiable. If it were not a wrong to Esau, to deprive him of the blessing, (he himself having forfeited it by selling the birth-right,) yet it was a wrong to Isaac, taking advantage of his infirmity, to impose upon him; it was a wrong to Jacob too, whom she taught to deceive, by putting a lie into his mouth, or, at least, by putting one into his right hand. It would likewise expose him to endless scruples about the blessing, if he should obtain it thus fraudulently, whether it would stand him or his in any stead, especially if his father should revoke it, upon the discovery of the cheat, and plead, as he might, that it was nullified by an *Error Personæ—A mistake of the Person.* He himself also was aware of the danger, lest, (*v. 12.*) if he should miss of the blessing, as he might, probably, have done, he should bring upon himself his father's curse, which he dreaded above any thing; besides, he laid himself open to that divine curse which is pronounced upon him that *causeth the blind to wander out of the way*, Deut. 27. 18. If Rebekah, when she heard Isaac promise the blessing to Esau, had gone, at his return from hunting, to Isaac, and, with humility and seriousness, put him in remembrance of that which God had said concerning their sons; if she further had showed him how Esau had forfeited the blessing, by selling his birth-right, and by marrying strange wives: it is probable that Isaac would have been prevailed with knowingly and wittingly to have conferred the blessing upon Jacob, and needed not thus to have been cheated into it. This had been honourable and laudable, and would have looked well in the history: but God left her to herself, to take this indirect course, that he might have the glory of bringing good out of evil, and of serving his own purposes by the sins and follies of men, and

that we might have the satisfaction of knowing that though there is so much wickedness and deceit in the world, God governs it according to his will, to his own praise. See Job 12, 16, *With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are his*. Isaac had lost the sense of seeing, which, in this case, could not have been imposed upon, Providence having so admirably well ordered the difference of features, that no two faces are exactly alike: conversation and commerce could scarcely be maintained, if there were not such a variety. Therefore she endeavours to deceive.

1. His sense of tasting, by dressing some choice pieces of kid, seasoning it, serving it up, so as to make him believe it was venison; which was no hard matter to do. See the folly of those that are nice and curious in their appetite, and take a pride in humouring it. It is easy to impose upon them with that which they pretend to despise and dislike, so little perhaps does it differ from that to which they give a decided preference. Solomon tells us that dainties are *deceitful meat*; for it is possible for us to be deceived by them, more ways than one, Prov. 23, 3.

2. His sense of feeling and smelling: she put Esau's clothes upon Jacob, his best clothes, which it might be supposed, Esau would put on, in token of joy and respect to his father, when he was to receive the blessing. Isaac knew these, by the stuff, shape, and smell, to be Esau's. If we would obtain a blessing of our heavenly Father, we must come for it in the garments of our elder Brother, clothed with his righteousness, who is the First-born among many brethren. Lest the smoothness and softness of Jacob's hands and neck should betray him, she covered them, and, probably part of his face, with the skins of the kids that were newly killed, v. 16. Esau was rough indeed, when nothing less than these would serve to make Jacob like him. Those that affect to seem rough and rugged in their carriage, put the beast upon the man, and really shame themselves, by thus disguising themselves.

And lastly, it was a very rash word which Rebekah spoke, when Jacob objected the danger of a curse, *Upon me be thy curse, my son*, v. 13. Christ indeed, who is mighty to save, because mighty to bear, has said, *Upon me be the curse, only obey my voice*; he has born the burthen of the curse, the curse of the law, for all those that will take upon them the yoke of the command, the command of the gospel. But it is too daring for any creature to say, *Upon me be the curse*, unless it be that *curse causeless*, which we are sure *shall not come*, Prov. 26, 2.

18. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am I*; who *art thou*, my son? 19. And Jacob said unto his father, *I am Esau thy first-born*; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20. And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me. 21. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near me, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau, or not. 22. And Jacob went near unto Isaac, his father: and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau. 23. And he

discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24. And he said, *Art thou my very son Esau?* And he said, *I am*. 25. And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near me now, and kiss me, my son. 27. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field, which the LORD hath blessed. 28. Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; 29. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren; and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

Observe here,

1. The art and assurance with which Jacob managed this intrigue: who would have thought that this plain man could have played his part so well in a design of this nature? His mother having put him in the way of it, and encouraged him in it, he dexterously applies himself to these methods which he had never accustomed himself to, but had always conceived an abhorrence of. Note, Lying is soon learned. The Psalmist speaks of these, who, *as soon as they are born, speak lies*, Ps. 58, 3. Jer. 9, 5. I wonder how honest Jacob could so readily turn his tongue to say, (v. 19.) *I am Esau, thy first-born*; nor do I see how the endeavour of some to bring him off, with that equivocation, *I am made thy first-born*, namely by purchase, does him any service; for when his father asked him, (v. 24.) *Art thou my very son Esau?* he said, *I am*. How could he say, *I have done as thou badest me*, when he had received no command from his father, but was doing as his mother bade him? How could he say, *Eat of my venison*, when he knew it came not from the field, but from the fold? But especially I wonder how he could have the assurance to father it upon God, and to use his name in the cheat, (v. 20.) *The LORD thy God brought it to me*. Is this Jacob? Is this Israel indeed without guile? It is certainly written, not for our imitation, but for our admonition. *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*. Good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of these graces for which they have been most eminent.

II. The success of this management: Jacob with some difficulty, gained his point, and got the blessing.

1. Isaac was, at first, dissatisfied, and would have discovered the fraud, if he could have trusted his own ears; for *the voice was Jacob's voice*, v. 22. Providence has ordered a strange variety of voices as well as faces, which is also of use to prevent our being imposed upon; and the voice is a thing not easily disguised or counterfeited. This may be alluded to, to illustrate the character of a hypocrite; his voice is Jacob's voice, but his hands are Esau's; he speaks the language of a saint, but does the works of a sinner; but the judgment will be (as here) *by the hands*.

2. At length he yielded to the power of the cheat,

*because the hands were hairy, (v. 23.)* not considering how easy it was to counterfeit that circumstance; and now Jacob carries it on dexterously, sets his venison before his father, and waits at table very officiously, till dinner is done, and the blessing comes to be pronounced in the close of this solemn feast. That which in some small degree extenuates the crime of Rebekah and Jacob, is, that the fraud was intended, not so much to hasten the fulfilling, as to prevent the thwarting, of the oracle of God: the blessing was just going to be put upon the wrong head, and they thought it was time to bestir themselves.

Now let us see how Isaac gave Jacob his blessing.

(1.) *He kissed him, (v. 26.)* in token of a particular affection to him. Those that are blessed of God, are kissed with the kisses of his mouth, and they do, by love and loyalty, *kiss the Son, Ps. 2. 12.*

(2.) *He praised him, v. 27. He smelled the smell of his raiment,* and said, *See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed,* that is, like that of the most fragrant flowers and spices. It appeared that God had blessed him, and therefore Isaac will bless him; compare v. 28.

3. *He prayed for him,* and therein prophesied concerning him. It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. And thus, as well as by their baptism, to do what they can, to preserve and perpetuate the entail of the covenant in their families. But this was an extraordinary blessing; and Providence so ordered it, that Isaac should bestow it upon Jacob ignorantly and by mistake, that it might appear he was beholden to God for it, and not to Isaac. Three things Jacob is here blessed with, [1.] *Plenty; (v. 28.)* heaven and earth concurring to make him rich. [2.] *Power; (v. 29.)* particularly dominion over his brethren, namely Esau and his posterity. [3.] *Prevalency with God,* and a great interest in Heaven; "*Cursed be every one that curseth thee.*" Let God be a friend to all thy friends, and an enemy to all thine enemies." More is certainly comprised in this blessing than appears, *prima facie—at first sight;* it must amount to an entail of the promise of the Messiah, and the church: that was, in the patriarchal dialect, *the blessing;* something spiritual, doubtless, is included in it. *First,* that from him should come the Messiah, who should have a sovereign dominion on earth. It was that top-branch of his family, which people should serve, and nations bow down to. See Numb. 24. 19, *Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, the Star and Sceptre, v. 17.* Jacob's dominion over Esau was to be only typical of this, *ch. 49. 10. Secondly,* That from him should come the church that should be particularly owned and favoured by Heaven. It was part of the blessing of Abraham, when he was first called to be the father of the faithful, *ch. 12. 3, I will bless them that bless thee;* therefore when Isaac afterward confirmed the blessing to Jacob, he called it *the blessing of Abraham, ch. 28. 4.* Balaam explains this too, Numb. 24. 9. Note, It is the best and most desirable blessing, to stand in relation to Christ and his church, and to be interested in Christ's power, and the church's favours.

30. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father,

Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. 32. And Isaac his father said unto him, *Who art thou?* And he said, *I am thy son, thy first-born Esau.* 33. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, *Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea and he shall be blessed.* 34. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, *Bless me, even me also, O my father.* 35. And he said, *Thy brother came with subtily, and hath taken away thy blessing.* 36. And he said, *Is he not rightly named Jacob?* For he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birth-right; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, *Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?* 37. And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, *Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?* 38. And Esau said unto his father, *Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.* And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. 39. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, *Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above.* 40. And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

Here is,

I. *The covenant-blessing denied to Esau.* He that made so light of the birth-right, *would now have inherited the blessing, but he was rejected, and found no place for repentance* in his father, though he sought it carefully with tears, Heb. 12. 17. Observe, 1. How carefully he sought it. He prepared the savoury meat, as his father had directed him, and then begged the blessing which his father had encouraged him to expect, v. 31. When he understood that Jacob had got it surreptitiously, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, v. 34. No man could have laid the disappointment more to heart than he did; he made his father's tent to ring with his grief, and again (v. 38.) *lifted up his voice and wept.* Note, The day is coming, when those that now make light of the blessings of the covenant, and sell their title to them for a thing of naught, will, in vain, be importunate for them. Those that will not so much as ask and seek now, will knock shortly, and cry, *Lord, Lord,* Slighters of Christ will then be humble suitors to him. 2. How he was rejected. Isaac, when first made sensible of the imposition that had been practised on him, *trembled exceedingly, v. 33.* Those that follow the choice of their own affections, rather than the dictates of the divine will, involve them

selves in such perplexities as these. But he soon recovers himself, and ratifies the blessing he had given to Jacob. *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*; he might upon very plausible grounds, have recalled it, but now, at last, he is sensible that he was in an error, when he designed it for Esau. Either himself recollecting the divine oracle, or rather having found himself more than ordinarily filled with the Holy Ghost when he gave the blessing to Jacob, he perceived that God did, as it were, say *Amen* to it.

Now, (1.) Jacob was hereby confirmed in his possession of the blessing, and abundantly satisfied of the validity of it, though he obtained it fraudulently; hence too he had reason to hope that God graciously overlooked and pardoned his mismanagement.

(2.) Isaac hereby acquiesced in the will of God, though it contradicted his own expectation and affection. He had a mind to give Esau the blessing, but when he perceived the will of God was otherwise, he submitted; and this he did *by faith*, (Heb. 11. 20.) as Abraham before him, when he had solicited for Ishmael. May not God do what he will with his own?

(3.) Esau was hereby cut off from the expectation of that special blessing which he thought to have preserved to himself when he sold his birth-right. We, by this instance, are taught, [1.] That it is *not of him that willet, nor of him that runneth, but of him that sheweth mercy*, Rom. 9. 16. The Apostle seems to allude to this story. Esau had a good will to the blessing, and ran for it; but God that showed mercy, designed it for Jacob that *the purpose of God according to election might stand*, v. 11. The Jews, like Esau, hunted *after the law of righteousness*, (v. 31.) yet missed of the blessing of righteousness, *because they sought it by the works of the law*; (v. 32.) while the Gentiles, who, like Jacob, sought it by faith in the oracle of God, obtained it by force, with that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers. See Matt. 11. 12. [2.] That those who undervalue their spiritual birth-right, and can afford to sell it for a morsel of meat, forfeit spiritual blessings, and it is just with God to deny them those favours they were careless of. Those that will part with their wisdom and grace, with their faith and a good conscience, for the honours, wealth, or pleasures of this world, however they pretend a zeal for the blessing, have already judged themselves unworthy of it, and so shall their doom be. [3.] That those who lift up hands in wrath, lift them up in vain. Esau, instead of repenting of his own folly, reproached his brother, unjustly charged him with *taking away* the birth-right which he had fairly sold to him, (v. 36.) and conceived malice against him for what he had now done, v. 41. Those are not likely to speed in prayer, who turn those resentments upon their brethren, which they should turn upon themselves, and lay the blame of their miscarriages upon others, when they should take shame to themselves. [4.] That those who seek not till it is too late, will be rejected. This was the ruin of Esau, he did not come in time. As there is an accepted time, a time when God will be found, so there is a time when he will not answer those that call upon him, because they neglected the appointed season. See Prov. 1. 28. The time of God's patience and our probation will not last always; the day of grace will come to an end, and the door will be shut. Then many that now despise the blessing, will seek it carefully; for then they will know how to value it, and will see themselves undone, for ever undone, without it, but to no purpose, Luke 13. 25. . 27. O that we would therefore, in this our day, *know the things that belong to our peace!*

II. Here is a *common blessing* bestowed upon Esau.

1. This he *desired*; *Bless me also*, v. 34. *Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?* v. 36. Note, (1.) The worst of men know how to wish well to themselves; and even those who profanely sell their birth-right, seem pious to desire the blessing; faint desires of happiness, without a right choice of the end, and a right use of the means, deceive many into their own ruin. Multitudes go to hell with their mouths full of good wishes. The desire of the slothful and unbelieving kills them. Many will seek to enter in, as Esau, who shall not be able, because they do not strive, Luke 13. 24. (2.) It is the folly of most men, that they are willing to take up with *any good*, (Ps. 4. 6.) as Esau here, who desired but a second-rate blessing, a blessing separated from the birth-right. Profane hearts think any blessing as good as that from God's oracle: *Hast thou but one?* As if he had said, "I will take up with any; though I have not the blessing of the church, yet let me have some blessing."

2. This he *had*; and let him make his best of it, v. 39, 40.

(1.) It was a good thing, and better than he deserved. It was promised him, [1.] That he should have a competent livelihood; *the fatness of the earth, and the dew of heaven*. Note, Those that come short of the blessings of the covenant, may yet have a very good share of outward blessings. God gives good ground, and good weather, to many that reject his covenant, and have no part or lot in it. [2.] That by degrees he should recover his liberty: if Jacob must rule, (v. 29.) Esau must serve; but he has this to comfort him, he shall *live by his sword*; he shall *serve*, but he shall not *starve*; and, at length, after much skirmishing, he shall break the yoke of bondage, and wear the marks of freedom. This was fulfilled, (2 Kings 8. 20, 22.) when the Edomites revolted.

(2.) Yet it was far short of Jacob's blessing; for *him* God had reserved some better thing. [1.] In Jacob's blessing, *the dew of heaven* is put first, as that which he most valued and desired, and depended upon; in Esau's, *the fatness of the earth* is put first, for that was it, which he had the first and principal regard to. [2.] Esau has these, but Jacob has them from God's hand. *God give thee* the dew of heaven, v. 28. It was enough to Esau to have the possession; but Jacob desired it by promise, and to have it from covenant love. [3.] Jacob shall have dominion over his brethren; for the Israelites often ruled over the Edomites. Esau shall have dominion, that is, he shall gain some power and interest, but shall never have dominion over his brother; we never find that the Jews were sold into the hands of the Edomites, or that they oppressed them, but the great difference is, that there is nothing in Esau's blessing that points at Christ; nothing that brings him or his into the church and covenant of God; and without that, the fatness of the earth, and the plunder of the field, will stand him in little stead. Thus Isaac by faith blessed them both according as their lot should be. Some observe that Jacob was blessed with a *kiss*, (v. 26.) so was not Esau.

41. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, the days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. 42. And these words of Esau her elder son, were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said un-



to him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, *purposing* to kill thee. 43. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44. And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45. Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget *that* which thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day? 46. And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these *which are* of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

Here is,

1. The malice Esau bore to Jacob upon account of the blessing which he had obtained, *v.* 41. Thus he went in the way of Cain, who slew his brother, because he had gained that acceptance with God which he had rendered himself unworthy of. Esau's hatred of Jacob was, 1. A *causeless* hatred; he hated him for no other reason, but because his father blessed him, and God loved him.\* Note, The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom Heaven blesses, Hell curses. 2. It was a *cruel* hatred; nothing less would satisfy him than to slay his brother. It is the blood of the saints that persecutors thirst after. *I will slay my brother*: how could he say that word, without horror? How could he call him *brother*, and yet vow his death? Note, The rage of persecutors will not be tied up by any bonds, no not the strongest and most sacred. 3. It was a hatred that calculated on gratifying its rage; he expected his father would soon die, and then titles must be tried, and interests contested, between the brothers, which would give him a fair opportunity of revenge. He thinks it not enough *to live by his sword himself*, (*v.* 40.) unless his brother die by it. He is loath to grieve his father while he lives, and therefore puts off the intended murder till his death, not caring how much he then grieved his surviving mother. Note, (1.) Those are bad children to whom their good parents are a burthen, and who, upon any account, long for the days of mourning for them. (2.) Bad men are long held in by external restraints from doing the mischief they would do, and so their wicked purposes come to naught. (3.) Those who think to defeat God's purposes, will undoubtedly be disappointed themselves. Esau aimed to prevent Jacob, or his seed from having the dominion, by taking away his life before he was married: but who can disannul what God has spoken. Men may fret at God's counsels, but cannot change them.

II. The method Rebekah took to prevent the mischief.

1. She gave Jacob warning of his danger, and advised him to withdraw for a while, and shift for his own safety. She tells him what she heard of Esau's design, that he comforted himself with the hope of an opportunity to kill his brother, *v.* 42. Would one think that such a bloody barbarous thought as this could be a comfort to a man? If Esau could have kept his design to himself, his mother had not suspected it; but men's impudence in sin is often their infatuation; and they cannot accomplish their wickedness, because their rage is too violent to be concealed, and a bird of the air carries the voice.

\*Esau would have stated this differently.—Ed.

Observe here, (1.) What Rebekah *feared*; lest she *should be deprived of them both in one day*; (*v.* 45.) deprived not only of the murdered, but of the murderer, who either by the magistrate, or by the immediate hand of God, would be sacrificed to justice; which she herself must acquiesce in, and not obstruct; or, if not so, yet thenceforward she would be deprived of all joy and comfort in him. Those that are lost to virtue, are in a manner lost to all their friends. With what pleasure can a child be looked upon, that can be looked upon as no other than a child of the Devil? (2.) What Rebekah *hoped*. That if Jacob for a while kept out of sight, the affront which his brother resented so fiercely, would by degrees go out of mind. The strength of passions is weakened and taken off by the distances both of time and place. She promised herself, that his brother's anger would turn away. Note, Yielding pacifies great offences; and even those that have a good cause and God on their side, must yet use that with other prudent expedients for their own preservation.

2. She possessed Isaac with an apprehension of the necessity of Jacob's going among her relations, upon another account, which was to get him a wife, *v.* 46. She would not tell him of Esau's wicked design against the life of Jacob, lest it should trouble him; but prudently took another way to gain her point. Isaac was as uneasy as she was, at Esau's being unequally yoked with Hittites; and therefore with a very good colour of reason, she moves to have Jacob married to one that was better principled. Note, One miscarriage should serve as a warning to prevent another; those are careless indeed, that stumble twice at the same stone. Yet Rebekah seems to have expressed herself somewhat too warmly in the matter, when she said, *What good will my life do me, if Jacob marry a Canaanite?* For thanks be to God, all our comfort is not lodged in one hand; we may do the work of life, and enjoy the comforts of life, though every thing do not fall out to our mind, and though our relations be not in all respects agreeable to us. Perhaps Rebekah spoke with this concern, because she saw it necessary, for the quickening of Isaac, to give speedy orders in this matter. Observe, though Jacob was himself very towardly and well-fixed in his religion, yet he has need to be put out of the way of temptation. Even *he* was in danger, both of following the bad example of his brother, and of being drawn into a snare by it. We must not presume too far upon the wisdom and resolution, no not of those children that are most hopeful and promising; but care must be taken to keep them out of harm's way.

## CHAP. XXVIII.

We have here, I. Jacob parting with his parents, to go to Padan-aram; the charge his father gave him, *v.* 1, 2. the blessing he sent him away with, *v.* 3, 4. his obedience to the orders given him, *v.* 5, 7. and the influence this had upon Esau, *v.* 6, 9. II. Jacob meeting with God, and his communion with him by the way. And there, 1. His vision of the ladder, *v.* 11, 12. 2. The gracious promises God made him, *v.* 13, 15. 3. The impression this made upon him, *v.* 16, 19. 4. The vow he made to God, upon this occasion, *v.* 20, 22.

1. AND Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother. 3. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply

thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; 4. And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. 5. And Isaac sent away Jacob; and he went to Padan-aram, unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Jacob had no sooner obtained the blessing, than immediately he was forced to run his country; and as if it were not enough that he was a stranger and sojourner there, he must go, to be more so, and no better than an exile in another country. Now *Jacob fled into Syria*, Hos. 12. 12. He was blessed with plenty of corn and wine, and yet he goes away poor; was blessed with government, and yet goes out to service, a hard service. This was, 1. Perhaps to correct him for his dealing fraudulently with his father. The blessing shall be confirmed to him, and yet he shall smart for the indirect course he takes to obtain it. While there is such an alloy as there is, of sin in our duties, we must expect an alloy of trouble in our comforts. However, 2. It was to teach us, that they who inherit the blessing, must expect persecution; and that they who have peace in Christ, *in the world shall have tribulation*, John 16. 33. We must neither think it strange, being told of it before, nor think it hard, being assured of a recompense for it hereafter. We may observe, likewise, that God's providences often seem to contradict his promises, and to go cross to them; and yet when the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see that all was for the best; and that cross providences did but render the promises and the accomplishment of them the more illustrious.

Now Jacob is here dismissed by his father.

I. With a solemn charge, v. 1, 2. *He blessed him, and charged him*. Note, those that have the blessing, must keep the charge annexed to it, and not think to separate what God has joined. The charge is like that, (2 Cor. 6. 14.) *Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers*; and all that inherit the promises of the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, must keep this charge, which follows those promises, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation*, Acts 2. 38. 40. Those that are entitled to peculiar favours, must be a peculiar people. If Jacob be an heir of promise, he must *not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*; those that profess religion, should not marry with those that are irreligious.

II. With a solemn blessing, v. 3, 4. He had before blessed him unwittingly; now he does it designedly, for the greater encouragement of Jacob in that melancholy condition to which he was now removing. This blessing is more express and full than the former; it is an entail of *the blessing of Abraham*, that blessing which was poured on the head of Abraham like the anointing oil, thence to run down to his chosen seed, as the skirts of his garments. It is a gospel-blessing, the blessing of church privileges; that is the *blessing of Abraham which comes upon the Gentiles through faith*, Gal. 3. 14. It is a blessing from God Almighty, by which name God appeared to the patriarchs, Exod. 6. 3. Those are blessed indeed, whom God Almighty blesses; for he commands, and effects the blessing. Two great promises Abraham was blessed with, and Isaac here entails them both upon Jacob.

1. The promise of heirs: (v. 3.) *God make thee fruitful and multiply thee*. (1.) Through his lins

should descend from Abraham, that *people*, which should be numerous as the stars of heaven, and the sand of the sea, and which should increase more than the rest of the nations, so as to be an *assembly of people*, as the margin reads it. And never was such a multitude of people so often gathered into one assembly, as the tribes of Israel were in the wilderness, and afterward. (2.) Through his loins should descend from Abraham, that *Person*, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and to whom the gathering of the people should be. Jacob had in him a multitude of people indeed, for all things in heaven and earth are united in Christ; (Eph. 1. 10.) all centre in him, that corn of wheat, which falling to the ground, produced much fruit, John 12. 24.

2. The promise of an inheritance for those heirs; (v. 4.) *that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings*. Canaan was hereby entailed upon the seed of Jacob, exclusive of the seed of Esau. Isaac was now sending Jacob away into a distant country, to settle there for some time; and lest this should look like disinheriting him, he here confirms the settlement of it upon him, that he might be assured that the discontinuance of his possession should be no defeasance of his right. Observe, he is here told that he should inherit the land wherein he sojourned. Those that are sojourners now, shall be heirs for ever: and even now, those do most inherit the earth, (though they do not inherit most of it,) that are most like strangers in it. Those have the best enjoyment of present things, that sit most loose to them. This promise looks as high as heaven, of which Canaan was a type. This was the better country, which Jacob with the other patriarchs, had in his eye, when he *confessed himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth*, Heb. 11. 13.

Jacob having taken leave of his father, was hastened away with all speed, lest his brother should find an opportunity to do him a mischief, and away he went to Padan-aram, v. 5. How unlike was his taking a wife from thence, to his father's? Isaac had servants and camels sent to fetch his; Jacob must go himself, go alone, and go afoot, to fetch his; he must go too in a fright from his father's house, not knowing when he might return. Note, If God, in his providence, disable us, we must be content, though we cannot keep up the state and grandeur of our ancestors. We should be more in care to maintain their piety than to maintain their port, and to be as good as they than to be as great. Rebekah is here called *Jacob and Esau's mother*; Jacob is named first, not only because he had always been his mother's darling, but because he was now made his father's heir, and Esau was, in this sense, set aside. Note, The time will come, when piety will have precedence, whatever it has now.

6. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him, he gave him a charge, saying, *Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan*; 7. And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram. 8. And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9. Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.

This passage concerning Esau comes in, in the

in midst of Jacob's story, either, 1. To show the influence of a good example. Esau, though the *greater* man, now begins to think Jacob the *better* man, and disdains not to take him for his pattern in this particular instance of marrying with a daughter of Abraham. The elder children should give to the younger an example of tractableness and obedience; it is bad, if they do not; but it is some alleviation, if they take the example of it from them, as Esau here did from Jacob. Or, 2. To show the folly of an after-wit; Esau did well, but he did it when it was too late. He *saw* that the daughters of Canaan pleased not his father, and he might have seen that long ago, if he had consulted his father's judgment as much as he did his palate. And how did he now mend the matter? Why truly, so as, to make bad worse. (1.) He married a daughter of Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, who was cast out, and was not to inherit with Isaac and his seed; thus joining with a family which God had rejected, and seeking to strengthen his own pretensions by the aids of another pretender. (2.) He took a third wife, while, for aught that appears, his other two were neither dead nor divorced. (3.) He did it only to please his father, not to please God; now that Jacob was sent into a far country, Esau would be all in all at home, and he hoped so to humour his father, as to prevail with him to make a new will, and entail the promise upon him, revoking the settlement lately made upon Jacob. And thus, [1.] He was wise when it was too late, like Israel that would venture when the decree was gone forth against them, Numb. 14. 40. and the foolish virgins, Matt. 25. 10. [2.] He rested in a partial reformation, and thought by pleasing his parents in one thing, to atone for all his other miscarriages. It is not said, that when he saw how obedient Jacob was, and how willing to please his parents, he repented of his malicious design against him; no, it appeared afterward that he persisted in that, and retained his malice. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to think themselves as good as they should be, because perhaps, in some one particular instance, they are not so bad as they have been. Thus Micah retains his idols, but thinks himself happy in having a Levite to be his priest, Judg. 17. 13.

10. And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 11. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13. And, behold, the LORD stood above it; and said, I *am* the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. 14. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15. And, behold, I *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this

land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

We have here Jacob upon his journey toward Syria, in a very desolate condition, like one that was sent to seek his fortune; but we find, that though he was alone, yet he was not alone, for *the Father was with him*, John 16. 32. If what is here recorded, happened (as it should seem it did) the first night, he had made a long day's journey from Beer-sheba to Bethel, above forty miles. Providence brought him to a convenient place, probably shaded with trees, to rest him in that night; and there he had,

1. A hard lodging; (v. 11.) the *stones for his pillows*, and the heavens for his canopy and curtains. As the usage then was, perhaps this was not so bad as it seems now to us; but we should think, 1. He lay *very cold*; the cold ground for his bed, and, which, one would suppose, made the matter worse, a cold stone for his pillow, and in the cold air. 2. *Very uneasy*; if his bones were sore with his day's journey, his night's rest would but make them sorer. 3. *Very much exposed*: he forgot that he was fleeing for his life; for had his brother, in his rage, pursued, or sent a murderer after him, here he lay ready to be sacrificed, and destitute of shelter and defence: we cannot think it was by reason of his poverty that he was so ill accommodated, but, (1.) It was owing to the plainness and simplicity of those times, when men did not take so much state, and consult their ease, so much as in these later times of softness and effeminacy. (2.) Jacob had been particularly used to hardships, as a plain man dwelling in tents; and, designing now to go to service, he was the more willing to inure himself to it; as it proved it was well, *ch.* 31. 40. (3.) His comfort in the divine blessing, and his confidence in the divine protection, made him easy, even then when he lay thus exposed; being sure that his God made him to dwell in safety, he could lie down and sleep upon a stone.

II. In his hard lodging, he had a pleasant dream; any Israelite indeed would be willing to take up with Jacob's pillow, provided he might have but Jacob's dream. Then and there, he *heard the words of God*, and *saw the visions of the Almighty*: it was the best night's sleep he ever had in his life. Note, God's time to visit his people with his comforts, is, when they are most destitute of other comforts, and other comforters; when afflictions in the way of duty (as these here were) do abound, then shall consolations so much the more abound. Now observe here,

1. The encouraging *vision Jacob saw*, v. 12. He saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the head of it. Now this represents the two things that are very comfortable to good people at all times, and in all conditions.

(1.) The providence of God, by which there is a constant correspondence kept up between heaven and earth. The counsels of heaven are executed on earth, and the actions and affairs of this earth are all known in heaven, and judged there. Providence does its work gradually, and by steps; angels are employed as ministering spirits, to serve all the purposes and designs of Providence, and the wisdom of God is at the upper end of the ladder, directing all the motions of second causes to the glory of the First Cause. The angels are active spirits, continually ascending and descending; they rest not day, nor night, from service, according to the posts assigned them. They ascend, to give account of what they have done, and to receive orders; and then descend to execute the orders they have received. Thus we should always abound in the work of the Lord, that we may do it as the angels do it, Ps. 103. 20,

21. This vision gave very seasonable comfort to Jacob, letting him know that he had both a good guide, and a good guard, in his going out and coming in; that though he was made to wander from his father's house, yet still he was the care of a kind providence, and the charge of the holy angels. This is comfort enough, though we should not admit the notion which some have, that the tutelar angels of Canaan were ascending, having guarded Jacob out of their land, and the angels of Syria descending to take him into their custody. Jacob was now the type and representative of the whole church, which the angels are intrusted with the guardianship of.

(2.) The mediation of Christ: he is the ladder, the foot on earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his divine nature: or, the former in his humiliation, the latter in his exaltation. All the intercourse between heaven and earth, since the fall, is by this ladder. Christ is the way; all God's favours come to us, and all our services go to him, by Christ. If God dwell with us, and we with him, it is by Christ; we have no way of getting to heaven than by this ladder; if we climb up any other way, we are thieves and robbers. This vision our Saviour alludes to, when he speaks of the angels of God *ascending and descending upon the Son of man*; (John 1. 51.) for the kind offices the angels do us, and the benefits we receive by their ministration are all owing to Christ, who has reconciled things on earth, and things in heaven, (Col. 1. 20.) and made them all meet in himself, Eph. 1. 10.

2. The encouraging words Jacob heard. God now brought him into the wilderness, and spake comfortably to him, spake from the head of the ladder, for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven, come through Jesus Christ.

(1.) The former promises made to his father, are repeated and ratified to him, v. 13, 14. In general, God intimates to him that he would be the same to him, that he had been to Abraham and Isaac. Those that tread in the steps of their godly parents, are interested in their covenant, and entitled to their privileges. Particularly, [1.] The land of Canaan is settled upon him, *the land whereon thou liest*; as if by his lying so contentedly upon the bare ground, he had taken livery and seisin of the whole land. [2.] It is promised him that his posterity should multiply exceedingly, as the dust of the earth, that though he seemed now to be plucked off as a withered branch, yet he should become a flourishing tree that should send out his boughs unto the sea. These were the blessings with which his father had blessed him, (v. 3, 4.) and God here said *Amen* to them, that he might have strong consolation. [3.] It is added that the Messiah should come from his loins, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Christ is the great blessing of the world; all that are blessed, whatever family they are of, are blessed in him, and none of any family are excluded from blessedness, in him, but those that exclude themselves.

(2.) Fresh promises were made him, accommodated to his present condition, v. 15. [1.] Jacob was apprehensive of danger from his brother Esau; but God promises to keep him. Note, Those are safe, whom God protects, whoever pursues them. [2.] He had now a long journey before him, was to travel alone, in an unknown road, to an unknown country; but, *behold I am with thee*, says God. Note, Wherever we are, we are safe, and may be easy, if we have God's favourable presence with us. [3.] He knew not, but God foresaw, what hardships he would meet with in his uncle's service, and therefore promises to preserve him in all places. Note, God knows how to give his people graces and comforts accommodated to the events that

shall be, as well as to those that are. [4.] He was now going as an exile into a place far distant, but God promises him to bring him back again to this land. Note, he that preserves his people's going out, will also take care of their coming in, Ps. 121. 8. [5.] He seemed to be forsaken of all his friends, but God here gives him this assurance, *I will not leave thee*. Note, Whom God loves, he never leaves. This promise is sure to all the seed, Heb. 13. 5. [6.] Providence seemed to contradict the promises; he is therefore assured of the performance of them in their season: *All shall be done that I have spoken to thee of*. Note, Saying and doing are not two things with God, whatever they are with us.

16. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. 17. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 18. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19. And he called the name of that place Beth-el, but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21. So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: 22. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

God manifested himself in his favour to Jacob, when he was asleep and purely passive; for the spirit like the wind, blows when and where he listeth, and God's grace, like the dew, trieth not for the sows of men, Mich. 5. 7. But Jacob applied himself to the improvement of the visit God had made him, when he was awake; and we may well think he awaked, as the prophet did, (Jer. 31. 26.) and, behold his sleep was sweet to him. Here is much of Jacob's devotion on this occasion.

1. He expresses great surprise at the tokens he had of God's special presence with him in that place, v. 16, *Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not*. Note, 1. God's manifestations of himself to his people, carry their own evidence along with them. God can give undeniable demonstrations of his presence, such as give abundant satisfaction to the souls of the faithful, that God is with them of a truth; satisfaction, not communicable to others, but convincing to themselves. 2. We sometimes meet with God there where we little thought of meeting with him. He is there where we did not think he had been; is found there where we asked not for him. No place excludes divine visits, (ch. 16. 13.) *here also*. Wherever we are, in the city or in the desert, in the house or in the field, in the shop or in the street, we may keep up our intercourse with Heaven, if it be not our own fault.

II. It struck an awe upon him, v. 17, *He was afraid*; so far was he from being puffed up, and exalted above measure, with the abundance of the revelations, (2 Cor. 12. 7.) that he was *afraid*.

Note, The more we see of God, the more cause we see for holy trembling and blushing before him. Those whom God is pleased to manifest himself to, are thereby laid, and kept very low in their own eyes, and see cause to fear, even the Lord and his goodness, Hos. 3. 5. He said, *How dreadful is this place!* That is, "The appearance of God in this place is never to be thought of, but with holy awe and reverence. I shall have a respect for this place, and remember it by this token, as long as I live:" not that he thought the place itself any nearer the divine visions than other places; but what he saw there at this time, was as it were, *the house of God*, the residence of the Divine Majesty, and *the gate of heaven*, that is, the general rendezvous of the inhabitants of the upper world, as the meetings of a city were in their gates; or, the angels ascending and descending, were like travellers passing and re-passing through the gates of a city. Note, 1. God is, in a special manner, present there where his grace is revealed, and where his covenants are published and sealed, as of old, by the ministry of angels, so now by instituted ordinances, Matt. 28. 20. 2. There where God meets us with his special presence, we ought to meet him with the most humble reverence, remembering his justice and holiness, and our own meanness and vileness.

III. He took care to preserve the memorial of it two ways.

1. He set up the stone for a pillar; (v. 18.) not as if he thought the visions of his head were any way owing to the stone on which it lay, but thus he would mark the place against he came back, and erect a lasting monument of God's favour to him, and because he had not time now to build an altar here, as Abraham did in the places where God appeared to him, ch. 12. 7. He therefore *poured oil on the top of this stone*, which, probably was the ceremony then used in dedicating their altars, as an earnest of his building an altar when he should have conveniences for it, as afterward he did, in gratitude to God for this vision, ch. 35. 7. Note, Grants of mercy call for returns of duty; and the sweet communion we have with God, ought ever to be remembered.

2. He gave a new name to the place, v. 19. It had been called *Luz*, an *almond-tree*; but he will have it henceforward called *Beth-el*, the *house of God*. This gracious appearance of God to him put a greater honour upon it, and made it more remarkable, than all the almond-trees that flourished there. This is that *Beth-el*, where, long after, it is said, *God found Jacob*, and there, in what he said to him, *he spake with us*, Hos. 12. 4. In process of time, this *Beth-el*, the *house of God*, became *Beth-aven*, a *house of vanity* and iniquity, when Jeroboam set up one of his calves there.

IV. He made a solemn vow upon this occasion, v. 20.. 22. By religious vows we give glory to God, we own our dependence upon him, and we lay a bond upon our own souls, to engage and quicken our obedience to him. Jacob was now in fear and distress; and it is seasonable to make vows, in times of trouble, or when we are in pursuit of any special mercy, John 1. 16. Ps. 66. 13, 14. 1 Sam. 1. 11. Numb. 21. 1..3. Jacob had now had a gracious visit from Heaven, God had renewed his covenant with him, and the covenant is mutual: when God ratifies his promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to him. Now in this vow, observe,

1. Jacob's faith: God had said, (v. 15.) *I am with thee, and will keep thee*; Jacob takes hold of that, and infers "*Seeing God will be with me, and will keep me*, as he has said, and (which is implied in that promise) will provide comfortably for me; and seeing he has promised to *bring me again to this*

*land*, that is, *to the house of my father*, whom I hope to find alive at my return *in peace*," (so unlike was he to Esau who longed for the days of mourning for his father,) "I depend upon it." Note, God's promises are to be the guide and measure of our desires and expectations.

2. Jacob's modesty and great moderation in his desires; he will cheerfully content himself with bread to eat, and raiment to put on; and though God's promise had now made him heir to a very great estate, yet he indents not for soft clothing and dainty meat. Agur's wish is his, *Feed me with food convenient for me*; and see 1 Tim. 6. 8. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less. Those that have most, have, in effect, no more for themselves than food and raiment; the overplus they have only either the keeping of, or the giving of, not the enjoyment of; if God give us more, we are bound to be thankful, and to use it for him; if he give us but this, we are bound to be content, and cheerfully to enjoy him in it.

3. Jacob's piety and his regard to God, which appear here, (1.) In what he *desired*; that God would be with him, and keep him. Note, We need desire no more to make us easy and happy, wherever we are, than to have God's presence with us, and to be under his protection: it is comfortable, in a journey, to have a guide in an unknown way, a guard in a dangerous way, to be well-carried, well provided for, and to have good company in any way; and they that have God with them, have all this in the best manner. (2.) In what he *designed*; his resolution is, [1.] *In general*, to cleave to the Lord, as his God in covenant. *Then shall the Lord be my God*. Not as if he would disown him and cast him off, if he should want food and raiment; no, though he slay us, we must cleave to him; but "*then I will rejoice in him as my God*; *then, I will more strongly engage myself to abide with him*." Note, Every mercy we receive from God, should be improved as an additional obligation upon us to walk closely with him as our God. [2.] *In particular*, that he would perform some special acts of devotion, in token of his gratitude. *First*, "This pillar shall keep possession here, till I come back in peace, and then it shall be God's house," that is, "an altar shall be erected here to the honour of God." *Secondly*, "The house of God shall not be unfurnished, nor his altar without a sacrifice; *of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee*, to be spent either upon God's altars, or upon his poor," both which are his receivers in the world. Probably, it was according to some general instructions received from Heaven, that Abraham and Jacob offered the tenth of their acquisitions to God. Note, 1. God must be honoured with our estates, and must have his dues out of them. When we receive more than ordinary mercy from God, we should study to give some signal instances of gratitude to him. 2. The tenth is a very fit proportion to be devoted to God, and employed for him; though, as circumstances vary, it may be more or less, as God prospers us, 1 Cor. 16. 2.

## CHAP. XXIX.

This chapter gives us an account of God's providences concerning Jacob, pursuant to the promises made him in the foregoing chapter. I. How he was brought in safety to his journey's end, and directed to his relations there, who bid him welcome, v. 1..14. II. How he was comfortably disposed of in marriage, v. 15..30. III. How his family was built up in the birth of four sons, v. 31..35. IV. The affairs of princes and mighty nations that were then in being, are not recorded in the book of God, but are left to be buried in oblivion; while these small domestic concerns of holy Jacob are particularly recorded, with their minute circumstances, that they may be in everlasting remembrance. For the memory of the just is blessed.

**T**HEN Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. 2 And he looked, and, behold, a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. 3. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place. 4. And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? and they said, Of Haran are we. 5. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. 6. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. 7. And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. 8. And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

All the stages of Israel's march to Canaan are distinctly noticed, but no particular journal is kept of Jacob's expedition further than Bethel; no, he had no more such happy nights as he had at Bethel, no more such visions of the Almighty; that was intended for a feast, he must not expect it to be his daily bread. But,

1. We are here told how cheerfully he proceeded in his journey, after the sweet communion he had with God at Bethel: *Then Jacob lifted up his feet*; so the margin reads it, v. 1. Then he went on with cheerfulness and alacrity, not burthened with his cares, nor cramped with his fears, being assured of God's gracious presence with him. Note, After the visions we have had of God, and the vows we have made to him in solemn ordinances, we should run the way of his commandments with enlarged hearts, Heb. 12. 1.

2. How happily he arrived at his journey's end; Providence brought him to the very field where his uncle's flocks were to be watered, and there he met with Rachel that was to be his wife. Observe, (1.) The Divine Providence is to be acknowledged in all the little circumstances which concur to make a journey, or other undertaking, comfortable and successful. If, when we are at a loss, we meet seasonably with those that can direct us; if we meet with a disaster, and those are at hand, that will help us; we must not say that it was by chance, or that fortune therein favoured us, but that it was by Providence, and that God therein favoured us. Our ways are ways of pleasantness, if we continually acknowledge God in them. (2.) Those that have flocks must look well to them, and be diligent to know their state, Prov. 27. 23. What is here said of the constant care of the shepherds concerning their sheep, (v. 2, 3, 7, 8.) may serve to illustrate the tender concern which our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, has for his flock, the church; for he is the good Shepherd, that knows his sheep, and is known of them, John 10. 14. The stone at the well's mouth, which is so often mentioned here, was either to secure their property in

it; for water was scarce, it was not there *usus communis aquarum*—for every one's use; or, it was to save the well from receiving damage from the heat of the sun, or from any spiteful hand, or to prevent the lambs of the flock from being drowned in it. (3.) Separate interests should not take us from joint and mutual help; when all the shepherds came together with their flocks, then like loving neighbours at watering time, they watered their flocks together. (4.) It becomes us to speak civilly and respectfully to strangers. Though Jacob was no courtier, but a plain man dwelling in tents, and a stranger to compliment, yet he addresses himself very obligingly to the people he met with, and calls them his *brethren*, v. 4. The law of kindness in the tongue has a commanding power, Prov. 31. 26. Some think he calls them *brethren*, because they were of the same trade, shepherds like him. Though he was now upon his preferment, he was not ashamed of his occupation. (5.) Those that show respect, have usually, respect showed them. As Jacob was civil to these strangers, so he found them civil to him: When he undertook to teach them how to despatch their business, (v. 7.) they did not bid him meddle with his own concerns, and let them alone; but though he was a stranger, they gave him the reason of their delay, v. 8. Those that are neighbourly and friendly, shall have neighbourly and friendly usage.

9. And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. 10. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. 12. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father. 13. And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him; and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. 14. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

Here we see, 1. Rachel's humility and industry; *she kept her father's sheep*, (v. 9.) that is, she took care of them, having servants under her that were employed about them. Rachel's name signifies a *sheep*. Note, Honest useful labour is that which nobody needs be ashamed of, nor ought it to be a hindrance to any one's preferment. 2. Jacob's tenderness and affection; when he understood that this was his kinswoman, (probably, he had heard of her name before,) knowing what his errand was into that country, we may suppose it struck into his mind immediately, that this must be his wife, he being already smitten with her ingenious and comely face, though it was, probably, sun-burnt, and she was in the homely dress of a shepherdess: hence, he is attentive, and courteous, and peculiarly anxious to serve her, v. 10. Hence he addresses himself to her with tears of joy and kisses of affection, v. 11. She runs with all haste to tell her father; for she will by no means entertain her kinsman's



address, without her father's knowledge and approbation, v. 12. These mutual respects, at their first interview, were good presages of their being a happy couple. 3. Providence made that which seemed contingent and fortuitous, to give speedy satisfaction to Jacob's mind, as soon as ever he came to the place which he was bound for. Abraham's servant, when he came upon a like errand, met with the like encouragement. Thus God guides his people with his eye, Ps. 32. 8. It is a groundless conceit which some of the Jewish writers have, that Jacob, when he kissed Rachel, wept because he had been set upon in his journey by Eliphaz the eldest son of Esau, at the command of his father, and robbed of all his money and jewels, which his mother had given him when she sent him away: it is plain that it was his passion for Rachel, and the surprise of this happy meeting, that drew these tears from his eyes. 4. Laban, though none of the best humoured men, bid him welcome, was satisfied in the account he gave of himself, and of the reason of his coming in such poor circumstances; while we avoid the extreme, on the one hand, of being foolishly credulous, we must take heed of falling into the other extreme, of being uncharitably jealous and suspicious. Laban owned him for his kinsman, (v. 14.) *Thou art my bone and my flesh.* Note, Those are hard-hearted indeed, that are unkind to their relations, and that *hide themselves from their own flesh*, Isa. 58. 7.

15. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for naught? Tell me, what shall thy wages be? 16. And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17. Leah was tender-eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured. 18. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. 19. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. 20. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. 21. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. 24. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid, for a hand-maid. 25. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26. And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born. 27. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. 28. And Jacob did

so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. 29. And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Billhah his handmaid to be her maid. 30. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Here is,

I. The fair contract made between Laban and Jacob, during the month that Jacob spent there as a guest, v. 14. It seems, he was not idle, nor did he spend his time in sport and pastime; but, like a man of business, though he had no stock of his own, he applied himself to serve his uncle, as he had begun, (v. 10.) when he watered his flock. Note, Wherever we are, it is good to be employing ourselves in some useful business, which will turn to a good account to ourselves or others. Laban, it seems, was so taken with Jacob's ingenuity and industry about his flocks, that he was desirous he should continue with him, and very fairly reasons thus, (v. 15.) "*Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for naught?*" No, what reason for that? If Jacob be so respectful to his uncle as to give him his service without demanding any consideration for it, yet Laban will not be so unjust to his nephew as to take advantage either of his necessity or of his good-nature. Note, Inferior relations must not be imposed upon; if it be their duty to serve us, it is our duty to reward them. Now Jacob had a fair opportunity to make known to Laban the affection he had for his daughter Rachel; and, having no worldly goods in his hand with which to endow her, he promises him seven years' service, upon condition that, at the end of seven years, he would bestow her upon him for his wife. It appears by computation that Jacob was now 77 years old when he bound himself apprentice for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep, Hos. 12. 12. His posterity are there reminded of it long afterward, as an instance of the meanness of their original: probably, Rachel was young, and scarcely marriageable, when Jacob first came, which made him the more willing to stay for her till his seven years' service were expired.

II. Jacob's honest performance of his part of the bargain, v. 20. He served seven years for Rachel: if Rachel still continued to keep her father's sheep as she did, (v. 9.) his innocent and religious conversation with her, while they kept the flocks, could not but increase their mutual acquaintance and affection; (Solomon's song of love is a pastoral;) if she now left it off, his easing her of that care was very obliging. Jacob honestly served out his seven years, and did not forfeit his indentures, though he was old; nay, he served them cheerfully, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her. As if it was more his desire to earn her than to have her. Note, Love makes long and hard services short and easy; hence we read of the labour of love, Heb. 6. 10. If we know how to value the happiness of heaven, the sufferings of this present time will be as nothing to us, in comparison of it. An age of work will be but as a few days to those that love God, and long for Christ's appearing.

III. The base cheat which Laban put upon him when he was out of his time; he put Leah into his arms instead of Rachel, v. 23. This was Laban's sin; he wronged both Jacob and Rachel, whose affections, doubtless, were engaged to each other, and if (as some say) Leah was herein no better than an adulteress, it was no small wrong to her too. But it was Jacob's affliction, a damp to the mirth of the marriage-feast, when in the morning, behold, it was Leah, v. 25. It is easy to observe here how Jacob was paid in his own coin. He had cheated

his own father when he pretended to be Esau, and now his father-in-law cheated him. Herein, how unrighteous soever Laban was, the Lord was righteous; as Judg. 1. 7. Even the righteous, if they take a false step, are sometimes thus recompensed in the earth. Many that are not, like Jacob, disappointed in the person, soon find themselves, as much to their grief, disappointed in the character. The choice of that relation therefore on both sides, ought to be made with good advice and consideration, that if there should be a disappointment, it may not be aggravated by a consciousness of management.

IV. The excuse and atonement Laban made for the cheat.

1. The excuse was frivolous, v. 26, *It must not be so done in our country.* We have reason to think there was no such custom of his country, as he pretends; only he banters Jacob with it, and laughs at his mistake. Note, Those that can do wickedly, and then think to turn it off with a jest, though they may deceive themselves and others, will find, at last, that God is not mocked. But if there had been such a custom, and he had resolved to observe it, he should have told Jacob so, when he undertook to serve him for his younger daughter. As saith the proverb of the ancients, *Wickedness proceeds from the wicked*, 1 Sam. 24. 13. Those that deal with treacherous men, must expect to be dealt treacherously with.

2. His compounding of the matter did but make bad worse: *We will give thee this also*, v. 27. Hereby he drew Jacob into the sin, and snare, and disquiet, of multiplying wives, which remains a blot in his escutcheon, and will be so to the end of the world. Honest Jacob did not design it, but to have kept as true to Rachel as his father had done to Rebekah; he that had lived without a wife to the 84th year of his age, could then have been very well content with one; but Laban, to dispose of his two daughters without portions, and to get seven years' service more out of Jacob, thus imposes upon him, and draws him into such a strait by his fraud, that (the matter not being yet settled as it was afterward by the divine law, Lev. 18. 18, and more fully since by our Saviour, Matt. 19. 5.) he had some colourable reason for marrying them both. He could not refuse Rachel, for he had espoused her; still less could he refuse Leah; and therefore Jacob must be content, and take two talents, 2 Kings 5. 23. Note, One sin is commonly the inlet of another. They that go in by one door of wickedness, seldom find the way out but by another. The polygamy of the patriarchs was, in some measure, excusable in them, because, though there was a reason against it as ancient as Adam's marriage, (Mal. 2. 15.) yet there was no express command against it; it was in them a sin of ignorance, it was not the product of any sinful lust, but for the building up of the church, which was the good that Providence brought out of it: but it will by no means justify the like practice now, when God's will is plainly made known, that one man and one woman only must be joined together, 1 Cor. 7. 2. The having of many wives suits well enough with the carnal sensual spirit of the Mahometan imposture, which allows it; but we have not so learned Christ. Dr. Lightfoot makes Leah and Rachel to be figures of the two churches, the Jews under the law, and the Gentiles under the gospel: the younger, the more beautiful, and more in the thoughts of Christ when he came in the form of a servant; but the other, like Leah, first embraced; yet, in this, the allegory does not hold, that the Gentiles, the younger, were more fruitful, Gal. 4. 27.

31. And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Ra-

chel *was* barren. 32. And Leah conceived and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction: now therefore my husband will love me. 33. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. 34. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. 35. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

We have here the birth of four of Jacob's sons, all by Leah. Observe,

I. That Leah, who was less beloved, was blessed with children, when Rachel was denied that blessing, v. 31. See how Providence, in dispensing its gifts, observes a proportion, to keep the balance even, setting crosses and comforts one over-against another, that none may be either too much elevated, or too much depressed. Rachel wants children, but she is blessed with her husband's love; Leah wants that, but she is fruitful. Thus it was between Elkanah's two wives; (1 Sam. 1. 5.) for the Lord is wise and righteous. *When the Lord saw that Leah was hated*, that is loved less than Rachel, in which sense it is required that we hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ, (Luke 14. 26.) then the Lord granted her a child; which was a *rebuke* to Jacob, for making so great a difference between those that he was equally related to; a *check* to Rachel, who perhaps insulted over her sister upon that account; and a *comfort* to Leah, that she might not be overwhelmed with the contempt put upon her: thus *God giveth abundant honour to that which lacked*, 1 Cor. 12. 24.

II. That the names she gave her children, were expressive of her respectful regards both to God and to her husband. 1. She appears very ambitious of her husband's love: she reckoned the want of it her affliction; (v. 32.) not upbraiding him with it as his fault, nor reproaching him for it, and so making herself uneasy to him, but laying it to heart as her grief, which yet she had reason to bear with the more patience, because she herself was consenting to the fraud by which she became his wife; and we may well bear that trouble with patience, which we bring upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. She promised herself that the children she bare him, would gain her the interest she desired in his affections. She called her first-born *Reuben*, See a son, with this pleasant thought, *Now will my husband love me*; and her third son *Levi*, *Joined*, with this expectation, *Now will my husband be joined unto me*, v. 34. Mutual affection is both the duty, and comfort, of that relation; and yoke-fellows should study to recommend themselves to each other, 1 Cor. 7. 33, 34. 2. She thankfully acknowledges the kind providence of God in it, *The Lord hath looked upon my affliction*, v. 32. "*The Lord hath heard*, that is, taken notice of it, that I was hated;" (for our afflictions, as they are before God's eyes, so they have a cry in his ears;) *He hath therefore given me this son*. Note, Whatever we have, that contributes either to our support and comfort under our afflictions, or to our deliverance from them, God must be owned in it, especially his pity

and tender mercy. Her fourth she called *Judah*, *Praise*, saying, *Now will I praise the Lord*, v. 35. And this was he, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Note, (1.) Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving: fresh favours should quicken us to praise God for former favours. *Now will I praise the Lord* more and better than I have done. (2.) All our praises must centre in Christ, both as the matter of them, and as the Mediator of them. He descended from him whose name was *Praise*, for he is our Praise. Is Christ formed in my heart? *Now will I praise the Lord*.

### CHAP. XXX.

In this chapter we have an account of the increase. I. Of Jacob's family. Eight children more we find registered in this chapter; Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah, Rachel's maid, v. 1. 8. Gad and Asher by Zilpah, Leah's maid, v. 9. 13. Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah, by Leah, v. 14. 21. And, last of all, Joseph, by Rachel, v. 22. 24. II. Of Jacob's estate. He makes a new bargain with Laban, v. 25. 34. And in the six years' further service he did to Laban, God wonderfully blessed him, so that his stock of cattle became very considerable, v. 35. 43. Herein was fulfilled the blessing which Isaac dismissed him with, (ch. 28. 3.) *God make thee fruitful, and multiply thee*. Even these small matters concerning Jacob's house and field, though they seem inconsiderable, are improveable for our learning. For the scriptures were written, not for princes and statesmen, to instruct them in politics; but for all people, even the meanest, to direct them in their families and callings: yet some things are here recorded concerning Jacob, not for imitation but for admonition.

1. **AND** when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. 2. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, *Am I in God's stead*, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? 3. And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. 4. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. 5. And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. 6. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. 7. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. 8. And Rachel said, with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali. 9. When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. 10. And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. 11. And Leah said, a troop cometh: and she called his name Gad. 12. And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son. 13. And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

We have here the bad consequences of that strange marriage which Jacob made with the two sisters. Here is,

1. An unhappy disagreement between him and

Rachel, (v. 1, 2.) occasioned, not so much by her own barrenness, as by her sister's fruitfulness. Rebekah, the only wife of Isaac, was long childless, and yet we find no uneasiness between her and Isaac; but here, because Leah bears children, Rachel cannot live peaceably with Jacob.

1. Rachel frets; (v. 1.) she envied her sister; envy is grieving at the good of another, than which no sin is more offensive to God, or more injurious to our neighbour and ourselves. She considered not that it was God that made the difference, and that though, in this single instance, her sister was preferred before her, yet in other things she had the advantage. Let us carefully watch against all the risings and workings of this passion in our minds. Let not our eye be evil towards any of our fellow-servants, because our master's is good. But this was not all; she said to Jacob, *Give me children, or else I die*. Note, We are very apt to miss it in our desires of temporal mercies, as Rachel here; (1.) One child would not content her; but, because Leah has more than one, she must have more too; *Give me children*. (2.) Her heart is inordinately set upon it, and if she have not what she would have, she will throw away her life, and all the comforts of it. "Give them me, or else I die," that is, "I shall fret myself to death; the want of this satisfaction will shorten my days." Some think she threatens Jacob to lay violent hands upon herself, if she could not obtain this mercy. (3.) She did not apply herself to God by prayer, but to Jacob only, forgetting that *children are an heritage of the Lord*, Ps. 127. 3. We wrong both God and ourselves, when our eye is more to men, the instruments of our crosses and comforts, than to God the Author. Observe a difference between Rachel's asking for this mercy, and Hannah's, 1 Sam. 1. 10. &c. Rachel envied, Hannah wept; Rachel must have children, and she died of the second; Hannah prayed for one child, and she had four more. Rachel is importunate and peremptory, Hannah is submissive and devout. *If thou wilt give me a child, I will give him to the Lord*. Let Hannah be imitated, and not Rachel; and let our desires be always under the conduct and check of reason and religion.

2. Jacob chides, and most justly; (v. 2.) he loved Rachel, and therefore reproved her for what she said amiss. Note, Faithful reproofs are products and instances of true affection, Ps. 141. 5. Prov. 27. 5, 6. Job reproved his wife when she spake the language of the foolish woman, Job 2. 10. See 1 Cor. 7. 16. He was angry, not at the person, but at the sin; he expressed himself so as to show his displeasure. Note, Sometimes it is requisite that a reproof should be given warm, like a physical potion; not too hot, lest it scald the patient; yet not cold, lest it prove ineffectual. It was a very grave and pious reply which Jacob gave to Rachel's peevish demand: *Am I in God's stead?* The Chaldee paraphrases it well, *Dost thou ask sons of me? Oughtest thou not to ask from before the Lord?* The Arabic reads it, "*Am I above God; can I give thee that which God denies thee?*" This was said like a plain man. Observe, (1.) He acknowledges the hand of God in the affliction which he was a sharer with her in. *He hath withheld the fruit of the womb*. Note, Whatever we want, it is God that withholds it, a sovereign Lord, most wise, holy, and just, that may do what he will with his own, and is debtor to no man; that never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures. The keys of the clouds, of the heart, of the grave, and of the womb, are four keys which God has in his hand, and which (the Rabbins say) he intrusts neither with angel nor seraphim. See Rev. 3. 7. Job 11. 10.—12. 14. (2.) He acknowledges his own inability to alter what God had appointed, "*Am I in God's stead? What! Dost thou make a god of me?*" *Deos qui rogat ille facit—He*

to whom we offer supplications, is to us a God. Note, [1.] There is no creature that is or can be, to us, in God's stead. God may be to us instead of any creature, as the sun instead of the moon and stars; but the moon and all the stars will not be to us instead of the sun. No creature's wisdom, power, and love, will be to us instead of God's. [2.] It is therefore our sin and folly to place any creature in God's stead, and to place that confidence in any creature, which is to be placed in God only.

II. An unhappy agreement between him and the two handmaids.

1. At the persuasion of Rachel, he took Bilhah her handmaid to wife, that, according to the usage of those times, his children by her might be adopted and owned as her mistress's children, *v.* 3, &c. She would rather have children by reputation than none at all; children that she might fancy to be her own, and call her own, though they were not so. One would think her own sister's children were nearer akin to her than her maid's, and she might with more satisfaction have made them her own, if she had so pleased; but (so natural is it for us all to be fond of power) children that she had a right to rule, were more desirable to her than children that she had more reason to love; and, as an early instance of her dominion over the children born in her apartment, she takes a pleasure in giving them names that carry in them nothing but marks of emulation with her sister. As if she had overcome her, (1.) *At law*; she calls the first son of her handmaid *Dan*, *Judgment*, saying, "*God hath judged me*," *v.* 6. (that is,) "given sentence in my favour." (2.) *In battle*; she calls the next *Naphthali*, *Wrestlings*, saying, "*I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed*;" (*v.* 8.) as if all Jacob's sons must be born men of contention. See what roots of bitterness, envy and strife are, and what mischief they make among relations.

2. At the persuasion of Leah, he took Zilpah her handmaid to wife also, *v.* 9. Rachel had done that absurd and preposterous thing, of giving her maid to her husband, in emulation with Leah; and now Leah (because she missed one year in bearing children) does the same, to be even with her, or rather, to keep before her. See the power of jealousy and rivalry, and admire the wisdom of the divine appointment, which joins together one man and one woman only: for *God hath called us to peace and purity*, 1 Cor. 7. 15. Two sons Zilpah bare to Jacob, whom Leah looked upon herself as entitled to; in token of which, she called one *Gad*, (*v.* 11.) promising herself a little *Troop* of children; and children are the militia of a family, they fill the quiver, Ps. 127. 4, 5. The other she called *Asher*, *Happy*, thinking herself happy in him, and promising herself that her neighbours would think so too, *v.* 13. *The daughters will call me blessed*. Note, It is an instance of the vanity of the world, and the foolishness bound up in our hearts, that most people value themselves, and govern themselves, more by reputation, than either by reason or religion; they think themselves *blessed*, if the daughters do but call them so. There was much amiss in the contest and competition between these two sisters, yet God brought good out of this evil; for the time being now at hand when the seed of Abraham must begin to increase and multiply, thus Jacob's family was replenished with twelve sons, heads of the thousands of Israel, from whom the celebrated twelve tribes descended, and were named.

14. And Reuben went in the days of wheat-harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give

me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. 15. And she said unto her, *Is it* a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. 16. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. 17. And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. 18. And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar. 19. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. 20. And Leah said, God hath endowed me *with* a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. 21. And afterward she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah. 22. And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. 23. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach. 24. And she called his name Joseph; and said, the LORD shall add to me another son.

Here is,

I. Leah fruitful *again*, after she had, for some time, left bearing. Jacob, it should seem, associated more with Rachel than with Leah. The law of Moses supposes it a common case, that if a man had two wives, one would be loved, and the other hated, Deut. 21. 15. But, at length, Rachel's strong passions betrayed her into a bargain with Leah, that Jacob should return to her apartment. Reuben, a little lad, five or six years old, playing in the field, found *mandrakes*, *dudaim*. It is uncertain what they were, the critics are not agreed about them; we are sure they were some rarities, either fruits or flowers that were very pleasant to the smell, Cant. 7. 13. Note, The God of nature has provided, not only for our necessities, but for our delights: there are products of the earth in the exposed fields, as well as in the planted protected gardens, that are very valuable and useful. How plentifully is nature's house furnished, and her table spread! Her precious fruits offer themselves to be gathered by the hands of little children. It is a laudable custom of the devout Jews, when they find pleasure, suppose in eating an apple, to lift up their hearts, and say, "Blessed be he that made this fruit pleasant!" Or, in smelling a flower, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet." Some think these mandrakes were jessamine flowers; whatever they were, Rachel could not see them in Leah's hands, into which the child had brought them, but she must covet them. She cannot bear the want of these pretty flowers, but, at any rate, she will purchase them. Note, There may be great sin and folly in the inordinate desire of a small thing. Leah takes this advantage, (as Jacob had of Esau's coveting his red pottage,) to obtain that which was justly due to her, but which Rachel would not otherwise have consented to. Note, Strong passions often thwart one another, and

those cannot but be continually uneasy, that are hurried by them. Leah is overjoyed that she shall have her husband's company again, that her family might yet further be built up, which is the blessing she desires and devoutly prays for, as is intimated, v. 17, where it is said, *God hearkened unto Leah*. The learned Bishop Patrick very well suggests here, that the true reason of this contest between Jacob's wives for his company, and their giving of him their maids to be his wives, was, the earnest desire they had to fulfil the promise made to Abraham, (and now lately renewed to Jacob,) that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude, and that in one Seed of his, the Messiah, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And he thinks it had been below the dignity of this sacred history, to take such particular notice of these things, if there had not been some such great consideration in them. Leah was now blessed with two sons; the first she called *Issachar*, *A hire*, (v. 18.) and reckoning herself well repaid for her mandrakes, nay, (which is a strange construction of the providence,) rewarded for giving her maid to her husband. Note, We abuse God's mercy, when we reckon that his favours countenance and patronise our follies. The other she called *Zebulun*, *Dwelling*, (v. 20.) owning God's bounty to her, *God has endowed me with a good dowry*. Jacob had not endowed her when he married her, nor had he wherewithal in possession; but she reckons a family of children, not a bill of charges, but a good dowry, Ps. 113. 9. She promises herself more of her husband's company, now that she had born him six sons, and that, in love to his children, at least, he would often visit her lodging. Mention is made, v. 21, of the birth of a daughter, *Dinah*, because of the following story concerning her, ch. 34. Perhaps Jacob had other daughters, though not registered.

II. Rachel fruitful at last, v. 22, *God remembered Rachel* whom he seemed to have forgotten, and *hearkened to her* whose prayers had been long denied; and then she bare a son. Note, As God justly denies the mercy we have been inordinately desirous of, so sometimes he graciously grants, at length, that which we have long waited for. He corrects our folly, and yet considers our frame, and does not contend for ever. Rachel called her son *Joseph*, which, in Hebrew, is akin to two words of a contrary signification, *Asaph*, *Abstulit*, *He has taken away my reproach*, as if the greatest mercy she had in this son, was that she had saved her credit; and *Jasaph*, *Adidit*, *The Lord shall add to me another son*; which may be looked upon, either as the language of her inordinate desire, (she scarcely knows how to be thankful for one, unless she may be sure of another,) or of her faith; she takes this mercy as an earnest of further mercy; "Has God given me his grace? I may call it *Joseph*, and say, He shall add more grace. Has he given me his joy? I may call it *Joseph*, and say, He will give more joy. Has he begun, and shall he not make an end?"

25. And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. 26. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go; for thou knowest my service which I have done thee. 27. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry*: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake. 28. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I

will give it. 29. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. 30. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming, and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? 31. And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock: 32. I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and of such shall be my hire. 33. So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted amongst the goats, and brown amongst the sheep, that shall be accounted stolen with me. 34. And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. 35. And he removed that day the he-goats that were ring-straked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hands of his sons. 36. And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

We have here,

I. Jacob's thoughts of home. He faithfully served his time out with Laban, even his second apprenticeship, though he was an old man, had a growing family to provide for, and it was high time for him to set up for himself; though Laban's service was hard, and he had cheated him in the first bargain he had made, yet, Jacob honestly performs his engagements. Note, A good man, though he swears to his own hurt, will not change. And though others have deceived us, that will not justify us in deceiving them. Our rule is, to do as we would be done by, not as we are done by. Jacob's term being expired, he begs leave to begone, v. 25. Observe, 1. He retained his affection for the land of Canaan, not only because it was the land of his nativity, and his father and mother were there, whom he longed to see; but because it was the land of promise, and in token of his dependence upon the promise of it; though he sojourn in Haran, he can by no means think of settling there. Thus should we be affected towards our heavenly country, looking upon ourselves as strangers here, viewing the heavenly country as our home, and longing to be there, as soon as the days of our service upon earth are numbered and finished. We must not think of taking root here, for this is not our place and country, Heb. 13. 14. 2. He was desirous to go to Canaan, though he had a great family to take with him, and no provision yet made for them. He had got wives and children with Laban, but nothing else; yet he does not solicit Laban to give him either a portion with his wives, or the maintenance of some of his children. No, all his request is, *Give me my wives and my children, and send me away*, v. 25, 26. Note,



Those that trust in God, and in his providence and promise, though they have great families and small incomes, can cheerfully hope that he who sends mouths will send meat. He who feeds the brood of the ravens, will not starve the seed of the righteous.

II. Laban's desire of his stay, *v. 27*. In love to himself, not to Jacob or to his wives or children, he speaks fairly and gently, that he may engage him to continue his chief shepherd; entreating him, by the regard he bore him, not to leave him; *If I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry*. Note, Churlish selfish men know how to give good words, when it is to serve their own ends. Laban found that his stock had wonderfully increased with Jacob's good management, and he owns it, with very good expressions of respect both to God and Jacob; *I have learned by experience, that the Lord has blessed me for thy sake*. Observe, 1. *Laban's learning*. *I have learned by experience*. Note, There is many a profitable good lesson to be learned by experience. We are very unapt scholars, if we have not learned by experience the evil of sin, the treachery of our own hearts, the vanity of the world, the goodness of God, the gains of godliness, and the like. 2. *Laban's lesson*; he owns, (1.) That his prosperity was owing to God's blessing; *The Lord has blessed me*. Note, Worldly men that choose their portion in this life, are often blessed with an abundance of this world's goods. Common blessings are given plentifully to many that have no title to covenant blessings. (2.) That Jacob's piety had brought that blessing upon him; *The Lord has blessed me, not for my own sake*, (let not such a man as Laban, that lives without God in the world, think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, *Jam. 1. 7.*) but *for thy sake*. Note, [1.] Good men are blessings to the places where they live, even there where they live meanly and obscurely, as Jacob in the field, and Joseph in the prison, *ch. 39. 23*. [2.] God often blesses bad men with outward mercies, for the sake of their godly relations, though it is seldom that they have either the wit to see it, or the grace to own it, as Laban did here.

III. The new bargain they came upon. Laban's craft and covetousness took advantage of Jacob's plainness, honesty, and good nature; and, perceiving that Jacob began to be won upon by his fair speeches, instead of making him a generous offer, and bidding high, as he ought to have done, all things considered, he puts it upon him to make his demands; (*v. 28.*) *Appoint me thy wages*; knowing he would be very modest in them, and would ask less than he could for shame offer. Jacob accordingly makes a proposal to him, in which,

1. He shows what reason he had to insist upon so much, considering, (1.) That Laban was bound in gratitude to do well for him, because he had served him not only faithfully, but very successfully, *v. 30*. Yet here observe, how he speaks, like himself, very modestly. Laban had said, *The Lord has blessed me for thy sake*; Jacob will not say so, but, *The Lord has blessed thee since my coming*. Note, Humble saints take more pleasure in doing good than in hearing of it again. (2.) That he himself was bound in duty to take care of his own family; *Now, when shall I provide for mine own house also?* Note, Faith and charity, though they are excellent things, must not take us off from making necessary provisions for our own support, and the support of our families. We must, like Jacob, *trust in the Lord, and do good*, and yet we must, like him, provide for our own houses also; he that does not, is worse than an infidel, *1 Tim. 5. 8*.

2. He is willing to refer himself to the providence of God, which, he knew, extends itself to the smallest things, even the colour of the cattle; and he

will be content to have for his wages the sheep and goats of such and such a colour, speckled, spotted, and brown, which should hereafter be brought forth, *v. 32, 33*. This, he thinks, will be a most effectual way both to prevent Laban's cheating him, and to secure himself from being suspected of cheating Laban. Some think he chose this colour, because in Canaan it was generally most desired, and delighted in; their shepherds in Canaan are called *Nekodim*, (*Amos 1. 1.*) the word here used for *speckled*; and Laban was willing to consent to this bargain, because he thought if the few he had that were now speckled and spotted, were separated from the rest, which by agreement was to be done immediately, the body of the flock which Jacob was to tend, being of one colour, either all black, or all white, would produce few or none of mixt colours, and so he should have Jacob's service for nothing, or next to nothing. According to this bargain, those few that were party-coloured, were separated, and put into the hands of Laban's sons, and sent three days' journey off; so great was Laban's jealousy, lest any of those should mix with the rest of the flock, to the advantage of Jacob. And now a fine bargain Jacob has made for himself! Is this his providing for his own house, to put it upon such an uncertainty? If these cattle bring forth, as usually cattle do, young ones of the same colour with themselves, he must still serve for nothing, and be a drudge and a beggar all the days of his life; but he knows whom he has trusted, and the event showed, (1.) That he took the best way that could be taken with Laban, who otherwise would certainly have been too hard for him. And, (2.) That it was not in vain to rely upon the Divine Providence, which owns and blesses honest humble diligence. Those that find men whom they deal with unjust and unkind, shall not find God so, but that, some way or other, he will right the injured, and be a good Pay-Master to those that commit their cause to him.

37. And Jacob took him rods of green poplar and of the hazel and chesnut-tree, and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear, which was in the rods. 38. And he set the rods, which he had pilled, before the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs, when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. 39. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-straked, speckled, and spotted. 40. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ring-straked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not into Laban's cattle. 41. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. 42. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses.

Here is Jacob's honest policy to make his bargain more advantageous to himself than it was likely to



be: if he had not taken some course to help himself, it would have been a bad bargain indeed, which he knew Laban would never have considered, or rather, which he would have been well-pleased to see him a loser by, so little did Laban consult any one's interest but his own. Now Jacob's contrivances were,

1. To set piled sticks before the cattle where they were watered, that, looking much at those unusual party-coloured sticks, by the power of imagination, they might bring forth young ones in like manner party-coloured, *v.* 37. 39. Probably, this custom was commonly used by the shepherds of Canaan, who coveted to have their cattle of this motley colour. Note, It becomes a man to be master of his trade, whatever it is, and to be not only industrious, but ingenious in it, and to be versed in all its lawful arts and mysteries; for what is a man but his trade? There is a discretion which God teaches the husbandman, (as plain a trade as that is,) and which he ought to learn, *Isa.* 28. 26.

2. When he began to have a stock of ring-straked and brown, he contrived to set them first, and to put the faces of the rest toward them, with the same design as he did the former with; but would not let his own that were motley-coloured, look at Laban's that were of one colour, *v.* 40. Strong impressions, it seems, are made by the eye, with which therefore we have need to make a covenant.

3. When he found that his project succeeded, through the special blessing of God upon it, he contrived, by using it only with the stronger cattle, to secure to himself those that were most valuable, leaving the feeblest to Laban, *v.* 41, 42. Thus Jacob increased exceedingly, (*v.* 43.) and grew very rich in a little time. This success of his policy, it is true, was not sufficient to justify it, if there had been any thing fraudulent or unjust in it, which we are sure there was not, for he did it by divine direction; (*ch.* 31. 12.) nor was there any thing in the thing itself, but the honest improvement of a fair bargain, which the Divine Providence wonderfully prospered, both in justice to Jacob, whom Laban had wronged and dealt hardly with, and in pursuance of the particular promises made to him of the tokens of the divine favour. Note, Those, who, while their beginning is small, are humble and honest, contented and industrious, are in a likely way to see their latter end greatly increasing; he that is faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more; he that is faithful in that which is another man's, shall be intrusted with something of his own. Jacob that had been a just servant, became a rich master.

### CHAP. XXXI.

Jacob was a very honest good man, a man of great devotion, and integrity, and yet he had more trouble and vexation than any of the patriarchs. He had left his father's house in a fright, came to his uncle in distress, very hard usage he had met with there, and now is going back surrounded with fears. Here is, I. His resolution to return, *v.* 1. 16. II. His clandestine departure, *v.* 17. 21. III. Laban's pursuit of him in displeasure, *v.* 22. 25. IV. The hot words that passed between them, *v.* 26. 42. V. Their amicable agreement at last, *v.* 43. 55.

1. **AND** he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which *was* our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it *was* not toward him as before. 3. And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4. And Jacob sent and called

Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, 5. And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7. And your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. 8. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then all the cattle bare ring-straked. 9. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me. 10. And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle, *were* ring-straked, speckled, and grised. 11. And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: And I said, Here *am* I. 12. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle, *are* ring-straked, speckled, and grised: for I have seen all that Laban *doeth* unto thee. 13. I *am* the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred. 14. And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, *is there* yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15. Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured our money. 16. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is our's, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Jacob is here taking up a resolution immediately to quit his uncle's service, and to take what he had, and go back to Canaan. He took up this resolution, upon a just provocation by divine direction, and with the advice and consent of his wives.

1. Upon a just provocation; for Laban and his sons were become very cross and ill-natured toward him, so that he could not stay among them with safety and satisfaction.

1. Laban's sons showed it in what they said, *v.* 1. It should seem, they said it in Jacob's hearing, with a design to vex him. The last chapter began with Rachel's envying Leah; this begins with Laban's son's envying Jacob. Observe, (1.) How greatly they magnify Jacob's prosperity, *He has gotten all this glory.* And what was this glory that they make so much ado about? It was a parcel of brown sheep, and speckled goats, (and perhaps the fine colours made them seem more glorious,) and some camels and asses, and such like trading; and that was all *this glory.* Note, Riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, while to all those that are conversant with heavenly things, they have no glory in comparison with the glory which excelleth. Men's over valuing worldly wealth, is that fundamental error which is the root of covetousness, envy,

and all evil. (2.) How basely they reflect upon Jacob's fidelity, as if what he had, he had not gotten honestly; *Jacob has taken away all that was our father's*. Not all, sure. What has become of those cattle which were committed to the custody of Laban's sons, and sent *three days' journey* off? *ch. 30. 35, 36.* They mean all that was committed to him; but speaking invidiously, they express themselves thus generally. Note, [1.] Those that are ever so careful to keep a good conscience, yet cannot always be sure of a good name. [2.] This is one of the vanities and vexations which attend outward prosperity, that it makes a man to be envied of his neighbour; (*Ecc. 4. 4.*) and *who can stand before envy?* *Prov. 26. 4.* Whom Heaven blesses Hell curses, and all its children on earth.

2. Laban himself said little, but his countenance was not toward Jacob as it used to be; and Jacob could not but take notice of it, *v. 2, 5.* He was but a churl at the best, but now he was more churlish than formerly. Note, Envy is a sin that often appears in the countenance; hence we read of an *evil eye*, *Prov. 23. 6.* Sour looks may do a great deal toward the ruin of peace and love in a family, and the making of those uneasy, whose comfort we ought to be tender of. Laban's angry countenance lost him the greatest blessing his family ever had, and justly.

II. He resolved it by divine direction, and under the convoy of a promise; (*v. 3.*) *The Lord said unto Jacob, Return, and I will be with thee.* Though Jacob had met with very hard usage here, yet he would not quit his place, till God bid him. He came thither by orders from Heaven, and there he would stay, till he was ordered back. Note, It is our duty to set ourselves, and it will be our comfort to see ourselves, under God's guidance, both in our going out, and in our coming in. The direction he had from Heaven, is more fully related in the account he gives of it to his wives, (*v. 10, 13.*) where he tells them of a dream he had about his cattle, and the wonderful increase of those of his colour; and how the angel of God, in that dream, (for I suppose the dream spoken of, *v. 10.* and that *v. 11.* to be the same), took notice of the workings of his fancy in his sleep, and instructed him, that it was not by chance, nor by his own policy, that he obtained that great advantage; but,

1. By the providence of God, who had taken notice of the hardships that Laban had put upon him, and took this way to right him; *For I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee*, and herein I have an eye to that. Note, There is more of equity in the distributions of Divine Providence, than we are aware of, and by them the wronged are righted really, though perhaps insensibly. Nor was it only by the justice of Providence, that Jacob was thus enriched, but,

2. In performance of the promise intimated in what is said, *v. 13, I am the God of Beth-el.* That was the place where the covenant was renewed with him. Note, Worldly prosperity and success are then doubly sweet and comfortable, when we see them flowing not from common providence, but from covenant-love; *to perform the mercy promised*; when we have them from God, as *the God of Beth-el*, from those promises of the life which now is, that belong to godliness. But we observe that Jacob, even when he had this hopeful prospect of growing rich with Laban, must think of returning. When the world begins to smile upon us, we must remember it is not our home. *Now arise*, (*v. 13.*) *and return*, (1.) *To thy devotions* in Canaan; the solemnities of which had perhaps been much intermitted while he was with Laban. The times of this servitude God had winked at; but now, "*Return to the place where thou anointedst the pillar,*

*and vowedst the vow.* Now that thou beginnest to grow rich, it is time to think of an altar and sacrifices again." (2.) *To thy comforts* in Canaan; *to the land of thy kindred.* He was here among his near kindred; but those only he must look upon as his kindred in the best sense, the kindred he must live and die with, to whom pertained the covenant. Note, The heirs of Canaan must never reckon themselves at home, till they come thither, however they may seem to take root here.

III. He resolved it with the knowledge and consent of his wives. He sent for Rachel and Leah to him *to the field*; (*v. 4.*) either that he might discourse with them more privately, or because one would not come to the other's apartment, and he would willingly talk with them together, or, because he had work to do in the field, which he would not leave. Note, Husbands that love their wives, will communicate their purposes and intentions to them. Where there is a mutual affection, there will be a mutual confidence. And the prudence of the wife should engage the heart of her husband so fully *to trust in her*, *Prov. 31. 1.* He told his wives,

1. How faithfully he had served their father, *v. 6.* Note, if others do not do their duty to us, yet we shall have the comfort of having done ours to them.

2. How unfaithfully their father had dealt with him, *v. 7.* He would never keep to any bargain that he made with him, but after the first year, still as he saw Providence favour Jacob with the colour agreed on, every half year of the remaining five, he changed it for some other colour, which made it ten times; as if he thought not only to deceive Jacob, but the Divine Providence which manifestly smiled upon him. Note, Those that deal honestly, are not always honestly dealt with.

3. How God had owned him notwithstanding; not only protecting him from Laban's ill-will, (*God suffered him not to hurt me.* Note, Those that keep close to God, shall be kept safe by him,) but providing plentifully for him, notwithstanding Laban's design to ruin him; (*v. 9.*) *God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.* Thus the righteous God paid Jacob for his hard service out of Laban's estate; as afterward he paid the seed of Jacob for their serving of the Egyptians with their spoils. Note, (1.) God is not unrighteous to forget his people's work and labour of love, though men be so, *Heb. 6. 10.* Providence has ways of making those honest in the event, that are not so in their design. (2.) *The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just*, *Prov. 13. 22.*

4. He told them of the command God had given him, in a dream to return to his own country, (*v. 13.*) that they might not suspect his resolution to arise from inconstancy, or any disaffection to their country or family, but might see it to proceed from a principle of obedience to his God, and dependence on him.

Lastly, His wives cheerfully consented to his resolution. They also brought forward their grievances, complaining that their father had been not only unkind, but unjust, to them, (*v. 14, 16.*) that he looked upon them as strangers, and was without natural affection toward them; and that whereas Jacob had looked upon the wealth which God had transferred from Laban to him as his wages, they looked upon it as their portions; so that, both ways, God forced Laban to pay his debts, both to his servant, and to his daughters. So then it seemed, [1.] They were weary of their own people, and their father's house, and they could easily forget them. Note, This good use we should make of the unkind usage we meet with from the world, we should sit the more loose to it, and be willing to leave it, and desirous to be at home. [2.] They were willing to

go along with their husband, and to put themselves with him under the divine conduct; *If whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.* Note, Those wives that are their husbands' meet helps, will never be their hinderances in doing that which God calls them to.

17. Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels. 18. And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. 19. And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. 20. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. 21. So he fled with all that he had; and rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead. 22. And it was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob was fled. 23. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead. 24. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Here is,

1. Jacob's flight from Laban. We may suppose he had been long considering of it, and casting about in his mind respecting it; but, when now, at last, God had given him positive orders to go, he made no delay, nor was he disobedient to the heavenly vision. The first opportunity that offered itself he laid hold on, when Laban was shearing his sheep, (v. 19.) that part of his flock which was in the hands of his sons three days' journey off. Now, 1. It is certain that it was lawful for Jacob to leave his service suddenly, without giving a quarter's warning. It was not only justified by the particular instructions God gave him, but warranted by the fundamental law of self-preservation, which directs us when we are in danger, to shift for our own safety, as far as we can do it without wronging our consciences. 2. It was his prudence to *steal away unawares to Laban*, lest, if Laban had known, he should have hindered him, or plundered him. 3. It was honestly done to take no more than his own with him, the *cattle of his getting*, v. 18. He took what Providence gave him, and was content with that, and would not take the repair of his damages into his own hands. Yet Rachel was not so honest as her husband; she *stole her father's images*, (v. 19.) and carried them away with her. The Hebrew calls them *Teraphim*. Some think they were only little representations of the ancestors of the family in statues or pictures, which Rachel had a particular fondness for, and was desirous to have with her, now that she was going into another country. It should rather seem, they were images for a religious use, *Pennates, Household-Gods*, either worshipped or consulted as oracles; and we are willing to hope (with Bishop Patrick) that she did not take them away as being covetous of the rich metal they were made of, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitious fear lest Laban, by consulting his *Teraphim*, might know which way they were gone. Jacob, no doubt, dwelt with his wives as a man of knowledge, and they were better taught than so; but she might design hereby to convince

her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods, which could not secure themselves, Isa. 46. 1, 2.

II. Laban's pursuit of Jacob. Tidings were brought him on the third day, that Jacob was fled; he immediately raises the whole clan, takes his brethren, that is, the relations of his family, that were all in his interests, and he pursues Jacob, as Pharaoh and his Egyptians afterward pursued the seed of Jacob, to bring them back into bondage again, or with design to strip him of what he had. Seven days' journey he marched in pursuit of him, v. 23. He would not have taken half the pains to have visited his best friends. But the truth is, bad men will do more to serve their sinful passions, than good men will, to serve their just affections, and are more vehement in their anger, than in their love.

Well, at length, Laban overtook him, and the very night before he came up with him, God interposed in the quarrel, rebuked Laban, and sheltered Jacob, charging Laban not to *speak unto him either good or bad*, (v. 24.) that is, to say nothing against his going on with his journey, for that it proceeded from the Lord. The same Hebraism we have, ch. 24. 50. Laban, during his seven days' march, had been full of rage against Jacob, and was now full of hopes that his lust should be satisfied upon him; (Exod. 15. 9.) but God comes to him, and with one word ties his hands, though he does not turn his heart. Note, 1. In a *dream*, and in *slumberings upon the bed*, God has ways of opening the ears of men, and sealing their instruction, Job 33. 15, 16. Thus he admonishes men by their consciences, in secret whispers which the man of wisdom will hear and heed. 2. The safety of good men is very much owing to the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, and the access he has to them. 2. God sometimes appears wonderfully for the deliverance of his people, then when they are upon the very brink of ruin. The Jews were saved from Haman's plot, when the king's decree drew near to be put in execution, Esth. 9. 1.

25. Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount; and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. 26. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? 27. Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp; 28. And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. 29. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 30. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? 31. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. 32. With whom-

soever thou findest thy gods, let him not live : before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. 33. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants' tents : but he found *them* not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. 34. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them : and Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not. 35. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord, that I cannot rise up before thee : for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

We have here the reasoning, not to say the rallying, that was between Laban and Jacob at their meeting, in that mountain which was afterwards called *Gilead*, v. 25.

Here is,

I. The high charge which Laban exhibited against him,

1. As a runagate, that had unjustly deserted his service. To represent him as a criminal, he will have it thought that he intended kindness to his daughters, (v. 27, 28.) that he would have dismissed them with all the marks of love and honour that could be, that he would have made a solemn business of it, would have kissed his little grandchildren, (and that was all he would have given them,) and, according to the foolish custom of the country, would have sent them away *with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp*: not as Rebekah was sent away out of the same family, about 120 years before, with prayers and blessings, (ch. 24. 60.) but with sport and merriment; which was a sign that religion was very much decayed in the family, and that they had lost their seriousness. However, he pretends they should have been treated with respect at parting. Note, It is common for bad men, when they are disappointed in their malicious projects, to pretend that they designed nothing but what was kind and fair. When they cannot do the mischief they intended, they are loath it should be thought that they ever did intend it. When they have not done what they *should* have done, they come off with this excuse, that they *would* have done it. Men may thus be deceived, but God cannot. He likewise suggests that Jacob had some bad design in stealing away thus, (v. 26.) that he took his wives away as captives. Note, Those that mean ill themselves, are most apt to put the worst construction upon what others do innocently. The insinuating and the aggravating of faults are the artifices of a designing malice, and those must be represented (though never so unjustly) as intending ill, against whom ill is intended. Upon the whole matter, (1.) He boasts of his own power, (v. 29.) *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt*: he supposes that he had both *right* on his side, a *good action* (as we say) against Jacob, and *strength* on his side, either to avenge the wrong, or recover the right. Note, Bad people commonly value themselves much upon their *power to do hurt*, whereas a power to do good is much more valuable. Those that will do nothing to make themselves amiable, love to be thought formidable. And yet, (2.) He owns himself under the check and restraint of God's power; and though it redounded much to the credit and comfort of Ja-

cob, he cannot avoid telling him the caution God had given him the night before, in a dream, *Speak not to Jacob, good or bad*. Note, As God has all wicked instruments in a chain, so when he pleases, he can make them sensible of it, and force them to own it to his praise, as Protector of the good; as Balaam did. Or, we may look upon this as an instance of some conscientious regard felt by Laban for God's express prohibitions. As bad as he was, he durst not injure one whom he saw to be the particular care of Heaven. Note, A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if men would but attend to the caveats which their own consciences give them in slumberings upon the bed, and regard to the voice of God in them.

2. He accuses him as a thief, v. 30. Rather than own that he had given him any colour of provocation to depart, he is willing to impute it to a foolishness for *his father's house*, which made him that he would *needs be gone*; but then (says he) *wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?* Foolish man! to call those his gods, which could be stolen! Could he expect protection from them that could neither resist, nor discover, their invaders? Happy are they who have the Lord for their God, for they have a God that they cannot be robbed of. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God. Here Laban lays to Jacob's charge things that he knew not, the common distress of oppressed innocence.

II. Jacob's apology for himself. Those that commit their cause to God, yet are not forbidden to plead it themselves with meekness and fear. 1. As to the charge of stealing away his own wives, he clears himself by giving the true reason why he went away unknown to Laban, v. 31. He feared lest Laban would by *force take away his daughters*, and so oblige him, by the bond of affection to his wives, to continue in his service. Note, Those that are unjust in the least, it may be suspected, will be unjust also in much, Luke 16. 10. If Laban deceived Jacob in his wages, it is likely he will make no conscience of robbing him of his wives, and putting those asunder whom God had joined together. What may not be feared from men that have no principle of honesty? 2. As to the charge of stealing Laban's gods, he pleads not guilty, v. 32. He not only did not take them himself, (he was not so fond of them,) but he did not know that they were taken. Yet perhaps he spake too hastily and inconsiderately, when he said, "Whoever has taken them, *let him not live*;" upon this he might reflect with some bitterness, when, not long after, Rachel, who had taken them, died suddenly in travail. How just soever we think ourselves to be, it is best to forbear imprecations, lest they fall heavier than we imagine.

III. The diligent search Laban made for his gods, (v. 33, 34, 35.) partly out of hatred to Jacob, whom he would gladly have an occasion to quarrel with, partly out of love to his idols, which he was loath to part with. We do not find that he searched Jacob's flocks for stolen cattle: but he searched his furniture for stolen gods. He was of Micah's mind, *Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* Judg. 18. 24. Were the worshippers of false gods so set upon their idols; did they thus walk in the name of their gods? And shall not we be as solicitous in our inquiries after the true God? When he is justly departed from us, how carefully should we ask, *Where is God my Maker? O that I knew where I might find him!* Job. 23. 3. Laban, after all his searches, missed of finding his gods, and was baffled in his inquiry with a sham; but our God will not only be found of those that seek him, but they shall find him their bountiful Rewarder.

36. And Jacob was wrath, and chode

with Laban : and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What *is* my trespass, what *is* my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me ? 37. Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household-stuff ? Set *it* here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. 38. This twenty years *have I been* with thee ; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of the flock have I not eaten. 39. That which was torn of *beasts* I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it ; of my hand didst thou require it, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night. 40. *Thus I was ;* in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. 41. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house ; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle : and thou hast changed my wages ten times. 42. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

See in these verses,

1. *The power of provocation.* Jacob's natural temper was mild and calm, and grace had improved it, he was a smooth man, and a plain man ; and yet Laban's unreasonable carriage toward him put him into a heat that transported him into some vehemence, v. 36, 37. His chiding with Laban, though it may admit of some excuse, was not justifiable, nor is it written for our imitation. Grievous words stir up anger, and commonly do but make bad worse. It is a very great affront to one that bears an honest mind, to be charged with dishonesty, and yet even *that* we must learn to bear with patience, committing our cause to God.

2. *The comfort of a good conscience.* This was Jacob's rejoicing, that when Laban accused him, his own conscience acquitted him, and witnessed for him that he had been in all things willing, and careful to live honestly, Heb. 13. 18. Note, Those that in any employment have dealt faithfully, if they cannot obtain the credit of it with men, yet shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms.

3. *The character of a good servant.* Particularly of a faithful shepherd. Jacob had approved himself such a one, v. 38. . 40 (1.) He was very *careful*, so that, through his oversight or neglect, the ewes did not cast their young. His piety also procured a blessing upon his master's effects that were under his hands. Note, Servants should take no less care of what they are intrusted with for their masters, than if they were entitled to it as their own. (2.) He was very *honest*, and took none of that for his own eating, which was not allowed him. He contented himself with mean fare, and coveted not to feast upon the rams of the flock. Note, Servants must not be dainty in their food, nor covet what is forbidden them, but in that, and other instances, show all good fidelity. (3.) He was very *laborious*, v. 40. He stuck to his business, all weathers ; and bore both heat and cold with invincible patience. Note, Men of business, that intend to make something of it, must resolve to endure

hardness. Jacob is here an example to ministers ; they also are shepherds, of whom it is required that they be true to their trust, and willing to take pains.

1. *The character of a hard master.* Laban had been such a one to Jacob. Those are bad masters, (1.) Who exact from their servants that which is unjust, by obliging them to make good that which is not damaged by any default of theirs. This Laban did, v. 39. Nay, if there has been a neglect, yet it is unjust to punish above the proportion of the fault. That may be an inconsiderable damage to the master, which would go near to ruin a poor servant. (2.) These also are bad masters, who deny to their servants that which is just and equal. This Laban did, v. 41. It was unreasonable for him to make Jacob serve for his daughters, when he had in reversion so great an estate secured to him by the promise of God himself ; as it was also to give him his daughters without portions, when it was in the power of his hands to do well for them. Thus he robbed the poor because he was poor, as he did also by *changing his wages*.

5. *The care of Providence* for the protection of injured innocence, v. 42. God took cognizance of the wrong done to Jacob, and repaid him whom Laban would otherwise have sent empty away, and rebuked Laban who otherwise would have swallowed him up. Note, God is the Patron of the oppressed ; and those who are wronged and yet not ruined, cast down and yet not destroyed, must acknowledge him in their preservation, and give him the glory of it. Observe, (1.) Jacob speaks of God, as the *God of his father*, intimating that he thought himself unworthy to be thus regarded, but was beloved *for the father's sake*. (2.) He calls him the *God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac* ; for Abraham was dead, and gone to that world where perfect love casts out fear ; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart, as his Fear and his Dread.

43. And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest, is mine : and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born ?* 44. Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou ; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. 45. And Jacob took a stone and set it up *for* a pillar. 46. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones ; and they took stones, and made an heap : and they did eat there upon the heap. 47. And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha : but Jacob called it Galeed. 48. And Laban said, This heap *is* a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed : 49. And Mizpah ; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. 50. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives beside my daughters, no man *is* with us ; see, God *is* witness betwixt me and thee. 51. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee ; 52. This heap



be witness, and *this pillar be witness*, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. 53. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. 55. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

We have here the compromising of the matter between Laban and Jacob. Laban had nothing to say in reply to Jacob's remonstrance: he could neither justify himself nor condemn Jacob, but was convicted by his own conscience of the wrong he had done him; and therefore desires to be no more of that matter. He is not willing to own himself in a fault, nor to ask Jacob forgiveness, and make him satisfaction as he ought to have done. But,

I. He turns it off with a profession of kindness for Jacob's wives and children, (v. 43.) *These daughters are my daughters*. When he cannot excuse what he has done, he does in effect, own what he *should have done*: he should have treated them as his own, but he had counted them strangers, v. 15. Note, It is common for those who are without natural affection, to pretend much to it, when it will serve a turn. Or, perhaps Laban said this in a vain-glorious way, as one that loved to talk big, and use great swelling words of vanity; "Al that thou seest, is mine." It was not so, it was all Jacob's, and he paid dear for it; yet Jacob let him have his saying, perceiving him coming into a better humour. Note, Property lies near the hearts of worldly people. They love to boast of it, "This is mine, and the other is mine," as Nabal, 1. Sam. 25. 11, *my bread and my water*.

II. He proposes a covenant of friendship between them, which Jacob readily agrees to, without insisting upon Laban's submission, much less his restitution. Note, When quarrels happen, we should be willing to be friends again upon any terms: peace and love are such valuable jewels, that we can scarcely buy them too dear. Better sit down losers than go on in strife. Now observe here,

1. The substance of this covenant; Jacob left it wholly to Laban to settle it. The tenor of it was, (1.) That Jacob should be a good husband to his wives, that he should not afflict them, nor marry other wives beside them, v. 50. Jacob had never given him any cause to suspect that he would be any other than a kind husband: yet, as if he had, he was willing to come under this engagement. Though Laban had afflicted them himself, yet he will bind Jacob, that he shall not afflict them. Note, Those that are injurious themselves, are commonly most jealous of others: and those that do not do their own duty, are most peremptory in demanding duty from others. (2.) That he should never be a bad neighbour to Laban, v. 52. It was agreed that no act of hostility should ever pass between them, that Jacob should forgive and forget all the wrongs he had received, and not remember them against Laban or his family in after times. Note, We may have a strong perception of an injury, which yet we may not revenge.

2. The ceremony of this covenant; it was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the

usages of those times. (1.) A pillar was erected, (v. 45.) and a heap of stones raised, (v. 46.) to perpetuate the memory of the thing; the way of recording agreements, by writing, being then either not known, or not used. (2.) A sacrifice was offered, (v. 54.) a sacrifice of peace-offerings. Note, Our peace with God is that which puts true comfort into our peace with our friends. If parties contend, the reconciliation of both to Him will facilitate their reconciliation one to another. (3.) They did eat bread together, (v. 46.) jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice, v. 54. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together. It was in the nature of a love-feast. (4.) They solemnly appealed to God concerning their sincerity herein; [1.] *As a Witness*, (v. 49.) *The Lord watch between me and thee*, that is, "The Lord take cognizance of every thing that shall be done on either side, in violation of this league. When we are out of one another's sight, let this be a restraint upon us, that wherever we are, we are under God's eye." This appeal is convertible into a prayer. Friends at a distance from each other may take the comfort of this, that when they cannot know or succour one another, God watches between them, and has his eye on them both. [2.] *As a Judge*, v. 53. *The God of Abraham*, from whom Jacob was descended, and *the God of Nahor*, from whom Laban was descended, *the God of their father*, the common ancestor, from whom they were both descended, judge betwixt us. God's relation to them is thus expressed, to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity betwixt them. Note, Those that have one God, should have one heart: those that agree in religion, should strive to agree in every thing else. God is judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously; whoever does wrong, it is at his peril. (5.) They gave a new name to the place, v. 47, 48. Laban called it in Syriac, and Jacob in Hebrew, *the heap of witness*. And v. 49, it was called *Mizpah*, *A watch-tower*. Posterity being included in the league, care was taken that thus the memory of it should be preserved. These names are applicable to the seals of the gospel-covenant, which are witnesses to us, if we be faithful, but witnesses against us, if we be false. The name Jacob gave this heap, stuck by it, *Galeed*, not the name Laban gave it. In all this re encounter, Laban was noisy and full of words, affecting to say much; Jacob was silent, and said little; when Laban appealed to God under many titles, Jacob only *sware by the Fear of his father Isaac*, that is, the God whom his father Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done. Two words of Jacob's were more memorable than all Laban's speeches and vain repetitions. *For the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools*, Eccl. 9. 17.

Lastly, After all this angry parley, they part friends, v. 55. Laban very affectionately *kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them*; and then went back in peace. Note, God is often better to us than our fears, and strangely over-rules the spirits of men in our favour, beyond what we could have expected; for it is not in vain to trust in him.

## CHAP. XXXII.

We have here Jacob still upon his journey towards Canaan. Never did so many memorable things occur in any march, as in this of Jacob's little family. By the way he meets, I. With good tidings from his God, v. 1, 2. II. With bad tidings from his brother, to whom he sent a message to notify his return, v. 2, 3, 6. In his distress, 1. He divides his company, v. 7, 8. 2. He makes his



prayer to God, v. 9. . 12. He sends a present to his brother, v. 13. . 23. 4. He wrestles with the angel, v. 24. . 32.

1. **AND** Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2. And when Jacob saw them, he said, *This is God's host*: and he called the name of that place *Mahanaim*.

Jacob is here got clear of Laban, and pursuing his journey homeward, toward Canaan: when God has helped us through difficulties, we should go on our way heaven-ward with so much the more cheerfulness and resolution.

Now,

1. Here is Jacob's convoy in his journey, v. 1. *The angels of God met him*, in a visible appearance, whether in a vision by day, or in a dream by night, as when he saw them upon the ladder, (ch. 28. 12.) is uncertain. Note, Those that keep in a good way, have always a good guard; angels themselves are ministering spirits for their safety, Heb. 1. 14. Where Jacob pitched his tents, they pitched their's about him, Ps. 34. 7. They met him, to bid him welcome to Canaan again: a more honourable reception this was, than ever any prince had, that was met by the magistrates of a city in their formalities. They met him, to congratulate him on his arrival, and particularly on his escape from Laban; for they have pleasure in the prosperity of God's servants. They had invisibly attended him all along, but now they appeared to him, because he had greater dangers before him than those he had hitherto encountered. Note, When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts. We should think it had been more seasonable for these angels to have appeared to him amidst the perplexity and agitation occasioned first by Laban, and afterward by Esau, than in this calm and quiet interval, when he saw not himself in any imminent peril; but God will have us, when we are in peace, to provide for trouble, and when trouble comes, to live upon former observations and experiences; for *we walk by faith, not by sight*. God's people, at death, are returning to Canaan, to their father's house; and then the angels of God will meet them, to congratulate them on the happy finishing of their servitude, and to carry them to their rest.

2. The comfortable notice he took of this convoy, v. 2, *This is God's host*, and therefore, (1.) It is a powerful host; very great is he that is thus attended, and very safe that is thus guarded. (2.) God must have the praise of this protection: "This I may thank God for, for it is his host." A good man may with an eye of faith, see the same that Jacob saw with his bodily eyes, by believing that promise, (Ps. 91. 11.) *He shall give his angels charge over thee*. What need have we to dispute whether every particular saint has a guardian angel, when we are sure he has a guard of angels about him? To preserve the remembrance of this favour, Jacob gave a name to the place from it, *Mahanaim*, *two hosts*, or *two camps*. That is, say some of the Rabbins, one host of the guardian angels of Mesopotamia, who conducted Jacob thence, and delivered him safe to the other host of the angels of Canaan, who met him upon the borders where he now was. Rather, they appeared to him in two hosts, one on either side, or one in front, and the other in rear, to protect him from Laban behind, and Esau before, that they might be a complete guard. Thus he is compassed with God's favour. Perhaps, in addition to this, the church is called *Mahanaim*, *two armies*, Cant. 6. 13. Here was Jacob's family, which was one army, representing the church mi-

litant and itinerant on earth; and the angels another army, representing the church triumphant, and at rest in heaven.

3. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: 5. And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. 6. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. 7. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; 8. And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

Now that Jacob was re-entering Canaan, God, by the vision of angels, reminded him of the *friends* he had when he left it, and thence he takes occasion to remind himself of the *enemies* he had, particularly Esau. It is probable that Rebekah had sent him word of Esau's settlement in Seir, and of the continuance of his enmity to him. What shall poor Jacob do? He longs to see his father, and yet he dreads to see his brother. He rejoices to see Canaan again, and yet cannot but rejoice with trembling because of Esau.

1. He sends a very kind and humble message to Esau. It does not appear that his way lay *through* Esau's country, or that he needed to ask his leave for a passage; but his way lay *near* it, and he would not go by him without paying him the respect due to a brother, a twin-brother, an only brother, an elder brother, a brother offended. Note, 1. Though our relations fail in their duty to us, yet we must make conscience of doing our duty to them. 2. It is a piece of friendship and brotherly love, to acquaint our friends with our state, and inquire into their's. Acts of civility may help to slay enmities. Jacob's message to him is very obliging, v. 4, 5. (1.) He calls Esau his *lord*, himself his *servant*, to intimate that he did not insist upon the prerogatives of the birth-right and blessing he had obtained for himself, but left it to God to fulfil his own purpose in his seed. Note, *Yielding pacifies great offences*, Eccl. 10. 4. We must not refuse to speak in a respectful and submissive manner, to those that are ever so unjustly exasperated against us. (2.) He gives him a short account of himself; that he was not a fugitive and a vagabond, but, though long absent, had had a certain dwelling-place, with his own relations, *I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there till now*; and that he was not a beggar, nor did he come home as the prodigal son, destitute of necessities, and likely to be a charge to his relations; No, *I have oxen and asses*. This, he knew, would (if any thing) recommend him to Esau's good opinion. And, (3.) He courts his favour; *I have sent, that I might find grace in thy sight*. Note, It is no disparagement to those that have the better cause, to become petitioners for reconciliation, and to sue for peace as well as right.

II. He receives a very formidable account of Esau's warlike preparations against him, (v. 6.) not a word, but a blow; a very coarse return to his kind message, and a sorry welcome home to a poor brother; *He comes to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.* He is now weary of waiting for the days of mourning for his good father, and even before they come, he resolves to slay his brother. 1. He remembers the old quarrel, and will now be avenged on him for the birth-right and blessing, and if possible, defeat Jacob's expectations from both. Note, Malice harboured, will last long, and find an occasion to break out with violence a great while after the provocations given. Angry men have good memories. 2. He envies Jacob what little estate he had, and though he himself was now possessed of a much better, yet nothing will serve him but to feed his eyes upon Jacob's ruin, and fill his fields with Jacob's spoils. Perhaps the account Jacob sent him of his wealth, did but provoke him the more. 3. He concludes it easy to destroy him, now that he was upon the road, a poor weary traveller, unfixed, and (as he thinks) unguarded. They that have the serpent's poison, have commonly the serpent's policy, to take the first and fairest opportunity that offers itself for revenge. 4. He resolves to do it suddenly, and before Jacob was come to his father, lest he should interpose and mediate between them. Esau was one of those that hated peace; when Jacob speaks, speaks peaceably, he is for war, Ps. 120. 6, 7. Out he marches, spurred on with rage, and intent on blood and murders; four hundred men he had with him, probably, such as used to hunt with him, armed, no doubt, rough and cruel like their leader, ready to execute the word of command though ever so barbarous, and now breathing nothing but threatenings and slaughter. The tenth part of these were enough to cut off poor Jacob, and his guiltless helpless family, root and branch. No marvel therefore that it follows, (v. 7.) *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed*, perhaps the more so, having scarcely recovered the fright Laban had put him in. Note, Many are the troubles of the righteous in this world, and sometimes the end of one is the beginning of another. The clouds return after the rain. Jacob, though a man of great faith, yet was now greatly afraid. Note, A lively apprehension of danger, and a quickening fear arising from it, may very well consist with a humble confidence in God's power, and promise. Christ himself, in his agony, was sore amazed.

III. He puts himself into the best posture of defence that his present circumstances will admit of. It was absurd to think of making resistance, all his contrivance is to make an escape, v. 7, 8. He thinks it prudent not to venture all in one bottom, and therefore divides what he had into two companies, that if one were smitten, the other might escape. Like a tender and careful master of a family, he is more solicitous for their safety than for his own. He divided his company, not as Abraham, (ch. 14. 15.) for fight, but for flight.

9. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: 10. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. 11. Deliver me, I pray

thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. 12. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

Our rule is to call upon God in the time of trouble; we have here an example to that rule, and the success encourages us to follow that example. It was now a time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it; and here we have him praying for that salvation, Jer. 30. 7. In his distress he sought the Lord, and he heard him. Note, Times of fear should be times of prayer; whatever frightens us should drive us to our knees, to our God. Jacob had lately seen his guard of angels, but in this distress he applied himself to God, not to them; he knew they were his fellow-servants, (Rev. 22. 9.) nor did he consult Laban's *Teraphim*; it was enough for him that he had a God to go to. To him he addresses himself with all possible solemnity, so, running for safety into the name of the Lord, *as a strong tower*, Prov. 18. 10. This prayer is the more remarkable, because it won him the honour of being an *Israel, a prince with God*, and the father of the praying remnant, who are hence called *the seed of Jacob*, to whom he never said, *Seek ye me in vain*. Now it is worth while to inquire what there was extraordinary in this prayer, that it should gain the petitioner all this honour.

1. The request itself is *one*, and very express, (v. 11.) *Deliver me from the hand of my brother*. Though there was no human probability on his side, yet he believed the power of God could rescue him as a lamb out of the bloody jaws of the lion. Note, 1. We have leave to be particular in our addresses to God, to mention the particular straits and difficulties we are in; for the God with whom we have to do, is one we may be free with; *we have liberty of speech* (*παρρησία*) at the throne of grace. 2. When our brethren aim to be our destroyers, it is our comfort that we have a Father to whom we may apply ourselves as our Deliverer.

II. The pleas are *many*, and very powerful; never was cause better ordered, Job 23. 4. He offers up his request with great faith, fervency, and humility. How earnestly does he beg! (v. 11.) *Deliver me, I pray thee*. His fear made him importunate. With what holy logic does he argue! With what divine eloquence does he plead! Here is a noble copy to write after.

1. He addresses himself to God as the God of his fathers, v. 9. Such was the humble self-denying sense he had of his own unworthiness, that he did not call God his own God, but a God in covenant with his ancestors, *O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac*; and this he could the better plead, because the covenant, by divine designation, was entailed upon him. Note, God's covenant with our fathers may be a comfort to us when we are in distress. It has often been so to the Lord's people, Ps. 22. 4, 5. Being born in God's house, we are taken under his special protection.

2. He produces his warrant, *Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country*. He did not rashly leave his place with Laban, nor undertake this journey, out of a fickle humour, or a foolish fondness for his native country, but in obedience to God's command. Note, (1.) We may be in the way of our duty, and yet we may meet with trouble and distress in that way. As prosperity will not prove us in the right, so cross events will not prove us in the wrong; we may be going whither God calls us, and yet may think our way hedged up with thorns. (2.)

We may comfortably trust God with our safety, while we carefully keep to our duty. If God be our Guide, he will be our Guard.

3. He humbly acknowledges his own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, (v. 10.) *I am not worthy*; it is an unusual plea. Some would think he should have pleaded that what was now in danger, was his own, against all the world, and that he had earned it dear enough; no, he pleads, *Lord, I am not worthy of it*. Note, Self-denial and self-abasement will become us in all our addresses to the throne of grace. Christ never commended any of his petitioners so much as him who said, *Lord I am not worthy*, (Matt. 8. 8.) and her who said, *Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table*, Matt. 15. 27. Now observe here, (1.) How magnificently and honourably he speaks of the mercies of God to him. We have here, *mercies*, in the plural number, an inexhaustible spring, and innumerable streams; *mercies and truth*, that is, past mercies given according to the promise, and further mercies secured by the promise. Note, What is laid up in God's truth, as well as what is laid out in God's mercies, is the matter both of the comforts, and the praises, of active believers. Nay, observe, it is *all* the mercies, and *all* the truth; the manner of expression is copious, and intimates that his heart was full of God's goodness. (2.) How meanly and humbly he speaks of himself, disclaiming all thought of his own merit. *"I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies*, much less am I worthy of so great a favour as this I am now suing for." Jacob was a considerable man, and, upon many accounts, very deserving, and, in treating with Laban, had justly insisted on his merits, but not before God. *I am less than all thy mercies*; so the word is. Note, The best and greatest of men are utterly unworthy of the least favour from God, and must be ready to own it upon all occasions. It was the excellent Mr. Herbert's motto, *Less than the least of all God's mercies*. Those are the best prepared for the greatest mercies, that see themselves unworthy of the least.

4. He thankfully owns God's goodness to him in his banishment, and how much it had out done his expectations. *"With my staff I passed over this Jordan*, poor and desolate like a forlorn and despised pilgrim;" he had no guides, no companions, no attendants, no conveniences for travel, but his staff only, nothing else to stay himself upon; *"and now I am become two bands*, now I am surrounded with a numerous and comfortable retinue of children and servants;" though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility and thankfulness, to remember how small their beginning was. Jacob pleads, "Lord, thou didst keep me when I went out only with my staff, and had but one life to lose; wilt not thou keep me now that so many are embarked with me?"

5. He urges the extremity of the peril he was in, *Lord, deliver me from Esau, for I fear him*, v. 11. The people of God have not been shy of telling God their fears; for they know he takes cognizance of them, and considers them. The fear that quickens prayer, is itself pleadable. It was not a robber, but a murderer, that he was afraid of; nor was it his own life only that lay at stake, but the mother's and the children's, that had left their native soil to go along with him. Note, Natural affection may furnish us with allowable acceptable pleas in prayer.

6. He insists especially upon the promise God had made him, (v. 9.) *Thou saidst, I will deal well with*

*thee*, and again in the close, (v. 12.) *Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good*. Note, (1.) The best we can say to God in prayer, is, what he has said to us. God's promises, as they are the surest guide of our desires in prayer, and furnish us with the best petitions, so they are the firmest ground of our hopes, and furnish us with the best pleas. "Lord, thou saidst thus and thus; and wilt thou not be as good as thy word, the word upon which thou hast caused me to hope?" Ps. 119. 49. (2.) The most general promises are applicable to particular cases. "Thou saidst, *I will do thee good*; Lord, do me good in this matter." He pleads also a particular promise, that of *multiplyng his seed*. "Lord what will become of that promise, if they be all cut off?" Note, [1.] There are promises to the families of good people, which are improvable in prayer for family mercies, ordinary and extraordinary, ch. 17. 7. Ps. 112. 2.—102. 28. [2.] The world's threatenings should drive us to God's promises.

13. And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand, a present for Esau his brother; 14. Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15. Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she-asses, and ten foals. 16. And he delivered *them* into the hands of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. 17. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? And whose *are* these before thee? 18. Then thou shalt say, *They be thy servant Jacob's*; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. 19. And so commanded he the second and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, on this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him, 20. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me. 21. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. 22. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. 23. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

Jacob having previously made God his Friend by a prayer, is here prudently endeavouring to make Esau his friend by a present. He had prayed to God to deliver him from the hand of Esau, for he feared him; but neither did his fear sink into such a despair as dispirits for the use of means, nor did his prayer make him presume upon God's mercy, without the use of means. Note, When we have prayed to God for any mercy, we must second our prayers with our endeavours; else, instead of trusting God we tempt him; we must so depend upon God's providence, as to make use of

our own prudence. "Help thyself, and God will help thee;" God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion. To pacify Esau,

1. Jacob sent him a very noble present, not of jewels or fine garments, (he had them not,) but of cattle, to the number of 580 in all, *v. 13. 15.* Now, (1.) It was an evidence of the great increase with which God had blessed Jacob, that he could spare such a number of cattle out of his stock. (2.) It was an evidence of his wisdom, that he would willingly part with some, to secure the rest; some men's covetousness loses them more than ever it got them, and by grudging a little expense, they expose themselves to great damage; *skin for skin, and all that a man has, if he be a wise man, he will give for his life.* (3.) It was a present that he thought would be acceptable to Esau, who had traded so much in hunting wild beasts, that, perhaps, he was but ill furnished with tame cattle with which to stock his new conquests. And we may suppose that the mixt colours of Jacob's cattle, ring-straked, speckled, and spotted, would please Esau's fancy. (4.) He promised himself that by this present he should gain Esau's favour; for a gift commonly *prosithers, which way soever it turns*, (*Prov. 17. 8.*) and *makes room for a man*; (*Prov. 18. 16.*) nay, *it pacifies anger and strong wrath*, *Prov. 21. 14.* Note, [1.] We must not despair of reconciling ourselves even to those that have been most exasperated against us: we ought not to judge men unappeasable, till we have tried to appease them. [2.] Peace and love, though purchased dear, will prove a good bargain to the purchaser. Many a morose ill-natured man would have said, in Jacob's case, "Esau has vowed my death without cause, and he shall never be a farthing the better for me; I will see him far enough before I will send him a present:" but Jacob forgives and forgets.

2. He sent him a very humble message, which he ordered his servants to deliver in the best manner, *v. 17, 18.* They must call Esau their *lord*, and Jacob his *servant*; they must tell him the cattle they had was a small present which Jacob had sent him, as a specimen of his acquisitions while he was abroad. The cattle he sent, were to be disposed of in several droves, and the servants that attended each drove, were to deliver the same message, that the present might appear the more valuable, and his submiss on, so often repeated, might be the more likely to influence Esau. They must especially take care to tell him, that Jacob was coming after, (*v. 18. 20.*) that he might not suspect he was fled through fear. Note, A friendly confidence in men's goodness may help to prevent the mischief designed us by their badness; if Jacob will seem not to be afraid of Esau, Esau, it may be hoped, will not be a terror to Jacob.

24. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 26. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. 29. And

Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31. And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. 32. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, in the sinew that shrank.

We have here the remarkable story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, and prevailing, which is referred to *Hos. 12. 4.* Very early in the morning, a great while before day, Jacob had helped his wives and his children over the river, and he desired to be private, and was left alone, that he might again more fully spread his cares and fears before God in prayer. Note, We ought to continue instant in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint: frequency and importunity in prayer prepare us for mercy. While Jacob was earnest in prayer, *stirring up himself to take hold on God*, an angel takes hold on him. Some think this was a created angel, the angel of his presence, (*Isa. 63. 9.*) one of those that *always behold the face of our Father*, and attend on the *Shechinah*, or the Divine Majesty, which probably Jacob had also in view. Others think it was Michael our Prince, the eternal Word, the Angel of the Covenant, who is indeed the Lord of the angels, who often appeared in a human shape, before he assumed the human nature for a perpetuity; whichsoever it was, we are sure *God's name was in him*, *Exod. 23. 21.* Observe,

I. How Jacob and this angel engaged, *v. 24.* It was a single combat, hand to hand, they had neither of them any seconds. Jacob was now full of care and fear about the interview he expected, next day, with his brother, and to aggravate the trial, God himself seemed to come forth against him as an enemy, to oppose his entrance into the land of promise, and to dispute the pass with him, not suffering him to follow his wives and children whom he had sent before. Note, Strong believers must expect divers temptations, and strong ones. We are told by the prophet, (*Hos. 12. 4.*) how *Jacob wrestled*; he *wept and made supplication*; prayers and tears were his weapons. It was not only a corporal, but a spiritual wrestling, by the vigorous actings of faith and holy desire; and thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob that pray, in praying, still wrestle with God.

II. What was the success of the engagement.

1. Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long, the angel *prevailed not against him*, (*v. 25.*) that is, this discouragement did not shake his faith, nor silence his prayer. It was not in his own strength that he wrestled, nor by his own strength that he prevails, but in and by strength derived from Heaven. That of Job illustrates this, (*Job 23. 6.*) *Will he plead against me with his great power?* No, (had the angel done so, Jacob had been crushed,) *but he would put strength in me*; and by that strength Jacob had power over the angel, *Hos. 12. 4.* Note, We cannot prevail with God, but in his own strength. It is his Spirit that intercedes in us, and *helps our infirmities*, *Rom. 8. 26.*

2. The angel put out Jacob's thigh, to show him what he could do, and that it was God he was wrestling with, for no man could disjoint his thigh with a touch. Some think that Jacob felt little or no pain

from this hurt; it is probable that he did not, for he did not so much as halt till the struggle was over, (v. 31.) and if so, that was an evidence of a divine touch indeed, which wounded and healed at the same time. Jacob prevailed, and yet had his thigh put out. Note, Wrestling believers may obtain glorious victories, and yet come off with broken bones; for *when they are weak, then are they strong*, weak in themselves, but strong in Christ, 2 Cor. 12. 10. Our honours and comforts in this world have their allays.

3. The angel, by an admirable condescension, gently requests Jacob to let him go, (v. 26.) as God said to Moses, (Exod. 32. 10.) *Let me alone*. Could not a mighty angel get clear of Jacob's grapples? He could, but thus he would put an honour upon Jacob's faith and prayer, and further try his constancy. *The king is held in the galleries*; (Cant. 7. 5.) *I held him*, (says the spouse,) *and would not let him go*, Cant. 3. 4. The reason the angel gives why he would be gone, is, *because the day breaks*, and therefore he would not any longer detain Jacob, who had business to do, a journey to go, a family to look after, which especially in this critical juncture, called for his attendance. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season; even the business of religion, and the comforts of communion with God, must sometimes give way to the necessary affairs of this life: *God will have mercy, and not sacrifice*.

4. Jacob persists in his holy importunity; *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*; whatever becomes of his family and journey, he resolves to make the best he can of this opportunity, and not to lose the advantage of his victory: he does not mean to wrestle all night for nothing, but humbly resolves he will have a blessing, and rather shall *all his bones be put out of joint*, than he will go away without one. The credit of a conquest will do him no good without the comfort of a blessing. In begging this blessing, he owns his inferiority, though he seemed to have the upper hand in the struggle; for *the less is blessed of the better*. Note, Those that would have the blessing of Christ, must be in good earnest, and be importunate for it, as those that resolve to have no denial. It is the fervent prayer, that is the effectual prayer.

5. The angel puts a perpetual mark of honour upon him, by changing his name; (v. 27, 28.) "Thou art a brave combatant," (says the angel,) "a man of heroic resolution; What is thy name?" "Jacob," says he, *a supplanter*; so Jacob signifies; "Well," says the angel, "be thou never so called any more; henceforth thou shalt be celebrated, not for craft and artful management, but for true valour; thou shalt be called *Israel, a prince with God*, a name greater than those of the great men of the earth." He is a prince indeed, that is a prince with God, and those are truly honourable, that are mighty in prayer, Israels, Israelites indeed. Jacob is here knighted in the field, as it were, and has a title of honour given him by him that is the Fountain of honour, which will remain, to his praise, to the end of time. Yet this was not all; having power with God, he shall have power with men too. Having prevailed for a blessing from Heaven, he shall, no doubt, prevail for Esau's favour. Note, Whatever enemies we have, if we can but make God our Friend, we are well off; they that by faith have power in Heaven, have thereby as much power on earth as they have occasion for.

6. He dismisses him with a blessing, v. 29. Jacob desired to know the angel's name, that he might according to his capacity, do him honour, Judg. 13. 17. But that request was denied, that he might not be too proud of his conquest, nor think he had the angel at such an advantage as to oblige him to what he pleased; No, "*Wherefore dost thou ask after my name*." What good will it do thee to know

that?" The discovery of that was reserved for his death-bed, upon which he was taught to call him *Shiloh*. But, instead of telling him his name, he gave him his blessing, which was the thing he wrestled for; *he blessed him there*, repeated and ratified the blessing formerly given him. Note, Spiritual blessings which secure our felicity, are better and much more desirable than fine notions which satisfy our curiosity. An interest in the angel's blessing is better than acquaintance with his name. The tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge. Thus Jacob carried his point; a blessing he wrestled for, and a blessing he had; nor did ever any of his praying seed seek in vain. See how wonderfully God condescends to countenance and crown importunate prayer: those that resolve, though God slay them, yet to trust in him, will, at length, be more than conquerors.

7. Jacob gives a new name to the place; he calls it *Peniel, the face of God*, (v. 30.) because there he had seen the appearance of God, and obtained the favour of God. Observe, The name he gives to the place, preserves and perpetuates, not the honour of his valour or victory, but only the honour of God's free grace. He does not say, "In this place, I wrestled with God, and prevailed;" but, "In this place, I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved;" not, "It was my praise that I came off a conqueror, but it was God's mercy that I escaped with my life." Note, It becomes those whom God honours, to take shame to themselves, and to admire the condescensions of his grace to them. Thus David did, after God had sent him a gracious message, (2 Sam. 7. 18.) *Who am I, O Lord God?*

*Lastly*, The memorandum Jacob carried of this in his bones, *He halted on his thigh*; (v. 31.) some think he continued to do so to his dying-day; and if he did, he had no reason to complain; for the honour and comfort he obtained by this struggle, were abundantly sufficient to countervail the damage, though he went limping to his grave. He had no reason to look upon it as his reproach, thus *to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*; (Gal. 6. 17.) yet it might serve, like St. Paul's thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of the revelations. Notice is taken of the sun's rising upon him when he passed over *Peniel*; for it is sun-rise with that soul that has communion with God. The inspired penman mentions a traditional custom which the seed of Jacob had, in remembrance of this, never to eat of that sinew, or muscle in any beast by which the hip-bone is fixed in its cup: by this observance they preserved the memorial of this story, and gave occasion to their children to inquire concerning it; they also did honour to the memory of Jacob. And this use we may still make of it, to acknowledge the mercy of God, and our obligations to Jesus Christ, that we may now keep up our communion with God, in faith, hope, and love, without peril, either of life or limb.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

We read in the former chapter, how Jacob had power with God, and prevailed; here we find what power he had with men too, and how his brother Esau was mollified, and, on a sudden, reconciled to him; for so it is written, Prov. 16. 7, *When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*. Here is, I. A very friendly meeting between Jacob and Esau, v. 1. 4. II. Their conference at their meeting, in which they vie with each other in civil and kind expressions. Their discourse is, I. About Jacob's family, v. 5. 7. 2. About the present he had sent, v. 8. 11. 3. About the progress of their journey, v. 12. 15. III. Jacob's settlement in Canaan, his house, ground, and altar, v. 16. 20.

1. **AND** Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. 2. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindmost. 3. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. 4. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Here,

I. Jacob discovers Esau's approach, *v.* 1. Some think that his lifting up his eyes denotes his cheerfulness and confidence, in opposition to a dejected countenance; having by prayer committed his case to God, he went on his way, *and his countenance was no more sad*, 1 Sam. 1. 18. Note, Those that have cast their care upon God, may look before them with satisfaction and composure of mind, cheerfully expecting the issue, whatever it may be; come what will, nothing can come amiss to him whose heart is fixed, trusting in God. Jacob sets himself upon his watch-tower, to see what answer God will give to his prayers, Hab. 2. 1.

II. He puts his family into the best order he could, to receive him, whether he should come as a friend, or as an enemy; consulting their decency if he come as a friend, and their safety if he come as an enemy, *v.* 1, 2. Observe what a different figure these two brothers made. Esau is attended with a guard of 400 men, and looks big; Jacob is followed by a cumbersome train of women and children that are his care, and he looks tender and solicitous for their safety; and yet Jacob had the birth-right, and was to have the dominion, and was every way the better man. Note, It is no disparagement to very great and good men, to give a personal attendance to their families, and to their family-affairs. Jacob, at the head of his household, set a better example than Esau at the head of his regiment.

III. At their meeting, the expressions of kindness were interchanged in the best manner that could be between them.

1. Jacob bowed to Esau, *v.* 3. Though he feared Esau as an enemy, yet he did obeisance to him as an elder brother; knowing and remembering perhaps that when Abel was preferred in God's acceptance before his elder brother Cain, yet God undertook for him to Cain that he should not be wanting in the duty and respect owing by a younger brother, *Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him*, ch. 4. 7. Note, (1.) The way to recover peace where it has been broken, is, to do our duty, and pay our respects, upon all occasions, as if it had never been broken. It is the remembering and repeating of matters, that separates friends, and perpetuates the separation. (2.) A humble submissive carriage goes a great way toward the turning away of wrath. Many preserve themselves by humbling themselves; the bullet flies over him that stoops.

2. Esau embraced Jacob, (*v.* 4.) *He ran to meet him*, not in passion, but in love; and as one heartily reconciled to him, he received him with all the endearments imaginable, *embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him*. Some think that when Esau came out to meet Jacob, it was with no bad design, but that he brought his 400 men, only for state, that

he might pay so much the greater respect to his returning brother. It is certain that Jacob understood the report of his messengers otherwise, *ch.* 32. 5, 6. Jacob was a man of prudence and fortitude, and we cannot suppose him to admit of a groundless fear, to such a degree as he did this, nor that the Spirit of God would stir him up to pray such a prayer as he did, for deliverance from a mere imaginary danger; and if there was not some wonderful change wrought upon the spirit of Esau at this time, I see not how wrestling Jacob could be said to obtain such power with men, as to denominate him a *prince*. Note, (1.) God has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them when and how he pleases, by a secret, silent, but resistless power. He can, of a sudden, convert enemies into friends, as he did two Sauls, one by restraining grace, (1 Sam. 26. 21, 25.) the other by renewing grace, Acts 9. 21, 22. (2.) It is not in vain to trust in God, and to call upon him in the day of trouble; they that do so, often find the issue much better than they expected.

3. They both wept. Jacob wept for joy, to be thus kindly received by his brother whom he had feared; and Esau perhaps wept for grief and shame, to think of the bad design he had conceived against his brother, which he found himself strangely and unaccountably prevented from the execution of.

5. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, *who are those with thee?* And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. 6. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8. And he said, *What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?* And he said, *These are* to find grace in the sight of my lord. 9. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. 10. And Jacob said, *Nay*, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. 11. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. 12. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 13. And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children *are* tender, and the flocks and herds with young *are* with me; and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die. 14. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children, be able to endure: until I come unto my lord unto Seir. 15. And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee *some* of the folk that *are* with me. And he



said, What needeth it? Let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

We have here the discourse between the two brothers at their meeting, which is very free and friendly, without the least intimation of the old quarrel. It was the best way to say nothing of it. They converse,

I. About Jacob's retinue, *v. 5. 7.* Eleven or twelve little ones followed Jacob close, the eldest of them not fourteen years old; *Who are these?* says Esau. Jacob had sent him an account of the increase of his estate, (*ch. 32. 5.*) but made no mention of his children; perhaps, because he would not expose them to his rage, if he should meet him as an enemy, or would please him with the unexpected sight, if he should meet him as a friend: Esau therefore had reason to ask, *Who are those with thee?* To which common question Jacob returns a serious answer; such as became his character, *They are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant.* It had been a sufficient answer to the question, and fit enough to be given to profane Esau, if he had only said, "They are my children;" but then Jacob had not spoken like himself, like a man whose eyes were ever toward the Lord. Note, It becomes us, not only to do common actions, but to speak of them, *after a godly sort*, 3 John 6. Jacob speaks of his children, 1. As *God's* gifts; they are a *heritage of the Lord*, Ps. 127. 3.—113. 9.—107. 41. 2. As *choice* gifts; he hath *graciously* given them. Though they were many, and now much his care, and as yet but slenderly provided for, yet he accounts them great blessings; his wives and children hereupon come up in order, and pay their duty to Esau, as he had done before them; (*v. 6, 7.*) for it becomes the family to show respect to those whom the master of the family shows respect to.

II. About the present he had sent him.

1. Esau modestly refused it, because he had enough, and did not need it, *v. 9.* Note, Those who wish to be considered men of honour, will not *seem* to be mercenary in their friendship: whatever influence Jacob's present had upon Esau to pacify him, he would not have it *thought* that it had any, and therefore he refused it. His reason is, *I have enough, I have much*; so the word is; so much, that he was not willing to take any thing that was his brother's. Note, (1.) Many that come short of spiritual blessings, and are out of covenant, yet have much of this world's wealth. Esau had what was promised him, the fatness of the earth, and a livelihood by his sword. (2.) It is a good thing for those that have much, to know that they have enough, though they have not so much as some others have. Even Esau can say, *I have enough.* (3.) Those that are content with what they have, must show it by not coveting what others have. Esau bids Jacob keep what he had to himself, supposing he had more need of it; Esau, for his part, needs it not, either to supply him, for he was rich, or to pacify him, for he was reconciled: we should take heed, lest at any time our covetousness impose upon the courtesy of others, and meanly take advantage of their generosity.

2. Jacob affectionately urges him to accept it, and prevails, *v. 10, 11.* Jacob sent it through fear, (*ch. 32. 20.*) but, the fear being over, he now importunes his acceptance of it, for love, to show that he desired his brother's friendship, and did not merely dread his wrath; two things he urges, (1.) The satisfaction he had in his brother's favour, which he thought himself bound to make this thankful acknowledgment of. It is a very high compliment that he passes upon him, *I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God,*

that is, "I have seen thee reconciled to me, and at peace with me, as I desire to see God reconciled." Or, the meaning is, that Jacob saw God's favour to him in Esau's: it was a token for good to him, that God had accepted his prayers. Note, [1.] Creature-comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when they are granted as answers to prayer, and are tokens of our acceptance with God. [2.] It is matter of great joy to those that are of a peaceable and affectionate disposition, to recover the friendship of their relations that they have been at variance with. (2.) The competency he had of this world's goods, *God has dealt graciously with me.* Note, If what we have in this world, increase under our hands, we must take notice of it with thankfulness, to the glory of God, and own that therein he has dealt graciously with us, better than we deserve: it is he that gives *power to get wealth*, Deut. 8. 18. He adds, "And I have enough; I have all," so the word is. Esau's enough was much, but Jacob's enough was all. Note, A Godly man, though he have but little in the world, yet may truly say, "I have all," [1.] Because he has the *God* of all, and has all in him; *all is yours if ye be Christ's*, 1 Cor. 3. 22. [2.] Because he has the *comfort* of all; *I have all, and abound*, Phil. 4. 18. He that has much, would have more; but he that thinks he has all, is sure he has enough. He has all in prospect; he will have all shortly, when he comes to heaven: upon this principle, Jacob urged Esau, and he took his present. Note, It is an excellent thing when men's religion makes them generous, free-hearted, and open-handed, scorning to do a thing that is paltry and sneaking.

III. About the progress of their journey. In which,

1. Esau offers himself to be his guide and companion, in token of sincere reconciliation, *v. 12.* We never find that Jacob and Esau were so sociable with one another, and so affectionate, as they were now. Note, As for God, his work is perfect. He made Esau, not only not an enemy, but a friend. This bone that had been broken, being well set, became stronger than ever. Esau is become fond of Jacob's company, courts him to mount Seir: let us never despair of any, nor distrust God, in whose hand all hearts are. Yet Jacob saw cause modestly to refuse this offer, (*v. 13, 14.*) wherein he shows a tender concern for his own family and flocks, like a good shepherd and a good father. He must consider the children and flocks with young, and not lead the one, or drive the other, too fast. This prudence and tenderness of Jacob ought to be imitated by those that have the care and charge of young people in the things of God. They must not be over-driven, at first, by heavy tasks in religious services, but led as they can bear, having their work made as easy to them as possible. Christ, the good shepherd does so, Isa. 40. 11. Now Jacob will neither desire Esau to slacken his pace, nor force his family to quicken their's, nor leave them, to keep company with his brother, as many would have done, that love any society better than those of their own house; but he desires Esau to march before, and promises to follow him leisurely, as he could get forward. Note, It is an unreasonable thing to tie others to our rate; we may come with comfort, at last to the same journey's end, though we do not journey together, either in the same path, or with the same pace. There may be those, with whom we cannot fall in, and yet with whom we need not fall out by the way. Jacob intimates to him, that it was his present design to come to him to mount Seir; and we may presume he did so, after he had settled his family and concerns elsewhere, though that visit is not recorded. Note, When we have happily recovered peace with our friends, we

must take care to cultivate it, and not to be behind-hand with them in civilities.

2. Esau offers some of his men to be his guard and convoy, v. 15. He saw Jacob but poorly attended, no servants but his husbandmen and shepherds, no pages or footmen; and therefore, thinking he was as desirous as himself (if he could afford it) to take state upon him, and look great, he would needs lend him some of his retinue, to attend upon him, that he might appear like Esau's brother; but Jacob numbly refuses his offer, only desiring that he would not take it amiss that he did not accept it; *What needeth it?* (1.) Jacob is humble, and needs it not for state; he desires not to make a fair show in the flesh, by encumbering himself, with a needless retinue. Note, It is the vanity of pomp and grandeur, that they are attended with a great deal, of which it may be said, *What needeth it?* (2.) Jacob is under the divine protection, and needs it not for safety. Note, Those are sufficiently guarded, that have God for their Guard, and are under a convoy of his hosts, as Jacob was. They need not be beholden to an arm of flesh, that have God for their Arm every morning. Jacob adds, "*Only let me find grace in the sight of my Lord; having thy favour, I have all I need, all I desire from thee.*" If Jacob thus valued the good-will of a brother, much more reason have we to reckon that we have enough, if we have the good will of our God.

16. So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. 18. And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19. And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-elohe-Israel.

Here,

1. Jacob comes to *Succoth*; having in a friendly manner parted with Esau, who was gone to his own country, (v. 16.) he comes to a place where, it should seem, he rested for some time, set up booths for his cattle, and other conveniences for himself and family. The place was afterward known by the name of *Succoth*, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan; it signifies *booths*; that when his posterity afterward dwelt in houses of stone, they might remember that *the Syrian ready to perish* was their father, who was glad of booths; (Deut. 26. 5.) such was the rock whence they were hewn.

2. He comes to *Shechem*; we read it to *Shalem*, a city of *Shechem*; the critics generally incline to read it appellatively; *he came safe, or, in peace, to the city of Shechem*: after a perilous journey, in which he had met with many difficulties, he came safe at last, into Canaan. Note, Diseases and dangers should teach us how to value health and safety, and should help to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness, when our going out and coming in have been signally preserved.

Here, (1.) He buys a field, v. 19. Though the land of Canaan was his by promise, yet the time for raking possession being not yet come, he is content to pay for his own, to prevent disputes with the present occupants. Note, Dominion is not founded

in grace. Those that have heaven on free-cost, must not expect to have earth so.

(2.) He builds an altar, v. 20. [1.] In thankfulness to God, for the good hand of his providence over him. He did not content himself with verbal acknowledgments of God's favour to him, but made real ones. [2.] That he might keep up religion, and the worship of God, in his family. Note, Where we have a tent, God must have an altar; where we have a house, he must have a church in it. He dedicated this altar to the honour of *El-elohe-Israel, God, the God of Israel*: to the honour of God, in general, the only living and true God, the best of beings and first of causes; and to the honour of the God of *Israel*, as a God in covenant with him. Note, in our worship of God, we must be guided and governed by the joint discoveries, both of natural and revealed religion. God had lately called him by the name of *Israel*, and now he calls God *the God of Israel*; though he is styled a *prince with God*, God shall still be a Prince with him, his Lord and his God. Note, Our honours then become honours indeed to us, when they are consecrated to God's honour; Israel's God is Israel's glory.

## CHAP. XXXIV.

At this chapter begins the story of Jacob's afflictions in his children, which were very great, and are recorded to show, 1. The vanity of this world. That which is dearest to us, may prove our greatest vexation, and we may meet with the greatest crosses in those things of which we said, *This same shall comfort us*. 2. The common griefs of good people. Jacob's children were circumcised, were well-taught, and prayed for, and had very good examples set them; yet some of them proved very untoward: *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. Grace does not run in the blood, and yet the interrupting of the entail of grace does not cut off the entail of profession and visible church-privileges: nay, Jacob's sons, though they were his grief in some things, yet were all taken into covenant with God. In this chapter we have, I. Dinah debauched, v. 1..5. II. A treaty of marriage between her and Shechem who had defiled her, v. 6..19. III. The circumcision of the Shechemites, pursuant to that treaty, v. 20..24. IV. The perfidious and bloody revenge which Simeon and Levi took upon them, v. 25..31.

1. **A**ND Dinah the daughter of Leah, *which* she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. 3. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. 5. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

Dinah was, for aught that appears, Jacob's only daughter, and we may suppose her therefore the mother's fondling, and the darling of the family; and yet she proves neither a joy nor a credit to them; for those children seldom prove either the best, or the happiest, that are most indulged. She is reckoned now but fifteen or sixteen years of age, when she here occasioned so much mischief.

Observe,

1. Her vain curiosity, which exposed her; she went out, perhaps unknown to her father, but by the connivance of her mother, to see the daughters

*of the land*; (v. 1.) probably, it was at a ball, or on some public day. Being an only daughter, she thought herself solitary at home, having none of her own age and sex to converse with; and therefore she must needs go abroad to divert herself, to keep off melancholy, and to accomplish herself by conversation better than she could in her father's tents. Note, It is a very good thing for children to love home; it is parents' wisdom to make it easy to them, and children's duty then to be easy in it. Her pretence was, *to see the daughters of the land*, to see how they dressed, and how they danced, and what was fashionable among them; she went to *see*; yet that was not all, she went to *be seen* too; she went to see the *daughters* of the land, but, it may be, with some thoughts of the *sons* of the land too. I doubt she went to get acquaintance with those Canaanites, and to learn their way. Note, The pride and vanity of young people betray them into many snares.

2. The loss of her honour by this means; (v. 2.) *Shechem the prince of the country*, but a slave to his own lusts, took her, and lay with her, it should seem not so much by force as by surprise. Note, Great men think they may do any thing; and what more mischievous than untaught and ungoverned youth? See what came of Dinah's gadding: young women must learn to be *chaste, keepers at home*; these properties are put together, Tit. 2. 5, for those that are not keepers at home, expose their chastity. Dinah went abroad to look about her; but if she had looked about her as she ought, she had not fallen into this snare. Note, The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. How great a matter does a little fire kindle! We should therefore carefully avoid all occasions of sin and approaches to it.

3. The court Shechem made to her, after he had defiled her; this was fair and commendable, and made the best of what was bad; he loved her, (not as Amnon, 2 Sam. 13. 15.) and he engaged his father to make a match for him with her, v. 4.

4. The tidings brought to poor Jacob, v. 5. As soon as his children grew up, they began to be a grief to him; let not godly parents, that are lamenting the miscarriages of their children, think their case singular or unprecedented. The good man held his *peace*, as one astonished, that knows not what to say; or, he said nothing, for fear of saying amiss, as David; (Ps. 39. 1, 2.) he smothered his resentments, lest, if he had suffered them to break out, they should have transported him into any indecencies. Or, it should seem, he had left the management of his affairs very much (too much I doubt) to his sons, and he would do nothing without them: or, at least, he knew they would make him uneasy, if he did, they having showed themselves, of late, upon all occasions, bold, forward and assuming. Note, Things never go well, when the authority of a parent runs low in a family. Let every man *bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity*.

6. And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him. 7. And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth; because he had wrought folly in Israel, in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done. 8. And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. 9. And make ye maria-

ges with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. 10. And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. 11. And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. 12. Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife. 13. And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister; 14. And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. 15. But in this we will consent unto you: if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; 16. Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. 17. But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone.

Jacob's sons when they heard of the injury done to Dinah, showed a very great resentment of it, influenced perhaps rather by jealousy for the honour of their family, than by a sense of virtue. Many are concerned at the shamefulfulness of sin, that never lay to heart the sinfulness of it.

It is here called *folly in Israel*, (v. 7.) according to the language of after-times; for Israel was not yet a people, but a family only. Note, 1. Uncleanmess is folly; for it sacrifices the favour of God, peace of conscience, and all the soul can pretend to, that is sacred and honourable, to a base and brutish lust. 2. This folly is most shameful in *Israel*, in a family in Israel, where God is known and worshipped, as he was in Jacob's tents, by the name of *the God of Israel*. Folly in Israel is scandalous indeed. 3. It is a good thing to have sin stamped with a bad name: uncleanness is here proverbially called *folly in Israel*, 2 Sam. 13. 12. Dinah is here called *Jacob's daughter*, for warning to all the daughters of Israel, that they betray not themselves to this folly.

Hamor came to treat with Jacob himself, but he turns them over to his sons; and here we have a particular account of the treaty, in which it is a shame to say, the Canaanites were more honest than the Israelites.

I. Hamor and Shechem fairly propose this match, in order to a coalition in *trade*. Shechem is deeply in love with Dinah; he will have her upon any terms, v. 11, 12. His father not only consents, but solicits for him, and gravely insists upon the advantages that would follow from the union of the families, v. 9, 10. He shows no jealousy of Jacob, though he was a stranger, but rather an earnest desire to settle a correspondence with him and his family, making him that generous offer, *The land shall be before you, trade ye therein*.

II. Jacob's sons basely pretend to insist upon a coalition in *religion*, when really they designed nothing less. If Jacob had taken the management of this affair into his own hands, it is probable that he and Hamor would soon have concluded it; but Jacob's sons meditate only revenge; and a strange pro-

ject they have for the compassing of it--the Shechemites must be circumcised; not to make them holy, they never intended that, but to make them sore, that they might become an easier prey to their sword.

1. The pretence was specious; "It is the honour of Jacob's family, that they carry about with them the token of God's covenant with them; and it will be a reproach to them that are thus dignified and distinguished, to enter into such a strict alliance with them that are *uncircumcised*;" (v. 14.) and therefore, *if ye will be circumcised, then we will become one people with you*," v. 15, 16. Had they been sincere herein, their proposals of these terms would have had in it something commendable: for, (1.) Israelites should not intermarry with Canaanites, professors with profane; it is a great sin, or, at least, the cause and inlet of a great deal, and has often been of pernicious consequence. (2.) The interest we have in any persons, and the hold we have of them, should be wisely improved by us, to bring them to the love and practice of religion; (*He that winneth souls is wise*;) but then we must not like Jacob's sons, think it enough to persuade them to submit to the external rites of religion, but must endeavour to convince them of its reasonableness, and to bring them acquainted with the power of it.

2. The intention was malicious, as appears by the sequel of the story; all they aimed at was to prepare them for the day of slaughter. Note, Bloody designs have often been covered and carried on, with a pretence of religion; thus they have been accomplished most plausibly, and most securely: But this dissembled piety is, doubtless, a double iniquity. Religion is never more injured, nor God's sacraments more profaned, than when they are thus used for a cloak of maliciousness. Nay, If Jacob's sons had *not* had this bloody design, I do not see how they could justify their offering the sacred sign of circumcision, the seal of God's covenant, to these devoted Canaanites, who had no part nor lot in the matter. They had no right to the seal, that had no right to the promise; *it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs*: but Jacob's sons valued not this, while they could make it serve their turn.

18. And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. 19. And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he *was* more honourable than all the house of his father. 20. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21. These men *are* peaceable with us, therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, *it is* large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22. Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they *are* circumcised. 23. *Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours?* Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24. And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of the city: and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

Here, 1. Hamor and Shechem gave consent themselves to be circumcised, v. 18, 19. To this perhaps they were moved, not only by the strong desire they had to bring about this match, but by what they might have heard of the sacred and honourable intentions of this sign, in the family of Abraham, which, it is probable, they had some confused notions of, and of the promises confirmed by it; which made them the more desirous to incorporate with the family of Jacob, Zech. 8, 23. Note, (1.) Many who know little of religion, yet know so much of it as makes them willing to join themselves with these that are religious. (2.) If a man would take upon him a firm of religion, to gain a good wife, much more should we embrace the power of it, to gain the favour of a good God; even circumcise our hearts to love him, and as Shechem here, *not defer to do the thing*. 2. They gained the consent of the men of their city, Jacob's sons requiring that *they* also should be circumcised. (1.) They themselves had great influence upon them by their conversation and example. Note, Religion would greatly prevail, if those in authority, who, like Shechem, are more honourable than their neighbours, would appear forward and zealous for it. (2.) They urged an argument which was very cogent, (v. 23.) *Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours?* They observed that Jacob's sons were industrious thriving people, and promised themselves and their neighbours advantage by an alliance with them; it would improve ground and trade, and bring money into their country. Now, [1.] It was bad enough to *marry* upon this principle; yet we see covetousness the greatest matchmaker in the world, and nothing designed so much, with many, as the laying of house to house, and field to field, without regard had to any other consideration. [2.] It was wise to be *circumcised* upon this principle. The Shechemites will embrace the religion of Jacob's family, only in hopes of interesting themselves thereby in the riches of that family. Thus there are many, with whom gain is godliness, and who are more governed and influenced by their secular interest, than by any principle of their religion.

25. And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. 26. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out. 27. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28. They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which *was* in the city, and that which *was* in the field. 29. And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives, took they captive, and spoiled even all that *was* in the house. 30. And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I *bring* few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

Here we have Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, young men not much above twenty years old, cutting the throats of the Shechemites, and thereby breaking the heart of their good father.

1. Here is the barbarous murder of the Shechemites; Jacob himself was used to the sheep-hook, but his sons had got swords by their sides, as if they had been the seed of Esau, who was to live by his sword; we have them here,

1. Slaying the inhabitants of Shechem, *all the males*; Hamor and Shechem particularly, with whom they had been treating in a friendly manner but the other day, yet with a design upon their lives. Some think that all Jacob's sons, when they wheedled the Shechemites to be circumcised, designed to take advantage of their soreness, and to rescue Dinah from among them; but that Simeon and Levi, not content with that, would themselves avenge the injury—they did it with a witness. Now, (1.) It cannot be denied that God was righteous in it. Had the Shechemites been circumcised, in obedience to any command of God, their circumcision would have been their protection; but when they submitted to that sacred rite, only to serve a turn, to please their prince, and to enrich themselves, it was just with God to bring this upon them. Note, As nothing secures us better than true religion, so nothing exposes us more than religion only pretended to. (2.) But Simeon and Levi were most unrighteous. [1.] It was true that Shechem *had wrought folly in Israel*, in defiling Dinah; but it ought to have been considered how far Dinah herself had been accessory to it. Had Shechem abused her in her own mother's tent, it had been another matter; but she went upon this ground, and perhaps by her indecent carriage had struck the spark which began the fire: when we are severe upon the sinner, we ought to consider who was the tempter. [2.] It was true that Shechem had done ill, but he was endeavouring to atone for it, and was as honest and honourable, *ex post facto*—after the deed, as the case would admit: it was not the case of the Levite's concubine that was abused to death, nor does he justify what he has done, but courts a reconciliation upon any terms. [3.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but what was that to all the Shechemites? Does one man sin, and will they be wroth with all the town? Must the innocent fall with the guilty? This was barbarous indeed. [4.] But that which above all aggravated the cruelty, was, the most perfidious treachery that was in it. The Shechemites had submitted to their conditions, and had done that upon which they had promised to become one people with them; (v. 16.) yet they act as sworn enemies to those to whom they were lately become sworn friends, making as light of their covenant, as they did of the laws of humanity. And are these the sons of Israel? *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce.* [5.] This also added to the crime that they made a holy ordinance of God subservient to their wicked design, so making that odious; as if it were not enough for them to shame themselves and their family, they bring a reproach upon that honourable badge of their religion; justly would it be called a *bloody ordinance*.

2. Seizing the prey of Shechem, and plundering the town; they rescued Dinah, (v. 26.) and if that was all they came for, they might have done that without blood, as appears by their own showing, (v. 17.) but they aimed at the spoil; and though Simeon and Levi only were the murderers, yet it is intimated that others of the sons of Jacob *came upon the slain, and spoiled the city*, (v. 27.) and so became accessory to the murder; in them it was manifest injustice, yet here we may observe the righteousness of God. The Shechemites were willing to gratify the sons of Jacob by submitting to the penance of

circumcision, upon this principle, *Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours*; (v. 23.) and see what was the issue; instead of making themselves masters of the wealth of Jacob's family, Jacob's family become masters of their wealth. Note, Those who unjustly grasp at that which is another's, justly lose that which is their own.

11. Here is Jacob's resentment of this bloody deed of Simeon and Levi, v. 30. Two things he bitterly complains of,

1. The reach they had brought upon him thereby; *Ye have troubled me*, put me into a disorder, for ye have made me to *stink among the inhabitants of the land*, that is, "Ye have rendered me and my family odious among them. What will they say of us and our religion? We shall be looked upon as the most perfidious barbarous people in the world." Note, The gross misconduct of wicked children is the grief and shame of their godly parents. Children should be the joy of their parents; but wicked children are their trouble, sadden their hearts, break their spirits, and make them go mourning from day to day. Children should be an ornament to their parents; but wicked children are their reproach, and as dead flies in their pot of ointment: but let such children know, that if they repent not, the grief they have caused to their parents, and the damage religion has sustained in its reputation through them, will come into the account and be reckoned for.

2. The ruin they had exposed him to; what could be expected, but that the Canaanites, who were numerous and formidable, would confederate against him, and he and his little family would become an easy prey to them? *I shall be destroyed, I and my house.* If all the Shechemites must be destroyed for the offence of one, why not all the Israelites for the offence of two? Jacob knew indeed that God had promised to preserve and perpetuate his house; but he might justly fear that these vile practices of his children would amount to a forfeiture, and cut off the entail. Note, When sin is in the house, there is reason to fear ruin at the door. The tender parents foresee those bad consequences of sin, which the wicked children have no dread of.

One would think this should have made them to relent, and they should have humbled themselves to their good father, and begged his pardon; but, instead of that they justify themselves, and give him this insolent reply, *Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?* No, he should not; but if he do, must they be their own avengers? Will nothing less than so many lives, and the ruin of a whole city, serve to atone for an abuse done to one foolish girl? By their question they tacitly reflect upon their father, as if he would have been content to let them deal with his daughter as with an harlot. Note, It is common for these who run into one extreme, to reproach and censure those who keep the mean, as if they ran into the other. Those who condemn the rigour of revenge, shall be misrepresented, as if they countenanced and justified the offence.

## CHAP. XXXV.

In this chapter, we have three communions, and three funerals. 1. Three communions between God and Jacob. 1. God ordered Jacob to Beth-el; and, in obedience to that order, he purged his house of idols, and prepared for that journey, v. 1. . 5. 2. Jacob built an altar at Beth-el, to the honour of God that had appeared to him, and in performance of his vow, v. 6, 7. 3. God appeared to him again, and confirmed the change of his name, and the covenant with him, (v. 9. . 13.) of which appearance Jacob made a grateful acknowledgement, v. 14, 15. II. Three funerals. 1. Deborah's, v. 8. 2. Rachel's, v. 16. . 20. 3. Isaac's, v. 27. . 29. Here is also Reuben's incest, (v. 22.) and an account of Jacob's sons, v. 23. . 26.



1. **AND** God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. 2. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: 3. And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. 4. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 5. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

Here,

I. God reminds Jacob of his vow at Beth-el, and sends him thither to perform it, *v. 1.* Jacob had said in the day of his distress, *If I come again in peace this stone shall be God's house, ch. 28. 22.* God had performed his part of the bargain, and had given Jacob more than bread to eat, and raiment to put on—he had got an estate, and was become two bands; but, it should seem, he had forgotten his vow, or, at least, had too long deferred the performance of it. Seven or eight years it was now, since he came to Canaan; he had purchased ground there, and had built an altar in remembrance of God's last appearance to him when he called him *Israel; (ch. 33. 19, 20.)* but Beth-el still is forgotten. Note, Time is apt to wear out the sense of merries, and the impressions made upon us by them, it should not be so, but so it is. God had exercised Jacob with a very sore affliction in his family, (*ch. 34.*) to see if that would bring his vow to his remembrance, and put him upon the performance of it, but it had not that effect; therefore God comes himself and puts him in mind of it, *Arise, go to Beth-el.* Note, 1. As many as God loves, he will remind of neglected duties, one way or other, by conscience or by providences. 2. When we have vowed a vow to God, it is best not to defer the payment of it, (*Ecc. 5. 4.*) yet better late than never. God bade him go to Beth-el and dwell there, that is, not only go himself, but take his family with him, that they might join with him in his devotions. Note, In Beth-el, the house of God, we should desire to dwell, *Ps. 27. 4.* That should be our home, not our inn. God reminds him not expressly of his vow, but of the occasion of it, *when thou fleddest from the face of Esau.* Note, The remembrance of former afflictions should bring to mind the workings of our souls under them, *Ps. 66. 13, 14.*

II. Jacob commands his household to prepare for this solemnity; not only for the journey and remove, but for the religious services that were to be performed, *v. 2, 3.* Note, 1. Before solemn ordinances, there must be solemn preparation. *Wash you, make you clean, and then come, and let us reason together, Isa. 1. 16. . 18.* 2. Masters of families should use their authority for the promoting of religion in their families. Not only we, but our houses also, should serve the Lord, *Josh. 24. 15.* Observe the commands he gives his household, like Abraham, *ch. 18. 19. (1.)* They must *put away the*

*strange gods.* Strange gods in Jacob's family! Strange things indeed! Could such a family, that was taught the good knowledge of the Lord, admit them? Could such a master, to whom God had appeared twice, and oftener, connive at them? Doubtless, this was his infirmity. Note, Those that are good themselves, cannot have those about them so good as they should be. In those families where there is a face of religion, and an altar to God, yet many times there is much amiss, and more strange gods than one would suspect. In Jacob's family, Rachel had her *Teraphim*, which, it is to be feared, she secretly made some superstitious use of.\* The captives of Shechem brought their gods along with them, and perhaps Jacob's sons took some with the plunder. However they came by them, now they must *put them away.* (2.) They must *be clean, and change their garments;* they must observe due decorum, and make the best appearance they could; Simeon and Levi had their hands full of blood, it concerned them particularly to wash, and to put on clean garments that were so stained. These were but ceremonies, signifying the purification and change of the heart. What are clean clothes, and new clothes, without a clean heart, and a new heart. Dr. Lightfoot, by their *being clean, or washing them,* understands Jacob's admission of the proselytes of Shechem and Syria into his religion by baptism, because circumcision was become odious. (3.) They must go with him to Beth-el, *v. 3.* Note, Masters of families, when they go up to the house of God, should bring their families with them.

III. His family surrendered all they had, that was idolatrous or superstitious, *v. 4.* Perhaps if Jacob had called for them sooner, they had sooner parted with them, being convicted by their own consciences of the vanity of them. Note, Sometimes attempts for reformation succeed better than one could have expected, and people are not so obstinate against them as we feared. Jacob's servants, and even the retainers of his family, gave him all the strange gods, and the ear-rings they wore, either as charms, or to the honour of their gods; they parted with all. Note, Reformation is not sincere, if it be not universal. We hope they parted with them cheerfully, and without reluctance, as Ephraim did, when he said, *What have I to do any more with idols?* (*Hos. 14. 8.*) or that people that said to their idols, *Get thee hence, Isa. 30. 22.* Jacob took care to bury their images, we may suppose, in some place unknown to them, that they might not afterward find them, and return to them. Note, We must be wholly separated from our sins, as we are from those that are dead and buried out of our sight; cast them *to the moles and the bats, Isa. 2. 20.*

IV. He removes without molestation from Shechem to Beth-el, *v. 5, The terror of God was upon the cities.* Though the Canaanites were much exasperated against the sons of Jacob for their barbarous usage of the Shechemites, yet they were so restrained by a divine power that they could not take this fair opportunity which now offered itself, when they were upon their march, to avenge their neighbour's quarrel. Note, The way of duty is the way of safety. While there was sin in Jacob's house, he was afraid of his neighbours; but now that the strange gods were put away, and they were all going together to Beth-el, his neighbours were afraid of him. When we are about God's work, we are under special protection, God is with us, while we are with him; and if he be for us, who can be against us? See *Exod. 34. 24, No man shall desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before the Lord.* God governs the world more by secret terrors on men's minds than we are aware of.

\* In his note on *ch. 31. 19.* our Author expresses a more favourable opinion; but the opinion expressed here seems more probable.—Ea



6. So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. 7. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8. But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el, under an oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth. 9. And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. 10. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel. 11. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee: and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12. And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13. And God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him. 14. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon: 15. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

Jacob and his retinue being come safe to Beth-el, we are here told what passed there.

I. There he built an altar, (v. 7.) and, no doubt, offered sacrifice upon it, perhaps the tenth of his cattle, according to his vow, *I will give the tenth unto thee*. With these sacrifices he joined praises for former mercies, particularly that which the sight of the place brought fresh to his remembrance; and he added prayers for the continuance of God's favour to him and his family. And he called the place, that is, *the altar, El-beth-el, the God of Beth-el*. As, when he made a thankful acknowledgment of the honour God had lately done him in calling him *Israel*, he worshipped God by the name of *Elohe-Israel*; so, now that he was making a grateful recognition of God's favour to him at Beth-el, he worships God by the name of *El-beth-el, the God of Beth-el*, because there God appeared to him. Note, The comfort which the saints have in holy ordinances, is not so much from *Beth-el, the house of God*, as from *El-beth-el, the God of the house*. The ordinances are but empty things, if we do not meet with God in them.

II. There he buried Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, v. 8. We have reason to think that Jacob, after he came to Canaan, while his family dwelt near Shechem, went himself (it is likely often) to visit his father Isaac at Hebron. Rebekah, probably, was dead, but her old nurse (of whom mention is made, ch. 24. 59.) survived her, and Jacob took her to his family, to be a companion to his wives, her country-women, and an instructor to his children; while they were at Beth-el, she died, and died lamented, so much lamented, that the oak under which she was buried, was called *Allon-Bachuth, the oak of weeping*. Note, 1. Old servants in a family, that have in their time been faithful and useful, ought to be respected. Honour was done to

this nurse, at her death, by Jacob's family, though she was not related to them, and though she was aged. Former services, in such a case, must be remembered. 2. We do not know where death may meet us; perhaps at Beth-el, the house of God. Therefore let us be always ready. 3. Family-afflictions may come even then, when family-reformation and religion are on foot. Therefore, rejoice with trembling.

III. There God appeared to him, (v. 9.) to own his altar, and to answer to the name by which he had called him, *The God of Beth-el*, (v. 7.) and to comfort him under his affliction, v. 8. Note, God will appear to them in a way of grace, that attend on him in a way of duty.

Here, 1. He confirmed the change of his name, v. 10. It was done before by the angel that wrestled with him, (ch. 32. 28.) and here it was ratified by the Divine Majesty, or *Shechinah*, that appeared to him. There, it was to encourage him against the fear of Esau, here, against the fear of the Canaanites. Who can be too hard for Israel, a prince with God? It is below these that are thus dignified, to drop and descend.

2. He renewed and ratified the covenant with him, by the name *El-shaddai, I am God Almighty; God all-sufficient*, (v. 11.) able to make good the promise in due time, and to support thee and provide for thee in the mean time. Two things are promised him, which we have met with often before. (1.) That he should be the father of a great nation; great in number, *A company of nations shall be of thee*; every tribe of Israel was a nation, and all the twelve a company of nations, great in honour and power, *kings shall come out of thy loins*. (2.) That he should be the master of a good land, (v. 12.) described by the grantees, Abraham and Isaac, to whom it was promised, not by the occupants, the Canaanites, in whose possession it now was. The land that was given to Abraham and Isaac, is here entailed on Jacob and his seed. He shall not have children without an estate, which is often the case of the poor; nor an estate without children, which is often the grief of the rich; but both. These two promises had a spiritual signification, which we may suppose Jacob himself had some notion of, though not so clear and distinct as we now have: for, without doubt, Christ is the promised Seed, and heaven is the promised land; the former is the foundation, and the latter the top-stone, of all God's favours.

He then went up from him, or *from over him*, in some visible display of glory, which had hovered over him while he talked with him, v. 13. Note, The sweetest communion the saints have with God in this world, are short and transient, and soon have an end. Our vision of God in heaven will be everlasting; there we shall be ever with the Lord; it is not so here.

IV. There Jacob erected a memorial of this, v. 14. 1. He set up a pillar. When he was going to Padan-aram, he set up that stone which he had laid his head on, for a pillar; that was agreeable enough to his low condition, and his hasty flight; but now he took time to erect one more stately, more distinguishable and durable, probably, inserting that stone into it. In token of his intending it for a sacred memorial of his communion with God, he poured oil and the other ingredients of a drink-offering upon it. His vow was, *This stone shall be God's house*, that is, shall be set up for his honour, as houses to the praise of their builders; and here he performs it, transferring it to God by anointing it. 2. He confirmed the name he had formerly given to the place, (v. 15.) *Beth-el, the house of God*. Yet this very place afterward lost the honour of its name, and became *Beth-aven, a house of iniquity*; for here it was

that Jeroboam set up one of his calves. It is impossible for the best men to entail upon a place so much as the *profession* and *form* of religion.

16. And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. 17. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem. 20. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

We have here the story of the death of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob.

1. She fell in travail by the way, not able to reach to Beth-lehem the next town, though they were near it; so suddenly does pain come upon a woman in travail, which she cannot escape, or put off. We may suppose that Jacob had soon a tent up, convenient enough for her reception.

2. Her pains were violent. She had *hard labour*; harder than usual: this was the effect of sin, *ch.* 3. 16. Note, Human life begins with sorrow, and the roses of its joy are surrounded with thorns.

3. The midwife encouraged her, *v.* 17. No doubt, she had her midwife with her, ready at hand, yet that would not secure her. Rachel had said, when she bare Joseph, *God shall add another son*; which now the midwife remembers, and tells her her words were made good. Yet this did not avail to keep up her spirits; unless God command away fear, no one else can. He only says, as one having authority, *Fear not*. We are apt in extreme perils, to comfort ourselves and our friends with the hopes of a temporal deliverance, in which we may be disappointed; we had better find our comforts on that which cannot fail us, the hope of eternal life.

4. Her travail was, to the life of the child, but to her own death. Note, Though the pains and perils of child-bearing were introduced by *sin*, yet they have sometimes been fatal to very *holy* women, who, though not saved in child-bearing, are saved *through* it with an everlasting salvation. Rachel had passionately said, *Give me children, or else I die*; and now that she had children, (for this was her second,) she died. Her dying is here called the *departing of her soul*. Note, The death of the body is but the departure of the soul to the world of spirits.

Her dying lips called her new-born son *Ben-oni, the son of my sorrow*. And many a son, not born in such hard labour, yet proves the son of his parent's sorrow, and the heaviness of her that bare him. Children are enough the sorrow of their poor mothers, in the breeding, bearing, and nursing, of them; they should therefore, when they grow up, study to be their joy, and so, if possible, to make them some amends. But Jacob, because he would not renew the sorrowful remembrance of the mother's death, every time he called his son by his name, changed his name, and called him *Benjamin, The son of my right hand*, that is, "very dear to me; set on my right hand for a blessing; the support of my age, like the staff in my right-hand."

6. Jacob buried her near the place where she died; as she died in child-bed, it was convenient to bury her quickly; and therefore he did not bring her to the burying-place of his family. If the soul be at

rest after death, it matters little where the body lies. In the place where the tree falls, there let it be. No mention is made of the mourning that was at her death, because that might easily be taken for granted. Jacob, no doubt was a true mourner. Note, Great afflictions sometimes befall us immediately after great comforts. Lest Jacob should be lifted up with the visions of the Almighty which he was honoured with, this was sent as a thorn in the flesh to humble him. Those that enjoy the favours peculiar to the children of God, must yet expect the troubles that are common to the children of men. Deborah, who, had she lived, would have been a comfort to Rachel in her extremity, died but a little before. Note, When death comes into a family, it often strikes double. God by it speaks once, yea twice. The Jewish writers say, "The death of Deborah and Rachel was to expiate the murder of the Shechemites, occasioned by Dinah, a daughter of the family."

Lastly, Observe Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave, so that it was known long after, to be Rachel's sepulchre, (1 Sam. 10. 2.) and Providence so ordered it, that this place afterward fell in the lot of Benjamin. Jacob set up a pillar in remembrance of his joy, (*v.* 14.) and here he sets up one in remembrance of his sorrows; for, as it may be of use to ourselves to keep both in mind, so it may be of use to others to transmit the memorials of both: the church, long afterward, owned that what God said to Jacob at Beth-el, both by his word and by his rod, he intended for their instruction, (*Hos.* 12. 4.) *There he spake with us.*

21. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Eder. 22. And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23. The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun: 24. The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin: 25. And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: 26. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these *are* the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram. 27. And Jacob came unto Isaac his father, unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. 28. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. 29. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, *bring* old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Here is,

1. Jacob's remove, *v.* 21. He also, as his fathers, sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, and was not long in a place. Immediately after the story of Rachel's death, he is here called *Israel*, (*v.* 21, 22.) and not often so, afterward: the Jews say, "The historian does him this honour here, because he bore that affliction with such admirable patience and submission to Providence." Note, Those are Israel's indeed, princes with God, that support the government of their own passions. He that has this rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. Israel, a prince with God, yet dwells

in tents; the city is reserved for him in the other world.

2. The sin of Reuben; a piece of abominable wickedness it was, that he was guilty of; (v. 22.) that very sin which, the apostle says, (1 Cor. 5. 1.) is not so much as named among the Gentiles, *that one should have his father's wife*. It is said to be *when Israel dwelt in that land*; as if he were then absent from his family, which might be the unhappy occasion of these disorders. Though perhaps Bilhah was the greater criminal, and, it is probable, was abandoned by Jacob for it, yet Reuben's crime was so provoking, that, for it, he lost his birth-right and blessing, *ch.* 49. 4. The first-born is not always the best, nor the most promising. This was Reuben's sin, but it was Jacob's affliction; and what a sore affliction it was, is intimated in a little compass, *and Israel heard it*. No more is said, that is enough; he heard it with the utmost grief and shame, horror and displeasure. Reuben thought to conceal it, that his father should never hear of it; but those that promise themselves secrecy in sin, are generally disappointed; a bird of the air carries the voice.

3. A complete list of the sons of Jacob, now that Benjamin the youngest was born. This is the first time we have the names of these heads of the twelve tribes together; afterward, we find them very often spoken of and enumerated, even to the end of the Bible, *Rev.* 7. 4.—21. 12.

4. The visit which Jacob made to his father Isaac at Hebron. We may suppose he had visited him before, since his return, for he *sore longed after his father's house*; but never, till now, brought his family to settle with him, or near him, *v.* 27. Probably, he did this now upon the death of Rebekah, by which Isaac was left solitary, and not disposed to marry again.

5. The age and death of Isaac are here recorded, though it appears, by computation, that he died not till many years after Joseph was sold into Egypt, and much about the time that he was preferred there. Isaac, a mild quiet man, lived the longest of all the patriarchs, for he was 180 years old; Abraham was but 175. Isaac lived about 40 years after he had made his will, *ch.* 27. 2. We shall not die an hour the sooner, but abundantly the better, for our timely setting of our heart and house in order. Particular notice is taken of the amicable agreement of Esau and Jacob, in solemnizing their father's funeral; (*v.* 29.) to show how wonderfully God had changed Esau's mind, since he vowed his brother's murder, immediately after his father's death, *ch.* 27. 41. Note, God has many ways of preventing bad men from doing the mischief they intended; he can either tie their hands, or turn their hearts.

## CHAP. XXXVI.

In this chapter, we have an account of the posterity of Esau, who, from him, were called *Edomites*; that Esau, who sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, and was not loved of God as Jacob was. Here is a brief register kept of his family for some generations. I. Because he was the son of Isaac, for whose sake this honour is put upon him. 2. Because the Edomites were neighbours to Israel, and their genealogy would be of use to give light to the following stories of what passed between them. 3. It is to show the performance of the promise of Abraham, that he should be the *father of many nations*, and of that answer which Rebekah had from the oracle she consulted, *Two nations are in thy womb*; and of the blessing of Isaac, *Thy dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth*. We have here, I. Esau's wives, *v.* 1. . . 5. II. His remove to Mount Seir, *v.* 6. . . 8. III. The names of his sons, *v.* 9. . . 14. IV. The dukes which descended of his sons, *v.* 15. . . 19. V. The dukes of the Horites, *v.* 20. . . 30. VI. The kings and dukes of Edom, *v.* 31. . . 43. Little more is recorded than their names, because the history of those that were out of the church, (though perhaps it might have been serviceable in politics,) yet would have been but little

use in divinity. It is in the church that the memorable instances are found of special grace, and special providences; for that is the enclosure, the rest is common. This chapter is abridged. 1 *Chron.* 1. 35, &c.

1. **N**OW these are the generations of Esau, who is Edom. 2. Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Abolibamah the daughter of Anah the daughter of Ziboen the Hivite; 3. And Bashemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth. 4. And Adah bare to Esau, Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel. 5. And Abolibamah bare Joush, and Jaalam, and Korah: these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan. 6. And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country, from the face of his brother Jacob. 7. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers, could not bear them, because of their cattle. 8. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

Observe here,

1. Concerning Esau himself, *v.* 1. He is called *Edom*, (and again, *v.* 8.) that name by which he perpetuated the remembrance of the foolish bargain he made, when he sold his birth-right for *that red, that red pottage*. The very mention of that name is enough to intimate the reason why his family is turned off with such a short account. Note, If men do a wrong thing, they must thank themselves, when it is, long afterward, remembered against them to their reproach.

2. Concerning his wives, and the children they bare him in the land of Canaan. He had three wives, and, by them all, but five sons: many a one has more by one wife. God in his providence often disappoints those who take indirect courses to build up a family; yet here the promise prevailed, and Esau's family was built up.

3. Concerning his remove to mount Seir, which was the country God had given him for a possession, when he reserved Canaan for the seed of Jacob. God owns it, long afterward, *I gave to Esau mount Seir*, (*Deut.* 2. 5. *Josh.* 24. 4.) which was the reason why the Edomites must not be disturbed in their possession. Those that have not a right by promise, such as Jacob had, to Canaan, may have a very good title by providence, to their estates, such as Esau had to mount Seir. Esau had begun to settle among his wives' relations, in Seir, before Jacob came from Padan-aram, *ch.* 32. 3. Isaac, it is likely, had sent him thither, (as Abraham in his life-time had sent the sons of the concubines from Isaac his son into the east-country, *ch.* 25. 6.) that Jacob might have the clearer way made for him in the possession of the promised land; but, probably, during the life of Isaac, Esau had still some effects remaining in Canaan. But, after his death, he wholly withdrew to mount Seir, took with him what came to his share of his father's personal estate, and left Canaan to Jacob; not only because he had the promise of it, but because he saw that if they should both continue to thrive as they had begun, there would not be room for both.

*Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir, v. 8.* Note, Whatever opposition may be made, God's word will be accomplished, and even those that have opposed it, will see themselves, some time or other, under a necessity of yielding to it, and acquiescing in it. Esau had struggled for Canaan, but now he tamely retires to mount Seir; for God's counsels shall certainly stand, concerning the times before appointed, and the bounds of our habitation.

9. And these *are* the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir. 10. These *are* the names of Esau's sons; Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau. 11. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. 12. And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek; these *were* the sons of Adah Esau's wife. 13. And these *are* the sons of Reuel; Nahath, and Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these *were* the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. 14. And these *were* the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 15. These *were* dukes of the sons of Esau: the sons of Eliphaz the first born *son* of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz, 16. Duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek: these *are* the dukes *that came* of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these *were* the sons of Adah. 17. And these *are* the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these *are* the dukes *that came* of Reuel in the land of Edom; these *are* the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. 18. And these *are* the sons of Aholibamah Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah: these *were* the dukes *that came* of Aholibamah the daughter of Anah Esau's wife. 19. These *are* the sons of Esau, who *is* Edom, and these *are* their dukes.

Observe here, 1. That only the names of Esau's sons and grandsons are recorded; only their names, not their history; for it is the church that Moses preserves the records of, not the record of those that were without. The elders only that lived by faith, obtained a good report. It is Zion that produces the men of renown, not Seir, Ps. 87. 5. Nor does the genealogy go any farther than the third and fourth generation, the very names of all after are buried in oblivion; it is only the pedigree of the Israelites, who were to be the heirs of Canaan, and of whom were to come the promised Seed, and the holy Seed, that is drawn out to any length, as far as there was occasion for it; even of all the tribes, till Canaan was divided among them, and of the royal line, till Christ came. 2. That these sons and grandsons of Esau are called *dukes*, v. 15. . 19. Probably, they were military commanders, dukes, or captains, that had soldiers under them; for Esau and his family lived *by the sword*, ch. 27. 40. Note, Titles of honour have been more ancient, out of the

church, than in it. Esau's sons were dukes, when Jacob's sons were but plain shepherds, ch. 47. 3. This is not a reason why such titles should not be used among Christians; but it is a reason why men should not overvalue themselves, or others, for the sake of them. There is an honour that comes from God, and a name in his house that is infinitely more valuable. Edomites may be dukes with men, but Israelites indeed are made to our God kings and priests. 3. We may suppose those dukes had numerous families of children and servants, that were their dukedoms. God promised to multiply Jacob, and to enrich him; yet Esau increases, and is enriched first. Note, It is no new thing for the men of this world to be full of children, and to have their bellies too *filled with hid treasure*, Ps. 17. 14. God's promise to Jacob began to work late, but the effect of it remained longer, and it had its complete accomplishment in the spiritual Israel.

20. These *are* the sons of Seir the Horite, who inhabited the land; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, 21. And Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these *are* the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom. 22. And the children of Lotan were Hori and Heman; and Lotan's sister was Timna. 23. And the children of Shobal *were* these; Alvan, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. 24. And these *are* the children of Zibeon; both Jah, and Anah; this *was* that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father. 25. And the children of Anah *were* these; Dishon, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah. 26. And these *are* the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Esbban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 27. The children of Ezer *are* these; Bilhan, and Zaavan; and Achah. 28. The children of Dishan, *are* these; Uz, and Haran. 29. These *are* the dukes *that came* of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah, 30. Duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these *are* the dukes *that came* of Hori, among their dukes in the land of Seir.

In the midst of this genealogy of the Edomites, here is inserted the genealogy of the Horites, those Canaanites, or Hittites, (compare ch. 26. 34.) that were the natives of mount Seir. Mention is made of them, (ch. 11. 6.) and of their interest in mount Seir, before the Edomites took possession of it, Deut. 2. 12, 22. This comes in here, not only to give light to the story, but to be a standing reflection upon the Edomites for intermarrying with them, by which, it is probable, they learned their way, and corrupted themselves. Esau having sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, and entered into alliance with the Hittites, his posterity and the sons of Seir are here reckoned together. Note, Those that treacherously desert God's church, are justly numbered with those that were never in it; apostate Edomites stand on the same ground with accursed Horites. Particular notice is taken of one Anah who fed the asses of Zibeon his father, (v. 24.) and yet is called *duke Anah*, v. 29. Note, Those that expect to rise high, should begin low. An honourable descent should not keep men from

an honest employment, nor a mean employment hinder any man's preferment. This Anah was not only industrious in his business, but ingenious too, and successful; for he found *mules*, or, (as some read it,) *waters, hot-baths*, in the wilderness. Those that are diligent in their business, sometimes find more advantages than they expected.

31. And these *are* the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel. 32. And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah. 33. And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. 34. And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead. 35. And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Be-dad, who smote Midian in the field of Mo-ab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city *was* Avith. 36. And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 37. And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth *by* the river reigned in his stead. 38. And Saul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 39. And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead; and the name of his city *was* Pau; and his wife's name *was* Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. 40. And these *are* the names of the dukes *that came* of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke Alvah, duke Jetheth, 41. Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, 42. Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, 43. Duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these *be* the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession: he *is* Esau the father of the Edomites.

By degrees, it seems, the Edomites wormed out the Horites, and got full possession of the country, and had a government of their own. 1. They were ruled by kings who governed the whole country, and seem to have come to the throne by election, and not by lineal descent; so Bishop Patrick observes. These kings reigned in Edom *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, that is, before Moses's time, for *he was king in Jeshurun*, v. 3. God had lately promised Jacob, *that kings should come out of his loins*, (ch. 35. 11.) yet Esau's blood becomes royal long before any of Jacob's did. Note, In external prosperity and honour, the children of the covenant are often cast behind, and those that are out of covenant get the start. The triumphing of the wicked may be quick, but it is short; soon ripe, and as soon rotten: while the productions of the promise, though they are slow, are sure and lasting; *at the end it shall speak, and not lie*. We may suppose it a great trial to the faith of God's Israel, to hear of the pomp and power of the kings of Edom, while they were bond-slaves in Egypt; but those that look for great things from God, must be content to wait for them; God's time is the best time. 2. They were afterward governed by dukes, again here named, who, I suppose, ruled all at the same time in several places in the

country. Either they set up this form of government in conformity to the Horites, who had used it, (v. 29.) or God's providence reduced them to it, as some conjecture, to correct them for their unkindness to Israel, in refusing them a passage through their country, Numb. 20. 18. Note, When power is abused, it is just with God to weaken it, by turning it into divers channels. *For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof*. Sin brought Edom from kings to dukes, from crowns to coronets. We read of the dukes of Edom, (Exod. 15. 15.) yet, long afterward, of their kings again.

Lastly, Observe, Mount Seir is called *the land of their possession*, v. 43. While the Israelites dwelt in the house of bondage, and their Canaan was only the land of promise, the Edomites dwelt in their own habitations, and Seir was in their possession. Note, The children of this world have their all in hand, and nothing in hope, (Luke 16. 25.) while the children of God have their all in hope, and next to nothing in hand. But, all things considered, it is better to have Canaan in promise, than mount Seir in possession.

## CHAP. XXXVII.

At this chapter, begins the story of Joseph, who, from hence, in every chapter (but one) to the end of this book, makes the greatest figure. He was Jacob's eldest son by his beloved wife Rachel, born, as many eminent men were, of a mother that had been long barren. His story is so remarkably divided between his humiliation and his exaltation, that we cannot avoid seeing something of Christ in it, who was first humbled and then exalted, and, in many instances, so as to answer the type of Joseph. It also shows the lot of christians, who must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom. In this chapter, we have, 1. The malice his brethren bore against him. They hated him, 1. Because he informed his father of their wickedness, v. 1, 2. 2. Because his father loved him, v. 3, 4. 3. Because he dreamed of his dominion over them, v. 5. 11. II. The mischiefs his brethren designed and did to him. 1. The kind visit he made them, gave an opportunity, v. 12. 17. 2. They designed to slay him, but determined to starve him, v. 18. 24. 3. They changed their purpose, and sold him for a slave, v. 25. 28. 4. They made their father believe that he was torn in pieces, v. 29. 35. 5. He was sold into Egypt to Potiphar, v. 36. And all this was working together for good.

1. **A**ND Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. 2. These *are* the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad *was* with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. 3. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of *many* colours. 4. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Moses has no more to say of the Edomites, unless as they happen to fall in Israel's way; but now applies himself closely to the story of Jacob's family, *These are the generations of Jacob*. His is not a bare barren genealogy as that of Esau, (ch. 36. 1.) but a memorable, useful history. Here is, 1. Jacob a sojourner with his father Isaac, who was yet living, v. 1. We shall never be at home, till we come to heaven. 2. Joseph, a shepherd, *feeding the flock with his brethren*, v. 2. Though he was his



father's darling, yet he was not bred up in idleness or delicacy. Those do not truly love their children, that do not inure them to business, and labour and mortification. The fondling of children is with good reason commonly called the *spoiling of them*.

Those that are trained up to do nothing, are likely to be good for nothing. 3. Joseph beloved by his father, (v. 3.) partly for his dear mother's sake that was dead, and partly for his own sake, because he was the greatest comfort of his old age; probably, he waited on him, and was more observant of him than the rest of his sons; he was the *son of the ancient*, so some; that is, when he was a child, he was as grave and discreet as if he had been an old man: a child, but not childish. Jacob proclaimed his affection to him by dressing him finer than the rest of his children; he *made him a coat of divers colours*, which, probably, was significant of further honours intended him. Note, Though those children are happy, that have that in them which justly recommends them to their parents' particular love; yet it is the prudence of parents not to make a difference between one child and another, unless there be a great and manifest cause given for it by the children's dutifulness or undutifulness; paternal government must be impartial, and managed with a steady hand. 4. Joseph hated by his brethren, (1.) Because his father loved him; when parents make a difference, children soon take notice of it, and it often occasions feuds and quarrels in families. (2.) Because he *brought to his father their evil report*. Jacob's sons did that, when they were from under his eye, which they durst not have done, if they had been at home with him; but Joseph gave his father an account of their bad carriage, that he might reprove and restrain them; not as a malicious tale bearer, to sow discord, but as a faithful brother, who, when he durst not admonish them himself, represented their faults to one that had authority to admonish them. Note, [1.] It is common for friendly monitors to be looked upon as enemies. They that hate to be reformed, hate those that would reform them, Prov. 9. 8. [2.] It is common for those that are beloved of God, to be hated by the world; whom heaven blesses, hell curses; those whom God speaks comfortably to, wicked men will not speak peaceably to. It is said here of Joseph, *the lad was with the sons of Bilhah*; some read it, and he was *servant to them*, they made him their drudge.

5. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7. For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8. And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars, made obeisance to me. 10. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast

dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11. And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Here,

Joseph relates the prophetic dreams he had, v. 6, 7, 9, 10. Though he was now very young, (about seventeen years old,) yet he was pious and devout, and well-inclined, and this fitted him for God's gracious discoveries of himself to him. Joseph had a great deal of trouble before him, and therefore God gave him betimes this prospect of his advancement, to support and comfort him under the long and grievous troubles with which he was to be exercised. Thus Christ had a *joy set before him*, and so have christians. Note, God has ways of preparing his people beforehand for the trials which they cannot foresee, but which he has an eye to, in the comforts he furnishes them with. His dreams were, (1.) That his brethren's sheaves all bowed to his, intimating upon what occasion they should be brought to do obeisance to him, namely, in seeking to him for corn; their empty sheaves should bow to his full one. (2.) That the sun, and moon, and the eleven stars, did obeisance to him, v. 9. Joseph was more of a prophet than a politician, else he would have kept this to himself, when he could not but know that his brethren did already hate him, and that this would but the more exasperate them. But if he told it in his simplicity, yet God directed it for the mortification of his brethren. Observe, Joseph dreamed of his prefeerment, but did not dream of his imprisonment. Thus many young people, when they are setting out in the world, think of nothing but prosperity and pleasure, and never dream of trouble.

2. His brethren take it very ill, and are more and more enraged against him, (v. 8.) *Shalt thou indeed reign over us?* See here, (1.) How truly they interpreted his dream, that he should *reign over them*. They become the expositors of his dream, who were enemies to the accomplishment of it, as in Gideon's story; (Judg. 7. 13, 14.) they perceived that he spake of them, Matt. 21. 45. The event exactly answered to this interpretation, ch. 42. 6, &c. (2.) How scornfully they resented it; "*Shalt thou, that art but one, reign over us, that are many? Thou, that art the youngest, over us that are elder?*" Note, The reign and dominion of Jesus Christ, our Joseph, have been, and are, striven against, by a carnal and unbelieving world, who cannot endure to think that this man should reign over them. The dominion also of the upright, in the morning of the resurrection, is thought of with the utmost disdain.

3. His father gives him a gentle rebuke for it, yet observes the saying, v. 10, 11. Probably, he checked him for it, to lessen the offence which his brethren would be apt to take at it, yet he took notice of it more than he seemed to do: he insinuated that it was but an idle dream, because his mother was brought in, who had been dead some time since; whereas the *sun, moon, and eleven stars*, signify no more than the whole family that should have a dependence upon him, and be glad to be beholden to him. Note, The faith of God's people in God's promises is often sorely shaken by their misunderstanding of the promises, and then suggesting the improbabilities that attend the performance. But God is doing his own work, and will do it, whether we understand him aright or no. Jacob, like Mary, (Luke 2. 51.) kept these sayings in his heart, and, no doubt, remembered them long afterward, when the event answered to the prediction.



12. And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. 13. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here *am I*. 14. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. 15. And a certain man found him, and, behold, *he was wandering in the field*: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? 16. And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. 17. And the man said, They are departed hence; for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. 18. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. 19. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. 20. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit; and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. 21. And Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. 22. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit that *is* in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

Here is,

I. The kind visit which Joseph, in obedience to his father's command, made to his brethren, who were feeding the flocks at Shechem, many miles off. Some suggest that they went thither on purpose, expecting that Joseph would be sent to see them, and that then they should have an opportunity to do him a mischief. However, Joseph and his father had both of them more of the innocence of the dove than of the wisdom of the serpent; else he had never come thus into the hands of those that hated him: but God designed it all for good. See in Joseph an instance, 1. Of dutifulness to his father; though he was his father's darling, yet he was made, and was willing to be, his father's servant. How readily does he wait his father's orders! *Here am I*, v. 13. Note, Those children that are best beloved by their parents, should be most obedient to their parents; and then their love is well-bestowed, and well-returned. 2. Of kindness to his brethren; though he knew they hated him, and envied him, yet he made no objections against his father's commands, either from the distance of the place, or the danger of the journey, but cheerfully embraced the opportunity of showing his respect to his brethren. Note, It is a very good lesson, though it is hardly learnt, and rarely practised, *to love those that hate us*: if our relations do not their duty to us, yet we must not be wanting in our duty to them. This is thank-worthy, Joseph was sent by his father to Shechem, to see whether his brethren were well

there, and whether the country had not risen upon them, and destroyed them, in revenge of their barbarous murder of the Shechemites, some years before. But Joseph, not finding them there, went to Dothan, which showed that he undertook this journey, not only in obedience to his father, (for then he might have returned, when he missed them at Shechem, having done what his father bid him,) but out of love to his brethren; and therefore he sought diligently, till he found them. Thus let brotherly love continue, and let us give proofs of it.

II. The bloody and malicious plot of his brethren against him, who rendered good for evil, and, for his love, were his adversaries. Observe, 1. How deliberate they were in the contrivance of this mischief; when they *saw him afar off*, they conspired against him, v. 18. It was not in a heat, or upon a sudden provocation, that they thought to slay him, but from malice prepense, and in cold blood. Note, Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer; for he will be one, if he have an opportunity, 1 John, 3. 15. Malice is a most mischievous thing, and is in danger of making bloody work where it is harboured and indulged. The more there is of a project and contrivance in a sin, the worse it is; it is bad to do evil, but worse to devise it. 2. How cruel they were in their design; nothing less than his blood would satisfy them, *Come, and let us slay him*, v. 20. Note, The old enmity hunts for the precious life. They are the *blood-thirsty*, that *hate the upright*, (Prov. 29. 10.) and it is the blood of the saints that the harlot is drunk with. 3. How scornfully they reproached him for his dreams; (v. 19.) *This dreamer cometh*, and (v. 20.) *We shall see what will become of his dreams*. This shows what it was that fretted and enraged them; they could not endure to think of doing obeisance to him, *that was it* which they were plotting to prevent by the murder of him. Note, Men that fret and rage at God's counsels, are impiously aiming to defeat them; but they imagine a vain thing, Ps. 2. 1. 3. God's counsels will stand. 4. How they agreed to keep one another's counsel, and to cover the murder with a lie; *We will say some evil beast hath devoured him*; whereas they were worse than the most evil beasts, being now engaged in consultation to devour him; for evil beasts prey not on those of their own kind, but these were tearing a piece of themselves.

III. Reuben's project to deliver him, v. 21, 22. Note, God can raise up friends for his people, even among their enemies: for he has all hearts in his hands. Reuben, of all the brothers, had most reason to be jealous of Joseph, for he was the first-born, and so, entitled to those distinguishing favours which Jacob was conferring on Joseph; yet he proves his best friend. Reuben's temper seems to have been most soft and effeminate, which had betrayed him to the sin of uncleanness; while the temper of the two next brothers, Simeon and Levi, was the reverse, which betrayed them to the sin of murder, a sin which Reuben started at the thought of. Note, Our natural constitution should be guarded against these sins to which it is most inclinable, and improved (as Reuben's here) against those sins to which it is most averse. Reuben made a proposal which they thought would effectually answer their intention of destroying Joseph, and yet which he designed should answer his intention of rescuing Joseph out of their hands, and restoring him to his father, probably, hoping thereby to recover his father's favour, which he had lately lost; but God over-ruled all to serve his own purpose of making Joseph an instrument to save much people alive.

Joseph was here a type of Christ; though he was the beloved Son of his Father, and hated by a wicked world, yet the Father sent him out of his

bosom to visit us in great humility and love; he came from heaven to earth, to seek and save us, yet then malicious plots were laid against him; he came to his own, and his own not only received him not, but consulted, *This is the heir, come let us kill him; Crucify him, crucify him.* This he submitted to, in pursuance of his design to redeem and save us.

23. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, *his coat of many colours that was on him*; 24. And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit *was empty, there was no water in it.* 25. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry *it* down to Egypt. 26. And Judah said unto his brethren, *What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?* 27. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he *is* our brother, *and* our flesh. And his brethren were content. 28. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty *pieces* of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. 29. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph *was* not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. 30. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, *The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?*

We have here the execution of their plot against Joseph.

I. They strip him: each striving to seize the envied coat of many colours, *v. 23.* Thus, in imagination, they degraded him from the birth-right, which perhaps this was the badge of, grieving him, affronting their father, and making themselves sport, while they insulted over him, "Now, Joseph, where is the fine coat?" Thus our Lord Jesus was stript of his seamless coat, and thus his suffering saints have first been industriously divested of their privileges and honours, and then made the off-scouring of all things.

II. They went about to starve him; throwing him into a dry pit, to perish there with hunger and cold, so cruel were their tender mercies, *v. 24.* Note, Where envy reigns, pity is banished, and humanity itself is forgotten, Prov. 27. 4. So full of deadly poison is malice, that the more barbarous any thing is, the more grateful it is. Now Joseph begged for his life, in the *anguish of his soul*, (*ch. 42. 21.*) entreated by all imaginable endearments, that they should be content with his coat, and spare his life; he pleads innocence, relation, affection, submission; he weeps, and makes supplication, but all in vain: Reuben only relents and intercedes for him, *ch. 42. 22.* But he cannot prevail to save Joseph from the horrible pit, in which they resolve he shall die by degrees, and be buried alive. Is this he to whom his brethren must do obeisance? Note, God's providences often seem to contradict his purposes, even then when they are serving them, and working at a distance toward the accomplishment of them.

III. They slighted him when he was in distress, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; for when he was pining away in the pit, bemoaning his own misery, and with a languishing cry calling to them for pity, they *sat down to eat bread, v. 25.*

1. They felt no remorse of conscience for the sin; if they had, it would have spoiled their appetite for their meat, and the relish of it. Note, A great force put upon conscience, commonly stupifies it, and, for the time, deprives it both of sense and speech. Daring sinners are secure ones: but the consciences of Joseph's brethren, though asleep now, were roused long afterward, *ch. 42. 21.* 2. They were now pleased to think how they were freed from the fear of their brother's dominion over them, and that on the contrary, they had turned the wheel upon him. They made merry over him, as the persecutors over the two witnesses that had tormented them, Rev. 11. 10. Note Those that oppose God's counsels, may possibly prevail so far as to think they have gained their point and yet be deceived.

IV. They sold him; a caravan of merchants very opportunely passed by; (Providence so ordering it;) and Judah made the motion, that they should sell Joseph to them, to be carried far enough off into Egypt, where in all probability, he would be lost and never heard of more. 1. Judah moved it in compassion to Joseph, (*v. 26.*) "*what profit is it, if we slay our brother?*" It will be less guilt and more gain to sell him." Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider the unprofitableness of it. It is what there is nothing to be got by. 2. They acquiesced in it, because they thought that if he were sold for a slave, he would never be a lord, if sold into Egypt would never be *their* lord; yet all this was working towards it. Note, The wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain, Ps. 76. 10. Joseph's brethren were wonderfully restrained from murdering him, and their selling him as wonderfully turned to God's praise: as Joseph was sold by the contrivance of Judah, for twenty pieces of silver, so was our Lord Jesus for thirty, and by one of the same name too, *Judas.*

Reuben (*it seems*) was gone away from his brethren, when they sold Joseph, intending to come round some other way to the pit, and to help Joseph out of it, and return him safe to his father; this was a kind project, but if it had taken effect, what had become of God's purpose concerning his preferment in Egypt? Note, There are many devices in man's heart, many devices of the enemies of God's people to destroy them, and of their friends to help them, which perhaps are both disappointed, as these here; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Reuben thought himself undone, because the child was sold; *I, whither shall I go?* *v. 30.* He being the eldest; his father would expect from him an account of him; but it proved that they had all been undone, if he had not been sold.

31. And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; 32. And they sent the coat of *many* colours, and they brought *it* to their father; and said, *This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.* 33. And he knew it, and said, *It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him*; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35. And all his son

and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 36. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Joseph would soon be missed, great inquiry would be made for him, and therefore his brethren have a further design, to make the world believe that Joseph was torn in pieces by a wild beast; and this they did.

I. To show themselves, that they might not be suspected to have done him any mischief. Note, We have all learned of Adam to cover our transgressions, Job. 31. 33. When the Devil has taught men to commit one sin, he then teaches them to conceal it with another; theft and murder, with lying and perjury; but he that covers his sin, shall not prosper long. Joseph's brethren kept their own and one another's counsel for some time, but their villany came to light at last, and it is here published to the world, and the remembrance of it transmitted to every age.

II. To grieve their good father; it seems designed by them on purpose to be avenged upon him for his distinguishing love of Joseph: it was contrived on purpose to create the utmost vexation to him; they sent him Joseph's coat of many colours, with one colour more than it had had, a bloody colour, v. 32. They pretend they had found it in the fields, and Jacob himself must be scornfully asked, *Is this thy son's coat?* Now the badge of his honour is the discovery of his fate; and it is rashly inferred from the bloody coat, that *Joseph, without doubt, is rent in pieces.* Love is always apt to fear the worst concerning the person loved; there is a love that casteth out fear, but that is a perfect love. Now let those that know the heart of a parent, suppose the agonies of poor Jacob, and put their souls into his soul's stead. How strongly does he represent to himself the direful idea of Joseph's misery! Sleeping or waking, he imagines he sees the wild beasts setting upon Joseph; thinks he hears his piteous shrieks, when the lion roared against him; makes himself tremble and grow chill, many a time, when he fancies how the beasts sucked his blood, tore him limb from limb, and left no remains of him, but the coat of many colours, to carry the tidings. And, no doubt, it added no little to the grief, that he had exposed him, by sending him, and sending him all alone, on this dangerous journey, which proved so fatal to him. This cuts him to the heart, and he is ready to look upon himself as an accessory to the death of his son.

Now, 1. Endeavours were used to comfort him; his sons basely pretended to do it, (v. 35.) but miserable hypocritical comforters were they all. Had they really desired to comfort him, they might easily have done it, by telling him the truth, "Joseph is alive, he is indeed sold into Egypt, but it will be an easy thing to send thither and ransom him." This would have loosed his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness presently. I wonder their countenances did not betray their guilt, and with what face they could pretend to condole with Jacob on the death of Joseph, when they knew he was alive. Note, The heart is strangely hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

But, 2. It was all in vain; *Jacob refused to be comforted*, v. 35. He was an obstinate mourner, resolved to go down to the grave mourning; it was not a sudden transport of passion, like that of David, *Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!* But, like Job, he hardened himself in sorrow.

Note, (1.) Great affection to any creature does but prepare for so much the greater affliction, when it is either removed from us, or imbuttered to us; inordinate love commonly ends in immoderate grief; as much as the sway of the pendulum throws one way, so much it will throw the other way. (2.) Those consult neither the comfort of their souls, nor the credit of their religion, that are determined to sorrow, upon any occasion whatsoever; we must never say, "We'll go to our grave mourning," because we know not what joyful days Providence may yet reserve for us, and it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to Providence. (3.) We often perplex ourselves with imaginary troubles; we fancy things worse than they are, and then afflict ourselves more than we need: sometimes there needs a more to comfort us, than to undeceive us: it is good to hope the best.

*Lastly.* The Ishmaelites and Midianites having bought Joseph, only to make their markets of him, here we have him sold again. (with gain enough to the merchants, no doubt,) to Potiphar, v. 36. Jacob was lamenting the loss of his life; had he known all, he would have lamented, though not so passionately, the loss of his liberty. Shall Jacob's free-born son exchange the best robe of his family for the livery of an Egyptian lord, and all the marks of servitude? How soon was the land of Egypt made a house of bondage to the seed of Jacob! Note, It is the wisdom of parents not to bring up their children too delicately, because they know not what hardships and mortifications Providence may reduce them to before they die. Jacob little thought that ever his beloved Joseph should be thus bought and sold for a servant.

## CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter gives us an account of Judah and his family, and such an account it is, that one would wonder that, of all Jacob's sons, *our Lord should spring out of Judah*, Heb. 7. 14. If we were to form a character of him by this story here, we should not say, *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, ch. 49. 8. But God will show that his choice is of grace, and not of merit, and that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief, and is not ashamed, upon their repentance, to be allied to them. Also, that the worth and worthiness of Jesus Christ are personal, of himself, and not derived from his ancestors; humbling himself to be made in the likeness of sinful flesh, he was pleased to descend from some that were infamous. How little reason had the Jews, who were so called from this Judah, to boast as they did, that they were not *born of fornication!* John 8. 41. We have in this chapter, I. Judah's marriage and issue, and the untimely death of his two eldest sons, v. 1. - 11. II. Judah's incest with his daughter-in-law Tamar, without his knowing it, v. 12. - 23. III. His confusion, when it was discovered, v. 24. - 26. IV. The birth of his twin sons, in whom his family was built up, v. 27. - 30.

1. **AND** it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. 2. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah; and he took her, and went in unto her. 3. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. 4. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. 5. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Shelah: and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. 6. And Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, whose name was Tamar. 7. And

Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. 8. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. 9. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled *it* on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. 10. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also. 11. Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren *did*: and Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

Here is,

I. Judah's foolish friendship with a Canaanite-man; he went down from his brethren, and withdrew for a time from their society, and his father's family, and got to be intimately acquainted with one Hirah, an Adullamite, *v. 1*. It is computed that he was not much above fifteen or sixteen years of age, an easy prey to the tempter. Note, When young people that have been well educated, begin to change their company, they will soon change their manners, and lose their good education. They that go down from their brethren, that despise and forsake the society of the seed of Israel, and pick up Canaanites for their companions, are going down the hill apace. It is of great consequence to young people to choose proper associates; for these they will imitate, study to recommend themselves to, and by their opinion of them, value themselves: an error in this choice is often fatal.

II. His foolish marriage with a Canaanite-woman; a match made, not by his father, who, it should seem was not consulted, but by his new friend Hirah, *v. 2*. Many have been drawn into marriages, scandalous and pernicious to themselves and their families, by keeping bad company, and growing familiar with bad people: one wicked league entangles men in another. Let young people be admonished by this, to take their good parents for their best friends, and to be advised by them, and not by flatterers, who wheedle them to make a prey of them.

III. His children by this Canaanite, and his disposal of them. Three sons he had by her, Er, Onan, and Shelah. It is probable that she embraced the worship of the God of Israel, at least in profession, but, for aught that appears, there was little of the fear of God in the family. Judah married too young, and very rashly; he also married his sons too young, when they had neither wit nor grace to govern themselves, and the consequences were very bad.

1. His first-born, *Er*, was notoriously wicked, he was so in the sight of the Lord, that is, in defiance of God and his law; or, if perhaps he was not wicked in the sight of the world, he was so in the sight of God, to whom all men's wickedness is open; and what came of it? Why God cut him off presently, (*v. 7*.) *The Lord slew him*. Note, Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners, and takes them away in his wrath, when they are but just setting out in a wicked course of life.

2. The next son, *Onan*, was according to the ancient usage, married to the widow, to preserve the name of his deceased brother that died childless. Though God had taken away his life for his wicked-

ness, yet they were solicitous to preserve his memory; and their disappointment therein, through Onan's sin, was a farther punishment of his wickedness. The custom of marrying the brother's widow was afterward made one of the laws of Moses, Deut. 25. 5. Onan, though he consented to marry the widow, yet, to the great abuse of his own body, of the wife that he had married, and of the memory of his brother that was gone, he refused to raise up seed unto his brother, as he was in duty bound. This was so much the worse, because the Messiah was to descend from Judah, and had he not been guilty of this wickedness, he might have had the honour of being one of his ancestors. Note, Those sins that dishonour the body and defile it, are very displeasing to God, and evidence of vile affections.

3. *Shelah*, the third son, was reserved for the widow, (*v. 11*.) yet with a design that he should not marry so young as his brothers had done, *lest he die also*. Some think that Judah never intended to marry Shelah to Tamar, but unjustly suspected her to have been the death of her two former husbands, (whereas it was their own wickedness that slew them,) and then sent her to her father's house, with a charge to remain a widow. If so, it was an inexcusable piece of prevarication that he was guilty of; however, Tamar acquiesced for the present, and waited the issue.

12. And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheep-shearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. 14. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. 15. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, because she had covered her face. 16. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? 17. And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Wilt thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? 18. And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. 19. And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the garments of her widowhood. 20. And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he found her not. 21. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way-side? And they said, There

was no harlot in this place. 22. And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. 23. And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

It is a very ill-favoured story that is here told concerning Judah; one would not have suspected such folly in Israel. Judah had buried his wife; and widowers have need to stand upon their guard with the utmost caution and resolution against all fleshly lusts. He was unjust to his daughter-in-law, either through negligence or design, in not giving her his surviving son, and thus exposed her to temptation.

I. Tamar wickedly prostituted herself as a harlot to Judah, that if the son might not, the father might, raise up seed to the deceased. Some excuse this, by suggesting that though she was a Canaanite, yet she had embraced the true religion, and believed the promise made to Abraham and his seed, particularly that of the Messiah, who was to descend from the loins of Judah, and that she was therefore thus earnestly desirous to have a child by one of that family, that she might have the honour, or, at least, stand fair for the honour, of being the mother of the Messiah. And if this was indeed her desire, it had its success; she is one of the four women particularly named in the genealogy of Christ, Matt. 1. 3. Her sinful practice was pardoned, and her good intention was accepted; which magnifies the grace of God, but will by no means be admitted to justify or encourage the like. Bishop Patrick thinks it probable that she hoped Shelah, who was by right her husband, might have come along with his father, and that he might have been allured to her embraces. There was a great deal of plot and contrivance in Tamar's sin. 1. She took an opportunity for it, when Judah had a time of mirth and feasting with his sheep-shearers. Note, Times of jollity often prove times of temptation, particularly to the sin of uncleanness; when men are fed to the full, the reins are apt to be let loose. 2. She exposed herself as a harlot in an open place, v. 14. Those that are, and would be chaste, must be keepers at home, Tit. 2. 5. It should seem, it was the custom of harlots, in those times, to cover their faces, that though they were not ashamed, yet they might seem to be so. The sin of uncleanness did not then go so bare-faced as it does now.

II. Judah was taken in the snare, and though it was ignorantly that he was guilty of incest with his daughter-in-law, (not knowing who she was,) yet he was wilfully guilty of fornication; whoever she was, he knew she was not his wife, and therefore not to be touched: nor was his sin capable, in the least, of such a charitable excuse as some make for Tamar, that though the action was bad, the intention possibly might be good. Observe, 1. Judah's sin began in the eye; (v. 15.) he saw her. Note, Those have eyes and hearts full of adultery, (as it is 2 Pet. 2. 14.) that catch at every bate that presents itself to them, and are as tinder to every spark. We have need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to turn them from beholding vanity, lest the eye infect the heart. 2. It is added to the scandal, that the hire of a harlot (than which nothing is more infamous) was demanded, offered, and accepted; a kid from the flock, a goodly price at which her chastity and honour were valued! Nay, had the consideration been thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, it had not been a valuable consideration. The favour of God, the purity of the soul, the peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven, are too precious to be exposed to sale at any

such rates, the topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them: what are those prices, that lose their souls to gain the world? 3. It turned to the reproach of Judah, that he left his jewels in pawn for a kid. Note, Fleshly lusts are not only brutish, but scottish, and ruining to men's secular interests. It is plain, that whoredom, as well as wine, and new wine, takes away the heart first, else it would never take away the signet and the bracelets.

III. He lost his jewels by the bargain; he sent the kid, according to his promise, to redeem his pawn, but the supposed harlot could not be found. He sent it by his friend, (who was indeed his back friend, because he was aiding and abetting in his evil deeds,) the Adullamite, who came back without the pledge. It is a good account (if it be but true) of any place, which they here gave, that there is no harlot in this place; for such sinners are the scandals and plagues of any place. Judah sits down, content to lose his signet and his bracelets, and forbids his friend to make any further inquiry after them, giving this reason, lest we be ashamed, v. 23. Either, 1. Lest his sin should come to be known publicly, and be talked of. Fornication and all uncleanness have ever been looked upon as scandalous things, and the reproach and shame of those that are convicted of them. Nothing will make those blush, that are not ashamed of these. Or, 2. Lest he should be laughed at as a fool, for trusting a strumpet with his signet and his bracelets. He expresses no concern about the sin, to get that pardoned, only about the shame, to prevent that. Note, There are many who are more solicitous to preserve their reputation with men, than to secure the favour of God and a good conscience; lest we be ashamed, goes further with them, than lest we be damned.

24. And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot; and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom: and Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. 25. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these are, am I with child: and she said, Discern, I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. 26. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more. 27. And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. 28. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? This breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. 30. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

Here is,

I. Judah's rigour against Tamar, when he heard she was an adulteress; she was, in the eye of the

law, Shelah's wife, and therefore. *her* being with child by another, was *looked* upon as an injury and reproach to Judah's family; *Bring her forth therefore*, says Judah, the master of the family, and *let her be burnt*; not burnt to death, but burnt in the cheek or forehead, stigmatized for a harlot. This seems probable, v. 24. Note, It is a common thing for men to be severe against those very sins in others, which yet they allow themselves in; and so in judging others, they condemn themselves, Rom. 2. 1.—14. 22. If he designed that she should be burnt to death, perhaps under pretence of zeal against the sin, he was contriving how to get rid of his daughter-in-law, being loath to marry Shelah to her. Note, It is a common thing, but a very bad thing, to cover malice against men's persons with a show of zeal against their vices.

II. Judah's shame, when it was made to appear that he was the adulterer; she produced *the ring and the bracelets* in court, which justified the fathering of the child upon Judah, v. 25, 26. Note, The wickedness that has been most secretly committed, and most industriously concealed, yet sometimes is strangely brought to light, to the shame and confusion of those who have said, *No eye sees*. A bird of the air may carry the voice; however, there is a discovering day coming, when all will be laid open. Some of the Jewish writers observe, that as Judah had said to his father, *See, is this thy son's coat?* (ch. 37. 32.) so it was now said to him, "See, are these thy signet and bracelets?" Judah being convicted by his own conscience, 1. Confesses his sin, *She has been more righteous than I*. He owns that a perpetual mark of infamy should be fastened rather upon him, who had been so much accessory to it. Note, Those offenders ought to be treated with the greatest tenderness to whom we have any way given occasion of offending. If servants purloin, and their masters, by withholding from them what is due, tempt them to it, they ought to forgive them. 2. He never returned to it again; *he knew her again no more*. Note, Those do not truly repent of their sins, that do not forsake them.

III. The building up of Judah's family hereby, notwithstanding, in the birth of Pharez and Zarah, from whom descended the most considerable families of the illustrious tribe of Judah. It should seem, the birth was hard to the mother, by which she was corrected for her sin. The children also, like Jacob and Esau, struggled for the birth-right, and Pharez got it, who is ever named first, and from him Christ descended. He had his name from his breaking forth before his brother; *This breach be upon thee*, which is applicable to those that sow discord, and create distance between brethren. The Jews, as Zarah, bad fair for the birth-right, and were marked with a scarlet thread, as those that came out first; but the Gentiles, like Pharez, as a son of violence, got the start of them, by that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers, and attained to the righteousness which the Jews came short of. Yet, when the fulness of time is come, all Israel shall be saved. Both these sons are named, in the genealogy of our Saviour, (Matt. 1. 3.) to perpetuate the story, as an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. Some observe, that the four eldest sons of Jacob fell under very foul guilt. Reuben and Judah under the guilt of incest, Simeon and Levi under the guilt of murder; yet they were patriarchs; of Levi came the priests, of Judah the kings and Messiah; thus they became examples of repentance, and monuments of pardoning mercy.

## CHAP. XXXIX.

At this chapter, we return to the story of Joseph. We have him here, 1. A servant, a slave in Potiphar's house, (v. 1.) and yet there greatly honoured and favoured, 1. By

the providence of God, which made him, in effect, a master, v. 2. 6. 2. By the grace of God, which made him more than a conqueror over a strong temptation to uncleanness, v. 7. 12. II. We have him here a sufferer, falsely accused, (v. 13. 18.) imprisoned; (v. 19, 20.) and yet his imprisonment made him both honourable and comfortable, by the tokens of God's special presence with him, v. 21. 23. And herein Joseph was a type of Christ, *who took upon him the form of a servant*, and yet then did that which made it evident that *God was with him*, who was tempted by Satan, but overcame the temptation, who was falsely accused and bound, and yet had all things committed to his hand.

1. **AND** Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. 2. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3. And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. 5. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. 6. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

Here is,

I. Joseph *bought*; (v. 1.) he that bought him, whatever he gave for him, had a good bargain of him; it was better than the merchandise of silver. The Jews have a proverb, "if the world did but know the worth of good men, they would hedge them about with pearls." He was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, with whom he might get acquainted with public persons and public business, and so be fitted for the preferment he was designed for afterward. Note, 1. What God intends men for, he will be sure some way or other, to qualify them for. 2. Providence is to be acknowledged in the disposal even of poor servants, and in their settlements, and therein may perhaps be working toward something great and considerable.

II. Joseph *blessed*, wonderfully blessed, even in the house of his servitude. 1. God prospered him, v. 2, 3. Perhaps the affairs of Potiphar's family had remarkably gone backward before; but, upon Joseph's coming into it, a discernible turn was given to them, and the face and posture of them altered on a sudden. Though, at first, we may suppose that his hand was put to the meanest services, even in those appeared his ingenuity and industry, and a particular blessing of Heaven attending him; and as he rose in his employment, it became more and more discernible. Note, (1.) Those that have wisdom and grace, have that which cannot be taken away from them, whatever else they are robbed of. Joseph's brethren had stripped him of his coat of many colours, but they could not strip him of his virtue and prudence. (2.) Those that can separate



us from all our friends, yet cannot deprive us of the gracious presence of our God. When Joseph had none of all his relations with him, he had his God with him, even in the house of the Egyptian. Joseph was separated from his brethren, but not from his God; banished from his father's house, but the Lord was with him, and that comforted him. (3.) It is God's presence with us that makes all we do prosperous. Those that would prosper, must therefore make God their friend; and those that do prosper must therefore give God the praise. 2. His master preferred him; by degrees made him steward of his household, *v. 4.* Note, (1.) Industry and honesty are the surest and safest way both of rising and thriving; *Seest thou a man prudent, and faithful, and diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings at length, and not always before mean men.* (2.) It is the wisdom of those that are in any sort of authority, to countenance and employ those with whom it appears that the presence of God is, Ps. 101. 6. Potiphar knew what he did, when he put all into the hand of Joseph; for he knew it would prosper better there than in his own hand. (3.) He that is faithful in a few things, stands fair for being made ruler over many things, Matt. 25. 21. Christ goes by this rule with his servants. (4.) It is a great ease to a master to have those employed under him, that are trusty; Potiphar was so well satisfied with Joseph's conduct, that *he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat, v. 6.* The servant had all the care and trouble of the estate, the master had only the enjoyment of it; an example not to be imitated by any master, unless he could be sure that he had one in all respects like Joseph, for a servant. 3. God favoured his master for his sake; (*v. 5.*) *He blessed the Egyptian's house*, though he was an Egyptian, a stranger to the true God, *for Joseph's sake*; and he himself, like Laban, soon learned it *by experience, ch. 30. 27.* Note, (1.) Good men are the blessings of the places where they live; even good servants may be so, though mean and lightly esteemed. (2.) The prosperity of the wicked is, one way or other, for the sake of the godly. Here was a wicked family blessed for the sake of one good servant in it.

7. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. 8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9. *There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* 10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. 11. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and *there was none of the men of the house there within.* 12. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

Here is,

I. A most shameful instance of impudence and modesty in Joseph's mistress, the shame and scandal of her sex, perfectly lost to all virtue and

honour, and not to be mentioned or thought of, without the utmost indignation. It was well that she was an Egyptian; for we must have shared in the confusion, if such folly had been found in Israel. Observe, 1. Her sin began in the eye; she *cast her eyes upon Joseph, (v. 7.) who was a goodly person, and well-favoured, v. 6.* Note, (1.) Remarkable beauty, either of men or women, often proves a dangerous snare both to themselves and others; which forbids pride in it, and commands constant watchfulness against temptation that attends it; favour is deceitful, that is deceiving. (2.) We have great need to make a covenant with our eyes, (Job 31. 1.) lest the eye infect the heart. Joseph's mistress had a husband that ought to have been to her for a covering of the eyes from all others, *ch. 20. 16.* 2. She was daring and shameless in the sin; with an impudent face, and a harlot's forehead, she said, *Lie with me*; having already, by her wanton looks and unchaste desires, committed adultery with him in her heart. Note, Where the unclean spirit gets possession and dominion in a soul, it is as with the possessed of the devils, (Luke 8. 27, 29.) the clothes of modesty are thrown off, and the bands and fetters of shame are broken in pieces. When lust has got head, it will stick at nothing, blush at nothing; decency, and reputation, and conscience, are all sacrificed to that Baal-peor. 3. She was urgent and violent in the temptation; often she had been denied with the strongest reasons, and yet as often renewed her vile solicitations. *She spake to him day by day, v. 10.* Now this was, (1.) Great wickedness in her, and showed her heart fully set to do evil. (2.) A great temptation to Joseph. The hand of Satan, no doubt, was in it, who, when he found he could not overcome him with troubles and the frowns of the world, for in them he still held fast his integrity, assaulted him with soft and charming pleasures, which have ruined more than the former, and have slain their ten thousands.

II. Here is a most illustrious instance of virtue and resolved chastity in Joseph, who, by the grace of God, was enabled to resist and overcome this temptation; and all things considered, his escape was, for aught I know, as great an instance of the divine power, as the deliverance of the three children out of the fiery furnace.

1. The temptation he was assaulted with, was very strong; never was a more violent onset made upon the fort of chastity than this recorded here. (1.) The sin he was tempted to was uncleanness, which, considering his youth, his beauty, his single state, and his plentiful living at the table of a ruler, was a sin which, one would think, might most easily beset him, and betray him. (2.) The tempter was his mistress, a person of quality, whom it was his place to obey, and his interest to oblige, whose favour would contribute more than any thing to his preferment, and by whose means he might arrive at the highest honours of the court. On the other hand, it was at his utmost peril, if he slighted her, and made her his enemy. (3.) Opportunity makes a thief, makes an adulterer; and *that* favoured the temptation. The tempter was in the house with him; his business led him to be, without any suspicion, where she was: none of the family were within, (*v. 11.*) there appeared no danger of its being ever discovered, or, if it should be suspected, his mistress would protect him. (4.) To all this was added importunity, frequent constant importunity, to such a degree, that, at last she laid violent hands on him.

2. His resistance of the temptation was very brave, and the victory truly honourable. The almighty grace of God enabled him to overcome this assault of the enemy.

(1.) By strength of reason; and wherever right reason may be heard, religion, no doubt, will carry the day. He argues from the respect he owed both to God and his master, *v. 8, 9.* [1.] He would not wrong his master, nor do such an irreparable injury to his honour. He considers, and urges it, how kind his master had been to him, what a confidence he had reposed in him, in how many instances he had befriended him; for which he abhorred the thought of making such an ungrateful return. Note, We are bound in honour, as well as justice and gratitude, not in any thing to injure those that have a good opinion of us, and place a trust in us, how secretly soever it may be done. See how he argues, (*v. 9.*) "*There is none greater in this house than I, therefore I will not do it.*" Note, Those that are great, instead of being proud of their greatness, should use it as an argument against sin; "Is there none greater than I? Then I will scorn to do a wicked thing; it is below me to serve a base lust; I will not disparage myself so much." [2.] He would not offend his God. This is the chief argument with which he strengthens his aversion to the sin. *How can I do this? not only, How shall I? or How dare I? but How can I? Id possumus, quod jure possumus—We can do that which we can do lawfully.* It is good to shut out sin with the strongest bar, even that of an impossibility. He that is born of God cannot sin, 1 John 3. 9.

Three arguments Joseph urges upon himself. *First*, he considers, who he was, that was tempted. "*I; others may perhaps take their liberty, but I cannot. I that am an Israelite in covenant with God, that profess religion, and relation to him: it is next to impossible for me to do so.*" *Secondly*, What the sin was to which he was tempted; *this great wickedness.* Others might look upon it as a small matter, a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but Joseph had another idea of it. In general, when at any time we are tempted to sin, we must consider the *great wickedness* there is in it; let sin *appear sin*, (Rom. 7. 13.) call it by its own name and never go about to lessen it. Particularly, let the sin of uncleanness always be looked upon as *great wickedness*, as an exceeding sinful sin, that wars against the soul as much as any other. *Thirdly*, Against whom he was tempted to sin, *against God*; "Not only how shall I do it, and sin against my master, my mistress, myself, my own body and soul; but *against God?*" Note, Gracious souls look upon this as the worst thing in sin, that it is against God, against his nature and his dominion, against his love and his design. They that love God, for this reason hate sin.

(2.) By steadfastness of resolution. The grace of God enabled him to overcome the temptation, by avoiding the tempter. [1.] He *hearkened not to her*, so much as to be with her, *v. 10.* Note, Those that would be kept from harm, must keep themselves out of harm's way: *Avoid it, pass not by it.* Nay, [2.] When she laid hold on him, he *left his garment in her hand*, *v. 12.* He would not stay so much as to parley with the temptation, but flew out from it with the utmost abhorrence; he *left his garment*, as one escaping for his life. Note, It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience.

13. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, 14. That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15. And it came to pass,

when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. 16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

Joseph's mistress, having tried in vain to make him a criminal, now endeavours to represent him as one; so to be avenged on him for his virtue. Now was her love turned into the utmost rage and malice, and she pretends she cannot endure the sight of him, whom a while ago she could not endure out of her sight. Chaste and holy love will continue, though slighted; but sinful love, like Amnon's to Tamar, is easily changed into sinful hatred.

1. She accused him to his fellow servants, (*v. 13. 15.*) and gave him a bad name among them. Probably, they envied him his interest in their master's favour, and his authority in the house; and perhaps found themselves aggrieved, sometimes by his fidelity, which prevented their purloining; and therefore they were glad to hear any thing that might tend to his disgrace, and, if there was room for it, incensed their mistress yet more against him. Observe, When she speaks of her husband, she does not call him her husband, or her lord, but only *he*; for she had forgotten the covenant of her God, that was between them. Thus the adulteress (Prov. 7. 19.) calls her husband *the good man*. Note, Innocence itself cannot secure a man's reputation. Not every one that keeps a good conscience, can keep a good name.

2. She accused him to his master, who had power in his hand to punish him, which his fellow servants had not, *v. 17, 18.* Observe, 1. What an improbable story she tells; producing his garments as an evidence that he had offered violence to her, which was a plain indication that she had offered violence to him. Note, Those that have broken the bonds of modesty, will never be held by the bonds of truth. No marvel that she who had impudence enough to say, *Lie with me*, had front enough to say, "He would have lien with me." Had the lie been told to conceal her own crime, it had been bad enough, yet in some degree, excusable; but it was told, to be avenged upon his virtue; a most malicious lie. And yet, 2. She manages it so as to incense her husband against him; reflecting upon him for bringing this Hebrew servant among them, perhaps, at first against her mind, because he was a Hebrew. Note, It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst of crimes by those who themselves are the worst of criminals. As this matter here was represented, one would have thought chaste Joseph a very bad man, and his wanton mistress a virtuous woman; it is well that there is a day of discovery coming, in which all shall appear in their true characters. This was not the first time that Joseph's coat was made use of as a false witness concerning him; his father had been deceived by it before, now his master.

19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, after this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was

kindled. 20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners *were* bound: and he was there in the prison. 21. But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that *were* in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. 23. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that *was* under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

Here is,

1. Joseph wronged by his master. He believed the accusation, and either Joseph durst not make his defence by telling the truth, as it would reflect too much upon his mistress, or, his master would not hear it, or would not believe it, and there is no remedy, he is condemned to perpetual imprisonment, v. 19, 20. God restrained his wrath, else he had put him to death; and that wrath which imprisoned him, God made to turn to his praise; in order to which, Providence so disposed, that he should be shut up among the king's prisoners, the state-prisoners. Potiphar, it is likely, chose that prison, because it was the worst; for there the irons entered into the soul, (Ps. 105. 18.) but God designed to pave the way to his enlargement. He was committed to the king's prison, that from thence he might be preferred to the king's person. Note, Many an action of false imprisonment will, in the great day, be found to lie against the enemies and persecutors of God's people. Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, was bound, and numbered with the transgressors.

2. Joseph owned and righted by his God, who is, and will be, the just and powerful Patron of oppressed innocence. Joseph was at a distance from all his friends and relations, had not them with him to comfort him, or to minister to him, or to mediate for him; but the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, v. 21. Note, (1.) God despises not his prisoners, Ps. 69. 33. No gates or bars can shut out his gracious presence from his people; for he has promised that he will never leave them. (2.) Those that have a good conscience in a prison, have a good God there. Integrity and uprightness qualify us for the divine favour, wherever we are. Joseph is not long a prisoner, before he becomes a little ruler even in the prison; which is to be attributed, under God, [1.] To the keeper's favour. God gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Note, God can raise up friends for his people, even there where they little expect to find them, and can make them to be pitied even of those that carry them captive, Ps. 106. 46. [2.] To Joseph's fitness for business. The keeper saw that God was with him, and that every thing prospered under his hand; and therefore intrusted him with the management of the affairs of the prison, v. 22, 23. Note, Wisdom and virtue will shine in the narrowest spheres. A good man will do good wherever he is, and will be a blessing even in bonds and banishments; for the Spirit of the Lord is not bound or banished, witness St. Paul, Phil. 1. 12. 13.

## CHAP. XL.

In this chapter, things are working, though slowly, toward Joseph's advancement. I. Two of Pharaoh's servants are committed to prison, and there to Joseph's care, and

so become witnesses of his extraordinary conduct, v. 1..4. II. They dreamed each of them a dream, which Joseph interpreted, (v. 5..19.) and the event verified the interpretation, (v. 20..22.) and so they became witnesses of his extraordinary skill. III. Joseph recommends his case to one of them, whose preferment he foresaw, (v. 14, 15.) but in vain, v. 23.

1. **AND** it came to pass after these things, **A** that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. 2. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. 3. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. 4. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

We should not have had this story of Pharaoh's butler and baker recorded in Scripture, if it had not been serviceable to Joseph's preferment. The world stands for the sake of the church, and is governed for its good. Observe, 1. Two of the great officers of Pharaoh's court having offended the king, are committed to prison. Note, High places are slippery places; nothing more uncertain than the favour of princes. Those that make God's favour their happiness, and his service their business, will find him a better master than Pharaoh was, and not so extreme to mark what they do amiss. Many conjectures there are concerning the offence of these servants of Pharaoh; some make it no less than an attempt to take away his life, others no more than the casual lighting of a fly into his cup, and a little sand into his bread. Whatever it was, Providence by this means brought them into the prison where Joseph was. 2. The captain of the guard himself, who was Potiphar, charged Joseph with them, (v. 4.) which intimates that he began now to be reconciled to him, and perhaps to be convinced of his innocence, though he durst not release him, for fear of disobliging his wife. John Baptist must lose his head, to please Herodias.

5. And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which *were* bound in the prison. 6. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they *were* sad. 7. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that *were* with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? 8. And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you. 9. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, in my dream, behold, a vine was before me; 10. And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: 11. And Pharaoh's cup was

in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12. And Joseph said unto him, *This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days:* 13. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. 14. But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: 15. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing, that they should put me into the dungeon. 16. When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also *was* in my dream, and, behold, *I had* three white baskets on my head: 17. And in the uppermost basket *there was* of all manner of bake-meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head. 18. And Joseph answered, and said, *This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days:* 19. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

Observe,

I. The special providence of God, which filled the heads of these two prisoners with unusual dreams, such as made extraordinary impressions upon them, and carried with them evidences of a divine original, both in one night. Note, God has immediate access to the spirits of men, which he can make serviceable to his own purposes whenever he pleases, quite beyond the intention of those concerned. To him all hearts are open, and anciently he spake not only to his own people, but to others, in dreams, Job 33. 15. Things to come were thus foretold, but very obscurely.

Observe,

II. The impression which was made upon these prisoners by their dreams; (*v. 6.*) *they were sad.* It was not the prison that made them sad, (they were pretty well used to that, and perhaps lived jovially there,) but the dream. Note, God has more ways than one to sadden the spirits of those that are to be made sad. Those sinners that are hardy enough under outward troubles, and will not yield to them, yet God can find out a way to punish; he can take off their wheels, by wounding their spirits, and laying loads upon them.

Observe,

Joseph's great tenderness and compassion toward them. He inquired with concern, *Wherefore look ye sadly to day?* *v. 7.* Joseph was their keeper, and in that office he was mild. Note, It becomes us to take cognizance of the sorrows even of those that are under our check. Joseph was their companion in tribulation, he was now a prisoner with them, and had been a dreamer too. Note, Communion in sufferings helps to work compassion toward those that do suffer. Let us learn hence, 1. To concern ourselves in the sorrows and troubles of others, and

to inquire into the reason of the sadness of our brethren's countenances; we should be often considering the tears of the oppressed, Eccl. 4. 1. It is some relief to those that are in trouble, to be taken notice of. 2. To inquire into the causes of our own sorrow. "Wherefore do I look so sadly? Is there a reason? Is it a good reason? Is there not a reason for comfort sufficient to balance it, whatever it is? Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

Observe,

IV. The dreams themselves, and the interpretation of them. That which troubled these prisoners, was, that being confined, they could not have recourse to the diviners of Egypt who pretended to interpret dreams; *there is no interpreter here in the prison, v. 8.* Note, There are interpreters, which those that are in prison and sorrow, should wish to have with them, to instruct them in the meaning and design of Providence; (Elihu alludes to such, when he says, *If there be an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness,* Job. 33. 23, 24.) interpreters to guide their consciences, not to satisfy their curiosity. Joseph, hereupon, directed them which way to look, *Do not interpretations belong to God!* He means the God whom he worshipped, to the knowledge of whom he endeavours hereby to lead them. Note, 1. It is God's prerogative to foretell things to come, Isa. 46. 10. 2. He must therefore have the praise of all the gifts of foresight which men have ordinary or extraordinary. Joseph premises a caveat against his own praise, and is careful to transmit the glory to God, as Daniel, *ch. 2. 30.* Joseph suggests, "If interpretations belong to God, he is a free Agent, and may communicate the power to whom he pleases, and therefore tell me your dreams."

Now, (1.) the chief butler's dream was a happy presage of his enlargement, and re-advancement, within three days; and so Joseph explained it to him, *v. 12, 13.* Probably it had been usual with him to press the full ripe grapes immediately into Pharaoh's cup, the simplicity of that age not being acquainted with the modern arts of making the wine fine. Observe, Joseph foretold the chief butler's deliverance, but he did not foresee his own. He had long before dreamt of his own honour, and the obeisance which his brethren should do to him, with the remembrance of which he must now support himself, without any new or fresh discoveries. The visions that are for the comfort of God's saints, are for a great while to come, and relate to things that are very far off, while the foresights of others, like this recorded here, look but three days before them.

(2.) The chief baker's dream portended his ignominious death, *v. 18, 19.* The happy interpretation of the other's dream encouraged him to relate his. Thus hypocrites, when they hear good things promised to good christians, would put in for a share, though they have no part or lot in the matter. It was not Joseph's fault that he brought him no better tidings; ministers are but interpreters, they cannot make the thing otherwise than it is; if therefore they deal faithfully, and their message prove unpleasant, it is not their fault. Bad dreams cannot expect a good interpretation.

Observe,

V. The improvement Joseph made of this opportunity, to get a friend at court, *v. 14, 15.* He modestly bespoke the favour of the chief butler, whose preferment he foretold; *But think on me, when it shall be well with thee.* Though the respect paid to Joseph, made the prison as easy to him as a prison could be, yet none can blame him for being desirous of liberty. See here, 1. What a modest representation he makes of his own case, *v. 15.* He does not reflect upon his brethren that sold

him, he only says, *I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews*, that is, unjustly sent away thence, no matter where the fault was. Nor does he reflect on the wrong done him in this imprisonment by his mistress that was his prosecutrix, and his master that was his judge; but mildly avers his own innocence: *Here have I done nothing, that they should put me into the dungeon.* Note, When we are called to vindicate ourselves, we should carefully avoid, as much as may be, speaking ill of others. Let us be content to prove ourselves innocent, and not be fond of upbraiding others with their guilt. 2. What a modest request he makes to the chief butler: "Only, think on me. Pray, do me a kindness, if it lie in your way." And his particular petition is, *Bring me out of this house.* He does not say, "Bring me into Pharaoh's house, get me a place at court." No, he begs for enlargement, not preferment. Note, Providence sometimes designs the greatest honours for those that least covet or expect them.

20. And it came to pass the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: 22. But he hanged the chief baker; as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Here is,

1. The verifying of Joseph's interpretation of the dreams, on the very day prefixed. The chief butler and baker were both advanced, one to his office, the other to the gallows, and both at the three days' end. Note, Very great changes, both for the better, and for the worse, often happen in a very little time; so sudden are the revolutions of the wheel of nature. The occasion of giving judgment severally upon their case, was, the solemnizing of Pharaoh's birth day, on which, all his servants being obliged by custom to attend him, these two came to be inquired after, and the cause of their commitment looked into. The solemnizing of the birth-days of Princes has been an ancient piece of respect done them; and if it be not abused, as Jerobam's was, (Hos. 7. 5.) and Herod's, (Mark 6. 21.) is a usage innocent enough: and we may all profitably take notice of our birth-days, with thankfulness for the mercies of our birth, sorrow for the sinfulness of it, and an expectation of the day of our death as better than the day of our birth. On Pharaoh's birth-day, he lifted up the head of those two prisoners, that is, arraigned and tried them, (when Naboth was tried) he was *set on high* among the people, 1 Kings 21. 9. and he restored the chief butler, and hanged the chief baker. If the butler was innocent, and the baker guilty, we must own the equity of Providence in clearing up the innocence of the innocent, and making the sin of the guilty to find him out. If either both were equally innocent, or equally guilty, it is an instance of the arbitrariness of such great princes as pride themselves in that power which Nebuchadnezzar set up for, (Dan. 5. 19. *whom he would, he slew, and whom he would, he kept alive,*) forgetting that there is a higher than they, to whom they are accountable.

2. The disappointing of Joseph's expectation from the chief butler; he remembered not Joseph, but forgot him, v. 23. (1.) See here an instance of base ingratitude; Joseph had deserved well at his hands,

had ministered unto him, sympathized with him, helped him to a favourable interpretation of his dream, had recommended himself to him as an extraordinary person upon all accounts; and yet he forgot him. We must not think it strange, if in this world we have hatred shown us for our love, and slights for our respects. (2.) See how apt those that are themselves at ease, are to forget others in distress. Perhaps it is in allusion to this story, that the prophet speaks of those that *drink wine in bowls, and are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*, Amos 6. 6. Let us learn hence to cease from man. Joseph perhaps depended too much upon his interest in the chief butler, and promised himself too much from him; he learned by his disappointment to trust in God only. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God.

Some observe the resemblance between Joseph and Christ in this story. Joseph's fellow-sufferers were like the two thieves that were crucified with Christ; the one saved, the other condemned. (It is Dr. Lightfoot's remark, from Mr. Broughton.) One of these, when Joseph said to him, *Remember me, when it shall be well with thee*, forgot him; but one of those, when he said to Christ, *Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*, was not forgotten. We justly blame the chief butler's ingratitude to Joseph, yet we conduct ourselves much more disingenuously toward the Lord Jesus. Joseph had but foretold the chief butler's enlargement, but Christ wrought out our's, mediated with the King of kings for us; yet we forget him, though often reminded of him, though we have promised never to forget him: thus ill do we requite him, like foolish people and unwise.

## CHAP. XLI.

Two things Providence is here bringing about. I. The advancement of Joseph. II. The maintenance of Jacob and his family in a time of famine; for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, and direct the affairs of the children of men for the benefit of those few whose hearts are upright with him. In order to these, here is, 1. Pharaoh's dreams, v. 1. . 8. 2. The recommendation of Joseph to him for an interpreter, v. 9. . 13. 3. The interpretation of the dreams, and the prediction of seven years plenty, and seven years' famine in Egypt, with the prudent advice given to Pharaoh thereupon, v. 14. . 36. 4. The preferment of Joseph to a place of the highest power and trust in Egypt, v. 37. . 45. 5. The accomplishment of Joseph's prediction, and his fidelity to his trust, v. 46. . 57.

1. **A**ND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed, and, behold, he stood by the river. 2. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well-favoured kine, and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4. And the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. 7. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8. And it came to pass in the morning, that his spirit was trou-



bled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but *there* was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Observe,

1. The delay of Joseph's enlargement; it was not till the *end of two full years*, (v. 1.) so long he waited, after he had intrusted the chief butler with his case, and began to have some prospect of relief. Note, We have need of patience, not only *bearing*, but *waiting*, patience. Joseph lay in prison until the time that his word came, Ps. 105. 19. There is a time set for the deliverance of God's people; that time will come, though it seem to tarry; and when it comes, it will appear to have been the best time, and therefore we ought to wait for it, (Hab. 2. 3.) and not think two full years too long to continue waiting.

2. The means of Joseph's enlargement, which were Pharaoh's dreams, here related. If we were to look upon them as ordinary dreams, we might observe from them the follies and absurdities of a roving, working, fancy; how it represents to itself tame cows as beasts of prey, nay, more ravenous than any, eating up those of their own kind; and ears of corn devouring one another. Surely in the multitude of dreams, nay, even in one dream, there are divers vanities, Eccl. 5. 7. Now that God no longer speaks to us in that way, I think it is no matter how little we either heed them or tell them.\* Foolish dreams related can make no better than foolish talk. But these dreams which Pharaoh dreamed, carried their own evidence with them, that they were sent of God; and therefore when he awoke, his spirit was troubled, v. 8. It cannot but put us into a concern, to receive any extraordinary message from heaven, because we are conscious to ourselves that we have no reason to expect any *good* tidings from thence. His magicians were puzzled, the rules of their art failed them; these dreams of Pharaoh it seems, did not fall within the compass of them, so that they could not offer at the interpretation of them. This was to make Joseph's performance by the spirit of God the more admirable. Human reason, prudence, and foresight, must be non-plussed, that divine revelation may appear the more glorious in the contrivance of our redemption, 1. Cor. 2. 13, 14. Compare with this story, Dan. 2. 27.—4. 7.—5. 8. Joseph's own dreams were the occasion of his troubles, and now Pharaoh's dreams were the occasion of his enlargement.

9. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day. 10. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, *both* me and the chief baker. 11. And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12. And *there* was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man ac-

cording to his dream he did interpret. 13. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. 14. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved *himself*, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and *there* is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, *that* thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, *It* is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Here is,

1. The recommending of Joseph to Pharaoh for an interpreter. The chief butler did it more in compliment to Pharaoh, to oblige him, than in gratitude to Joseph, or in compassion for his case. He makes a fair confession, (v. 9.) "*I remember my faults this day*, in forgetting Joseph." Note, It is best to remember our duty, and to do it in its time; but if we have neglected that, it is next best to remember our faults, and repent of them, and do our duty at last: better late than never. Some think he means his faults against Pharaoh, for which he was imprisoned; and then he would insinuate that though Pharaoh had forgiven him, he had not forgiven himself. The story he had to tell, was, in short, That there was an obscure young man in the king's prison, who had very properly interpreted his dream, and the chief baker's (the event corresponding in each with the interpretation,) and that he would recommend him to the king his master for an interpreter. Note, God's time for the enlargement of his people will appear at last to be the fittest time. If the chief butler had at first used his interest for Joseph's enlargement, and had obtained it, it is probable that, upon his release, he would have gone back to *the land of the Hebrews* again, which he spake of so feelingly, (ch. 40. 15.) and then he had neither been so blessed himself, nor such a blessing to his family, as afterwards he proved. But staying two years longer, and coming out now upon this occasion, at last, to interpret the king's dreams, way was made for his very great preferment. Those that patiently wait for God, shall be paid for their waiting, not only principal but interest, Lam. 3. 26.

2. The introducing of Joseph to Pharaoh. The king's business required haste; Joseph is sent for out of the dungeon with all speed; Pharaoh's order discharged him, both from his imprisonment, and from his servitude, and made him a candidate for some of the highest trusts at court. The king can scarcely allow him time, but that decency required it, to shave himself, and to change his raiment, v. 14. It is done with all possible expedition, and Joseph is brought in, perhaps almost as much surprised as Peter was, Acts 12. 9. So suddenly is his captivity brought back, that he is as one that dreams, Ps. 126.

1. Pharaoh immediately, without inquiring who or whence he was, tells him his business, that he expected he should interpret his dream, v. 15. To which Joseph makes him a very modest decent reply, (v. 16.) in which, (1.) He gives honour to God; "It is not in me, God must give it." Note, Great gifts then appear most graceful and illustrious, when those that have them, use them humbly, and take not the praise of them to themselves, but give it to God. To such God gives more grace. (2.) He shows respect to Pharaoh, and hearty good will to

\* Yet, since our dreams are materially affected by all our moral habits, and particularly by the previous tone of our passions, and since they often bear away the mind into scenes, which, though they may never occur in actual life, supply a decisive test of character; we may occasionally derive from them important suggestions as it respects health, purity, integrity, discretion, and the government of the heart in general. Our author himself intimates to the same purport in his note on ch. 31. 29. See Beattie's Essays.—Ed.



hum and his government, in supposing that the interpretation would be an answer of peace. Note, Those that consult God's oracles, may expect an answer of peace. If Joseph be made the interpreter hope the best.

17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river. 18. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favoured; and they fed in a meadow. 19. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor, and very ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. 20. And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine. 21. And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they *were* still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. 22. And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good. 23. And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, *and* blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them. 24. And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told *this* unto the magicians; but *there was* none that could declare *it* to me. 25. And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh what he *is* about to do. 26. The seven good kine *are* seven years; and the seven good ears *are* seven years: the dream is one. 27. And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them, *are* seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind, shall be seven years of famine. 28. *This is* the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh; What God *is* about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh. 29. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. 30. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land. 31. And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it *shall be* very grievous. 32. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; *it is* because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Here,

I. Pharaoh relates his dream. He dreamt that he stood upon the bank of the river Nile, and saw the kine, both the fat ones, and the lean ones, come out of the river. For the kingdom of Egypt had no rain, as appears, Zech. 14. 18, but the plenty of the year depended upon the overflowing of the river, and it was about one certain time of the year that it overflowed. If it rose to fifteen or sixteen cubits, there was plenty; if to twelve or thirteen only, or under, there was scarcity. See how many ways Providence has of dispensing its gifts; yet what-

ever the second causes are, our dependence is still the same upon the First Cause, who makes every creature that to us, that it is, be it rain or river.

11. Joseph interprets his dream, and tells him that it signified seven years of plenty now immediately to ensue, which should be succeeded by as many years of famine.

1. The two dreams signify the same thing, but the repetition was to denote the certainty, the nearness, and the importance, of the event, v. 32. Thus has God often showed *the immutability of his counsel by two immutable things*, Heb. 6. 17, 18. The covenant is sealed with two sacraments; and in the one of them there are both bread and wine, wherein the dream is one, and yet it is doubled, for the thing is certain.

2. Yet the two dreams had a distinct reference to the two things wherein we most experience plenty and scarcity, namely, *grass and corn*. The plenty and scarcity of grass for the cattle were signified by the fat kine and the lean ones; the plenty and scarcity of herb for the service of man, by the full ears and the thin ones.

3. See what changes the comforts of this life are subject to. After great plenty, may come great scarcity; how strong soever we may think our mountain stands, if God speak the word, it will soon be moved. We cannot be sure that *to-morrow shall be as this day*, next year as this, and *much more abundant*, Isa. 56. 12. We must learn how to want, as well as how to abound.

4. See the goodness of God, in sending the seven years of plenty before those of famine, that provision might be made accordingly. Thus he *sets the one over against the other*, Eccl. 7. 14. With what wonderful wisdom has Providence, that great House-Keeper, ordered the affairs of this numerous family from the beginning hitherto! Great variety of seasons there have been, and the produce of the earth is sometimes more and sometimes less; yet, take one time with another, what was miraculous concerning the manna, is ordinarily verified in the common course of Providence, *He that gathers much, has nothing over, and he that gathers little, has no lack*, Exod. 16. 18.

5. See the perishing nature of our worldly enjoyments. The great increase of the years of plenty was quite lost and swallowed up in the years of famine; and the overplus of it, which seemed very much, yet did but just serve to keep men alive, v. 29. . . 31. *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them*, 1 Cor. 6. 13. There is bread which *endures to everlasting life*, which shall not be forgotten, and which it is worth while to labour for, John 6. 27. They that make the things of this world *their good things*, will find but little pleasure in remembering that they *have received them*, Luke 16. 25.

6. Observe, God revealed this beforehand to Pharaoh, who, as king of Egypt, was to be the father of his country, and to make prudent provision for them. Magistrates are called *shepherds*, whose care it must be, not only to rule, but to feed.

33. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. 34. Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. 36. And that food shall be for

store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. 37. And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find *such a one* as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? 39. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this; *there is none so discreet and wise as thou art.* 40. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43. And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, *I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.* 45. And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.

Here is,

I. The good advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh, which was, 1.<sup>st</sup> That in the years of plenty he should lay up for the years of famine; buy up corn when it was cheap, that he might both enrich himself, and supply the country, when it would be dear and scarce. Note, (1.) Fair warning should always be followed with good counsel. *Therefore* the prudent man foresees the evil, that he may hide himself. God has in his word told us of a day of trial and exigence before us, when we shall need all the grace we can get, and all little enough, "Now, therefore, provide accordingly." (2.) Times of gathering must be diligently improved, because there will come a time of spending. Let us go to the ant, and learn of her this wisdom, Prov. 6. 6..8. 2. Because that which is every body's work, commonly proves nobody's work; he advises Pharaoh to appoint officers who should make it their business, and to pitch upon some one person to preside in the affair, v. 33. Probably, if Joseph had not advised this, it had not been done; Pharaoh's counsellors could no more improve the dream, than his magicians interpret it; therefore, it is said of him, (Ps. 105. 22.) that he *taught the senators wisdom.* Hence, we may justly infer, with Solomon, (Ecc. 4. 13.) *Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king.*

II. The great honour that Pharaoh did to Joseph.

1. He gave him an honourable testimony; He is *a man in whom the Spirit of God is*; and that puts a great excellency upon any man; such men ought to be valued, v. 38. He is a nonsuch for prudence, *There is none so discreet and wise as thou art*, v. 39. Now he is abundantly recompensed for the disgrace that had been done him; and his righteousness is as the morning-light, Ps. 37. 6.

2. He puts him into an honourable office; not only employed him to buy up corn, but made him prime-minister of state, comptroller of the household, *Thou shalt be over my house*, Chief Justice of the kingdom, *according to thy word shall all my people be ruled or armed*, as some read it, and then it bespeaks him General of the forces. His commission was very ample, *I have set thee over all the land of Egypt*; (v. 41.) *without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot*; (v. 44.) all the affairs of the kingdom must pass through his hand. Nay, (v. 40.) *only in the throne will I be greater than thou.* Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer those, and the happiness of people to have those preferred, to places of power and trust, in whom the Spirit of God is. It is probable, that there were those about the court who opposed Joseph's preferment, which occasioned Pharaoh so often to repeat the grant, and with that solemn sanction, (v. 44.) *I am Pharaoh.* When the proposal was made that there should be a corn-master-general nominated, it is said, (v. 37.) *Pharaoh's servants were all pleased* with the motion, each hoping for the place; but when Pharaoh said to them, "Joseph shall be the man," we do not read that they made him any answer, being uneasy at it, and acquiescing, only because they could not help it. Joseph had enemies, no doubt, archers that shot at him, and hated him, ch. 49. 23. as Daniel, ch. 6. 4.

3. He put upon him all the marks of honour imaginable, to recommend him to the esteem and respect of the people, as the king's favourite, and one whom he delighted to honour. (1.) He gave him his own ring, as a ratification of his commission, and in token of peculiar favour; or it was like delivering him the great seal. (2.) He put fine clothes upon him, instead of his prison-garments. For they that are in king's palaces must wear soft clothing; he that, in the morning, was dragging his fetters of iron, before night, was adorned with a chain of gold. (3.) He made him *ride in the second chariot*, next his own, and ordered all to do obeisance to him: "*Bow the knee*, as to Pharaoh himself." (4.) He gave him a new name, to show his authority over him, and yet such a name as bespoke the value he had for him, *Zaphnath-paaneah—A revealer of secrets.* (5.) He married him honourably to a prince's daughter. Where God had been liberal in giving wisdom and other merits, Pharaoh was not sparing in conferring honours. Now this preferment of Joseph was, [1.] An abundant recompense for his innocent and patient suffering, a lasting instance of the equity and goodness of Providence, and an encouragement to all good people to trust in a good God. [2.] It was typical of the exaltation of Christ, that great *Revealer of secrets*, (John 1. 18.) or, as some translate Joseph's new name, the *Saviour of the world.* The brightest glories of the upper world are put upon him, the highest trust lodged in his hand, and all power given him both in heaven and earth. He is Gatherer, Keeper, and Disposer, of all the stores of divine grace, and Chief Ruler of the kingdom of God among men. The work of ministers is to cry before him, "*Bow the knee; kiss the Son.*"

46. And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt: and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47. And in the seven plentiful years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 48. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the

cities: the food of the field, which *was* round about every city, laid he up in the same. 49. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for *it was* without number. 50. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him. 51. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh; For God, *said he*, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. 52. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. 53. And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy *corn*; because that the famine was *so* sore in all lands.

Observe here,

I. The building of Joseph's family in the birth of two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, *v. 50. . 52.* In the names he gave them he owned the Divine Providence giving this happy turn to his affairs. 1. He was made to *forget his misery*, Job 11. 16. We should bear our afflictions when they are present, as those that know not but Providence may so outweigh them by after-comforts, as that we may even forget them when they are past. But could he be so unnatural as to *forget all his father's house*? He means the unkindness he received from his brethren, or perhaps the wealth and honour he expected from his father, with the birth-right. The robes which he now wore, made him forget the coat of divers colours which he wore in his father's house. 2. He was made *fruitful in the land of his affliction*; it had been the land of his affliction, and in some sense it was *still* so, for it was not Canaan, the land of promise. His distance from his father was still his affliction. Note, Light is sometimes sown for the righteous in a barren and unlikely soil; and yet if God sow it, and water it, it will come up again. The afflictions of the saints promote their fruitfulness. *Ephraim* signifies *Fruitfulness*, and *Manasseh*, *Forgetfulness*, for these two often go together; when Jeshurun waxed fat, he *forgot God his Maker*.

II. The accomplishment of Joseph's predictions; Pharaoh had great confidence in the truth of them, perhaps finding in his own mind, beyond what another person could, an exact correspondence between them and his dreams as between the key and the lock; and the event showed that he was not deceived. The seven plenteous years came, (*v. 47.*) and

at length, they were ended, *v. 53.* Note, we ought to foresee the approaching period of the days both of our prosperity and of our opportunity; and therefore must not be secure in the enjoyment of our prosperity, nor slothful in the improvement of our opportunity; years of plenty will end, therefore, What thy hand finds to do, do it; and gather in gathering time. *The morning cometh, and also the night*, (Isa. 21. 12.) the plenty, and also the famine. *The seven years of dearth began to come*, *v. 54.* See what changes of conditions we are liable to in this world, and what need we have to be joyful in 2 day of prosperity, and in a day of adversity to consider, Eccl. 7. 14. This famine, it seems, was not only in Egypt, but in other lands, in *all lands*, that is, all the neighbouring countries; *fruitful lands* are soon *turned into barrenness for the iniquity of them that dwell therein*, Ps. 107. 34. It is here said, that *in the land of Egypt there was bread*; meaning, probably, not that only which Joseph had bought up for the king, but that which private persons, by his example, and upon the public notice of this prediction, as well as by the rules of common prudence, had laid up.

III. The performance of Joseph's trust; he was found faithful to it, as a steward ought to be. 1. He was diligent in laying up, while the plenty lasted, *v. 48, 49.* He that thus gathers, is a wise son. 2. He was prudent and careful in giving out, when the famine came, and kept the markets low by furnishing them at reasonable rates out of his stores. The people in distress cried to Pharaoh, as that woman to the king of Israel, (2 Kings 6. 26.) *Help, my lord, O king*: he sent them to his treasurer, *Go to Joseph*. Thus God in the gospel directs those that apply themselves to him for mercy and grace, to *go to the Lord Jesus*, in whom all fulness dwells; and, *What he saith to you, do*. Joseph, no doubt, with wisdom and justice fixed the price of the corn he sold, so that Pharaoh, whose money had bought it up, might have a reasonable profit, and yet the country might not be oppressed, nor advantage taken of their prevailing necessity; while *he that withholdeth corn*, when it is dear, in hopes it will yet grow dearer, though people perish for want of it, has many a curse for so doing, (and it is not a *curse causeless*;) *blessings shall be upon the head of him that thus selleth it*, Prov. 11. 26. And let the price be determined by that golden rule of justice, to do as we would be done by.

## CHAP. XLII.

We had in the foregoing chapter, the fulfilling of the dreams which Joseph had *interpreted*: in this and the following chapters, we have the fulfilling of the dreams which Joseph himself had *dreamed*, that his father's family should do obeisance to him. The story is very largely and particularly related of what passed between Joseph and his brethren, not only because it is an entertaining story, and, probably, was much talked of, both among the Israelites and among the Egyptians, but because it is very instructive, and it gave occasion for the removal of Jacob's family into Egypt, on which so many great events afterward depended. We have, in this chapter, I. The humble application of Jacob's sons to Joseph, to buy corn, *v. 1. . 6.* II. The fright Joseph put them into, for their trial, *v. 7. . 20.* III. The conviction they were now under of their sin concerning Joseph long before, *v. 21. . 24.* IV. Their return to Canaan with corn, and the great distress their good father was in, upon hearing the account of their expedition, *v. 25. . 38.*

1. **N**OW when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2. And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may

live, and not die. 3. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. 4. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. 5. And the sons of Israel came to buy *corn* among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6. And Joseph *was* the governor over the land, *and he it was* that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him *with* their faces to the earth.

Though Jacob's sons were all married, and had families of their own, yet, it should seem, they were still incorporated in one society, under the conduct and presidency of their father Jacob.

We have here,

I. The orders he gave them to go and buy corn in Egypt, *v. 1, 2.* Observe, 1. The famine was grievous in the land of Canaan. It is observable that all the three Patriarchs, to whom Canaan was the land of promise, met with famine in that land; which was not only to try their faith, whether they could trust God, though he should slay them, though he should starve them, but to teach them to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly, Heb. 11. 14., 16. We have need of something to wean us from this world, and make us long for a better. 2. Still when there was famine in Canaan, there was corn in Egypt. Thus Providence orders it, that one place should be a succour and supply to another; for we are all brethren. The Egyptians, the seed of the accursed Ham, have plenty, when God's blessed Israel want. Thus God, in dispensing common favours, often crosses hands; yet observe, the plenty Egypt now had, was owing, under God, to Joseph's prudence and care: if his brethren had not sold him into Egypt, but respected him according to his merits, who knows but he might have done the same thing for Jacob's family, which now he had done for Pharaoh, and the Egyptians might then have come to them to buy corn; but those who drive away from among them wise and good men, know not what they do. 3. *Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt*; he saw the corn that his neighbours had brought there and brought home. It is a spur to exertion, to see where supplies are to be had, and to see others supplied. Shall others get food for their souls, and shall we starve while it is to be had? 4. He reproved his sons for delaying to provide corn for their families, *Why do ye look one upon another?* Note, When we are in trouble and want, it is folly for us to stand looking upon one another, that is, to stand desponding and despairing, as if there were no hope, no help; to stand disputing either which shall have the honour of going first, or which shall have the safety of coming last; to stand deliberating and debating what we shall do, and doing nothing; to stand dreaming under a spirit of slumber, as if we had nothing to do, and to stand delaying, as if we had time to command. Let it never be said, "We left that to be done to-morrow, which we could as well have done to-day." 5. He quickened them to go to Egypt, *Get you down thither.* Masters of families must not only pray for daily bread for their families, and food convenient, but must lay out themselves with care and industry to provide it.

II. Their obedience to these orders, *v. 3.* They *went down to buy corn*; they did not send their servants, but very prudently went themselves to lay out their own money. Let none think themselves too great or too good to take pains. Masters of families should

see with their own eyes, and take heed of leaving too much to servants. Only Benjamin went not with them, for he was his father's darling. To Egypt they came, among others, and having a considerable cargo of corn to buy, they were brought before Joseph himself, who, probably, expected they would come; and according to the laws of courtesy, *they bowed down themselves before him, v. 6.* Now their empty sheaves did obeisance to his full ones. Compare this with Isa. 60. 14. and Rev. 3. 9.

7. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. 3. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. 9. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, *Ye are spies*; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 10. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. 11. *We are* all one man's sons; we *are true men*; thy servants are no spies. 12. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 13. And they said, Thy servants *are* twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest *is* this day with our father, and one *is* not. 14. And Joseph said unto them, *That is it* that I spake unto you, saying, *Ye are spies*. 15. Hereby ye shall be proved: by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. 16. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any truth in you*: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies. 17. And he put them altogether into ward three days. 18. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; *for I fear God*. 19. If ye *be true men*, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: 20. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

We may well wonder that Joseph during the 20 years that he had now been in Egypt, especially during the last 7 years that he had been in power there, never sent to his father to acquaint him with his circumstances; nay it is strange that he who so often *went throughout all the land of Egypt*, (*ch. 41. 45, 46.*) never made an excursion to Canaan, to visit his aged father, when he was in the borders of Egypt, that lay next to Canaan; perhaps it would not have been above three or four days journey for him in his chariot. It is a probable conjecture, that his whole management of himself in this affair was by special direction from Heaven, that the purpose of God concerning Jacob and his family might be accomplished. When Joseph's brethren came, he

knew them by many a satisfactory token, but they knew not him, little thinking to find him there, *v. 8.* He remembered the dreams, (*v. 9.*) but they had forgotten them. The laying up of God's oracles in our hearts, will be of excellent use to us in all our conduct. Joseph had an eye to his dreams which he knew to be divine, in his carriage toward his brethren, and aimed at the accomplishment of them, and the bringing of his brethren to repentance for their former sins; and both those points were gained.

1. He showed himself very rigorous and harsh with them; the very manner of his speaking, considering the post he was in, was enough to frighten them; for *he spake roughly to them, v. 7.* He charged them with bad designs against the government, (*v. 9.*) treated them as dangerous persons, *Ye are spies, protesting by the life of Pharaoh* that they were so, *v. 16.* Some make that an oath, others make it no more than a vehement asseveration, like that, *as thy soul liveth*; however, it was more than yea, yea, and nay, nay, and therefore came of evil. Note, Bad words are soon learned by converse with those that use them, but not so soon unlearned. Joseph, by being much at court, got the courtier's oath, *By the life of Pharaoh*; perhaps designed hereby to confirm his brethren in their belief that he was an Egyptian, and not an Israelite; they knew this was not the language of a son of Abraham; when Peter would prove himself no disciple of Christ, he cursed and swore. Now, why was Joseph thus hard upon his brethren? We may be sure it was not from a spirit of revenge, that he might trample upon them now, who had formerly trampled upon him; he was not a man of that temper. But, (1.) It was to enrich his own dreams, and complete the accomplishment of them. (2.) It was to bring them to repentance. (3.) It was to get out of them an account of the state of their family, which he longed to know: they would have discovered him, if he had asked as a friend, therefore he asks as a judge. Not seeing his brother Benjamin with them, perhaps he began to suspect that they had made away with him too, and therefore gives them occasion to speak of their father and brother. Note, God in his providence sometimes seems harsh with those he loves, and speaks roughly to those whom he has yet great mercy in store for.

They, hereupon, were very submissive; they spake to him with all the respect imaginable; *Nay, my lord; (v. 10.)* a great change since they said, *Behold, this dreamer comes.* They very modestly deny the charge, *We are no spies*; they tell him their business, that they came to buy food, a justifiable errand, and the same that many strangers came to Egypt upon at this time; they undertake to give a particular account of themselves and their family; (*v. 13.*) that was what he wanted.

3. He clapped them all up in prison for three days, *v. 17.* Thus God deals with the sinner; he designs for special comfort and honour; he first humbles them, and terrifies them, and brings them under a spirit of bondage, and then binds up their wounds by the spirit of adoption.

4. He concluded with them, at last, that one of them should be left as an hostage, and the rest should go home and fetch Benjamin. It was a very encouraging word he said to them, (*v. 18.*) *I fear God*; as if he had said, "You may assure yourselves I will do you no wrong; I dare not, for I know that, high as I am, there is one higher than I." Note, With those that fear God, we have reason to expect fair dealing. The fear of God will be a check upon those that are in power, to restrain them from abusing their power to oppression and tyranny; those that have no one else to stand in awe of, ought to

stand in awe of their own consciences. See Neh. 5. 15, *So did not I, because of the fear of God.*

21. And they said one to another, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22. And Reuben answered them, saying, *Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear?* Therefore, behold, also, his blood is required. 23. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. 24. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. 25. Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. 26. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. 27. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it *was* in his sack's mouth. 28. And he said unto his brethren, *My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them*, and they were afraid, saying one to another, *What is this that God hath done unto us?*

Here is,

1. The penitent reflection Joseph's brethren made upon the wrong they had formerly done to him, *v. 21.* They talked the matter over in the Hebrew tongue, not suspecting that Joseph, whom they took for a native of Egypt, understood them, much less that he was the person they spake of. 1. They remembered with regret the barbarous cruelty wherewith they persecuted him, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*: we do not read that they said this, during their three days' imprisonment; but now when the matter was come to some issue, and they saw themselves still embarrassed, now they began to relent. Perhaps Joseph's mention of the fear of God, (*v. 18.*) put them upon consideration, and extorted this reflection. Now see here, (1.) *The office of conscience*; it is a remembrancer, to bring to mind things long since said and done, to show us wherein we have erred, though it was long ago, as this reflection here was above twenty years after the sin was committed. As time will not wear out the guilt of sin, so it will not blot out the records of conscience; when the guilt of this sin of Joseph's brethren was fresh, they made light of it, and sat down to eat bread; but now, long afterward, their consciences reminded them of it. (2.) *The benefit of afflictions*; they often prove the happy and effectual means of awakening conscience, and bringing sin to our remembrance, Job 13. 26. (3.) *The evil of guilt concerning our brethren*; of all their sins, that was it that conscience now reproached them for; whenever we think we have wronged one, we ought to remember the wrong we have done to others, Ecc. 7. 21. 22. 2. Reuben only remembered with comfort, that he had been an advocate for his brother, and had done what he could to prevent the mischief they did him, (*v. 22.*) *Spake*



*I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child?* Note, (1.) It is an aggravation of the sin, that it was committed against admonitions. (2.) When we come to share with others in their calamities, it will be a comfort to us, if we have the testimony of our consciences for us, that we did not share with them in their iniquities, but, in our places, witnessed against them. This shall be our rejoicing in the day of evil, and take out the sting.

II. Joseph's tenderness toward them upon this occasion. He retired from them to weep, v. 24. Though his reason directed that he should still carry himself as a stranger to them, because they were not as yet humbled enough; yet natural affection could not but work, for he was a man of a tender spirit. This represents the tender mercies of our God toward repenting sinners. See Jer. 31. 20. *Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* See Judg. 10. 16.

III. The imprisonment of Simeon, v. 24. He chose him for the hostage, probably, because he remembered him to have been his most bitter enemy, or because he observed him now to be least humbled and concerned; he bound him *before their eyes*, to affect them all; or perhaps it is intimated that though he bound him with some severity *before them*, yet afterward, *when they were gone*, he took off his bonds.

IV. The dismissal of the rest of them. They came for corn, and corn they had; and not only so, but every man had his money restored in his sack's mouth. Thus Christ, our Joseph, gives out supplies without money and without price. Therefore the poor are invited to buy, Rev. 3. 17, 18. This put them into great consternation, v. 28, *Their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us?* 1. It was really a merciful event; for I hope it will be allowed they had no wrong done to them, (when they had their money given them back,) but a kindness; yet they were thus terrified by it. Note, (1.) Guilty consciences are apt to take good providences in a bad sense, and to put wrong constructions even upon those things that make for them. They flee when none pursues. (2.) Wealth sometimes brings as much care along with it as want does, and more too. If they had been robbed of their money, they could not have been worse frightened than they were now, when they found their money in their sacks. Thus he whose ground brought forth plentifully, said, *What shall I do?* Luke 12. 17. 2. Yet, in their circumstances, it was very *amazing*. They knew that the Egyptians abhorred a Hebrew, (ch. 43. 32.) and therefore, since they could not expect to receive any kindness from them, they concluded that this was done with a design to pick a quarrel with them; the rather, because the man, the lord of the land, had charged them as spies. Their own consciences also were awake, and their sins set in order before them; and this puts them into confusion. Note, (1.) When men's spirits are sinking, every thing helps to sink them. (2.) When the events of Providence concerning us are surprising, it is good to inquire what it is that God has done, and is doing with us, and to consider the operation of his hands.

29. And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them, saying, 30. The man *who* is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. 31. And we said unto him, *We are true men*; we are no spies: 32. *We be* twelve brethren, sons of our father; one *is* not, and

the youngest *is* this day with our father in the land of Canaan. 33. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, hereby shall I know that ye *are* true *men*; leave one of your brethren *here* with me, and take *food* for the famine of your households, and be gone: 34. And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye *are* no spies, but that ye *are* true *men*: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land. 35. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack: and when *both* they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. 36. And Jacob their father said unto them, *Me* have ye bereaved of *my children*: Joseph *is* not, and Simeon *is* not, and ye will take Benjamin *away*: all these things are against me. 27. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. 38. And he said, My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Here is,

1. The report which Jacob's sons made to their father, of the great distress they had been in in Egypt; how they had been suspected, and threatened, and obliged to leave Simeon a prisoner there, till they should bring Benjamin with them thither. Who would have thought of this, when they left home? When we go abroad, we should consider how many sad accidents, that we little think of, may befall us before we return home. *We know not what a day may bring forth*, we ought therefore to be always ready for the worst.

2. The deep impression this made upon the good man. The very bundles of money which Joseph returned, in kindness, to his father, frightened him; (v. 35.) for he concluded it was done with some mischievous design, or perhaps suspected his own sons to have committed some offence, and so to have run themselves into a *præmunire*—a *penalty*; which is intimated in what he says, (v. 36.) *Me* have ye bereaved. He seems to lay the fault upon them; knowing their characters, he feared they had provoked the Egyptians, and perhaps forcibly or fraudulently, brought home their money. Jacob is here much out of temper. (1.) He has very melancholy apprehensions concerning the present state of his family; *Joseph is not, and Simeon is not*; whereas Joseph was in honour, and Simeon in the way to it. Note, We often perplex ourselves with our own mistakes, even in matters of fact. True griefs may arise from false intelligence and suppositions, 2 Sam. 13. 31. Jacob gives up Joseph for gone, and Simeon and Benjamin as being in danger; and concludes, *All these things are against me*. It proved otherwise, that all these were for him, were working together for his good, and the good of his family; yet here he thinks them all against him. Note, Through our ignorance or mistake, and the weakness of our faith, we often apprehend that to be against us, which is really for us. We are afflicted in body,



estate, name, and relations; and we think all these things are against us, whereas these are really working for us the weight of glory. (2.) He is at present, resolved that Benjamin shall not go down. Reuben will undertake to bring him back in safety; (v. 37.) not so much as putting in, *If the Lord will*, not excepting the common disasters of travellers; but he foolishly bids Jacob slay his two sons, (which it is likely he was very proud of,) if he brought him not back; as if the death of two grandsons could satisfy Jacob for the death of a son. No, Jacob's present thoughts are, *My son shall not go down with you*. He plainly intimates a distrust of them, remembering that he never saw Joseph since he had been with them; therefore, "Benjamin shall not go with you, by the way in which you go; for *ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave*." Note, It is bad with a family, when children conduct themselves so ill, that their parents know not how to trust them.

### CHAP. XLIII.

Here the story of Joseph's brethren is carried on, and very particularly related. 1. Their melancholy parting with their father Jacob in Canaan, v. 1. . 14. Their pleasant meeting with Joseph in Egypt, v. 15. . 34. For, in this chapter, nothing occurs there, but what was agreeable and pleasant.

1. **A**ND the famine *was* sore in the land. 2. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. 3. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you. 4. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: 5. But if thou wilt not send *him*, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother *be* with you. 6. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye *so* ill with me, *as* to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? 7. And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, *Is* your father yet alive? Have ye *another* brother? And we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? 8. And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we and thou, *and* also our little ones. 9. I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: 10. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

Here, 1. Jacob urges his sons to go and buy corn in Egypt, v. 1, 2. The famine continued; the corn they had bought, was all spent, for it was meat that perisheth. Jacob, as a good master of a family, is in care to provide for those of his own house, food convenient; and shall not God provide for his children, *for the household of faith*? Jacob bids them go buy a *little* food; now, in time of scarcity, a little must suffice, for nature is content with a little. 2.

Judah urges him to consent that Benjamin should go down with them, how much soever it went against his feelings and previous determination. Note, it is not at all inconsistent with the honour and duty which children owe their parents, humbly and modestly to advise them, and, as occasion is, to reason with them: *Plead with your mother, plead*, Hos. 2. 2. (1.) He insists upon the absolute necessity they were under of bringing Benjamin with them; which he, who was a witness to all that had passed in Egypt, was a more competent judge of than Jacob could be. Joseph's protestation (v. 3.) may be alluded to, to show upon what terms we must draw nigh to God; unless we bring Christ along with us in the arms of our faith, we cannot see the face of God with comfort. (2.) He engages to take all possible care of him, and to do his utmost for his safety, v. 8, 9. Judah's conscience had lately smitten him for what he had done a great while ago against Joseph; (*ch.* 42. 21.) and as an evidence of the truth of his repentance, he is ready to undertake, as far as a man could do it, for Benjamin's security. He will not only not wrong him, but will do all he can to protect him. This is restitution, as the case will admit; when he knew not how he could retrieve Joseph, he would make some amends for the irreparable injury he had done him, by doubling his care concerning Benjamin.

11. And their father Israel said unto them, *If it must be so now*, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12. And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry *it* again in your hand; peradventure *it was* an oversight: 13. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: 14. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. *If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved*.

Observe here,

1. Jacob's persuadableness. He would be ruled by reason, though they were his inferiors that urged it. He saw the necessity of the case; and, since there was no remedy, he consented to yield to the necessity, (v. 11.) "*If it must be so now, take your brother*." If no corn can be had, but upon these terms, we may as well expose him to the perils of the journey, as suffer ourselves and families, and Benjamin among the rest, to perish for want of bread." *Skin for skin, and all that a man has*, even a Benjamin, the dearest of all, *will he give for his life*. No death so dreadful as that by famine, Lam. 4. 9. Jacob had said, (*ch.* 42. 38.) *My son shall not go down*; but now he is over-persuaded to consent. Note, It is no fault, but our wisdom and duty, to alter our purposes and resolutions, when there is a good reason for our so doing. Constancy is a virtue, but obstinacy is not. It is God's prerogative not to repent, and to make unchangeable resolves.

II. Jacob's prudence and justice, which appeared in three things. 1. He sent back the money which they had found in the sack's mouth, with this discreet construction of it, *Peradventure it was an oversight*. Note, Honesty obliges us to make restitution, not only of that which comes to us by our own fault, but of that which comes to us by the mistakes of others. Though we get it by oversight, if we keep it, when the oversight is discovered, it

is kept by deceit. In the stating of accounts, errors must be excepted, even those that make for us, as well as those that make against us. Jacob's words furnish us with a favourable construction to put upon that which we are tempted to resent as an injury and affront; pass it by, and say, *Peradventure it was an oversight.* 2. He sent double money, as much again as they took the time before, upon supposition that the price of corn might be risen; or, that if it should be insisted upon, they might pay a ransom for Simeon, or his prison-fees? or, to show a generous spirit, that they might be the more likely to find generous treatment with *the man, the lord of the land.* 3. He sent a present of such things as the land afforded, and as were scarce in Egypt, *balm and honey, &c.* (v. 11.) the commodities that Canaan exported, *ch. 37.* 25. Note, (1.) Providence dispenses its gifts variously. Some countries produce one commodity, others another, that commerce may be preserved. (2.) Honey and spice will never make up the want of bread-corn. The famine was sore in Canaan, and yet they had balm and myrrh, &c. We may live well enough upon plain food without dainties; but we cannot live upon dainties without plain food. Let us thank God, that that which is most needful and useful, is generally most cheap and common. (3.) A gift in secret pacifies wrath, *Prov. 21.* 14. Jacob's sons were unjustly accused as spies, yet Jacob is willing to be at the expense of a present, to pacify the accuser. Sometimes we must not think much to buy peace, even there where we may justly demand it, and insist upon it as our right.

III. Jacob's piety appearing in his prayer, *v. 14.* *God Almighty give you mercy before the man!* Jacob had formerly turned an angry brother into a kind one with a present and a prayer; and here he betakes himself to the same tried method, and it sped well. Note, Those that would find mercy with men, must seek it of God, who has all hearts in his hands, and turns them as he pleases.

IV. Jacob's patience; he concludes all with this, *"If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved; If I must part with them thus one after another, I must acquiesce, and say, The will of the Lord be done."* Note, It is our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to the sorest afflictions, and make the best of them; for there is nothing got by striving with our Maker, *2 Sam. 15.* 25, 26.

15. And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. 16. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. 17. And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. 18. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. 19. And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, 20. And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

21. And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. 22. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. 23. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. 24. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. 25. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

Jacob's sons, having got leave to take Benjamin with them, were observant of the orders their father had given them, and went down the second time into Egypt to buy corn. If we should ever know what a famine of the word means, let us not think it much to travel as far for spiritual food, as they did here for corporal food. Now here we have an account of what passed between them and Joseph's steward, who, some conjecture was in the secret, and knew them to be Joseph's brethren, and helped to humour the thing; I rather think not, because no man must be present when Joseph afterward made himself known to them, *ch. 45.* 1.

I. Joseph's steward has orders from his master, (who was busy selling corn, and receiving money,) to take them to his house, and make ready for their entertainment. Though Joseph saw Benjamin there, he would not leave his work at working-time, nor trust another with it. Note, Business must take place of civility in its season. Our needful employments must not be neglected, no, not to pay respects to our friends.

II. Even this frightened them; (*v. 18.*) *They were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house.* The just challenges of their own consciences, and Joseph's violent suspicions of them, forbade them to expect any favour, and suggested to them, that this was done with a bad design upon them. Note, Those that are guilty and timorous, are apt to make the worst of every thing. Now they thought they should be reckoned with about the money in the sacks' mouths, and should be charged as cheats, and men not fit to be dealt with, who had taken advantage of the hurry of the market, to carry off their corn unpaid for. They therefore laid the case before the steward, that he, being apprised of it, might stand between them and danger. *Herein* they gave substantial proof of their honesty, that, before they were charged with taking back their money, they produced it. Note, Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, and will clear themselves as the light of the morning.

III. The steward encouraged them; (*v. 23.*) *Peace be to you, fear not;* though he knew not what his master drove at, yet, he was aware, these were men whom he meant no harm to, while he thus amused them; and therefore he directs them to look at the Divine Providence in the return of their money; *Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks.* Observe, 1. Hereby he shows that he had no suspicion at all of dishonesty in them: for, of what we get by deceit, we cannot say, "God gives it us."

2. Hereby he silences their further inquiry about it; "Ask not how it came thither, Providence brought it you, and let that satisfy you." 3. It appears by what he said, that, by his good master's instructions, he was brought to the knowledge of the true God, the God of the Hebrews. It may justly be expected that those who are servants in religious families, should take all fit occasions to speak of God and his providence with reverence and seriousness. 4. He directs them to look up to God, and acknowledge his providence in the good bargain they had. We must own ourselves indebted to God, as *our God, and the God of our fathers*, (a God in covenant with us and them,) for all our successes and advantages, and the kindnesses of our friends; for every creature is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. The steward encouraged them, not only in words but in deeds; for he made very much of them till his master came, v. 24.

26. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. 27. And he asked them of *their* welfare, and said, *Is* your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? *Is* he yet alive? 28. And they answered, Thy servant our father *is* in good health, *he is* yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. 29. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, *Is* this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. 30. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there. 31. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. 32. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that *is* an abomination unto the Egyptians. 33. And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. 34. And he took *and sent* messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

Here is,

I. The great respect that Joseph's brethren paid to him; when they brought him the present, *they bowed themselves before him*; (v. 26.) and again, when they gave him an account of their father's health, *they made obeisance*, and called him, *Thy servant our father*, v. 28. Thus were Joseph's dreams fulfilled more and more: and even the father, by the sons, *bowed before him*, according to the dream, ch. 37. 10. Probably, Jacob had directed them, if they had occasion to speak of him to *the man, the lord of the land*, to call him *his servant*

II. The great kindness that Joseph showed to them, while they little thought it was a *brotherly* kindness. Here is,

1. His kind inquiry concerning Jacob, *Is he yet alive?* A very fit question to be asked concerning any, especially concerning old people; for we are dying daily; it is strange, that we are *yet alive*. Jacob had said, many years before, *I will go to the grave to my son; but he is yet alive*: we must not die when we will.

2. The kind notice he took of Benjamin, his own brother. (1) He put up a prayer for him, (v. 29.) *God be gracious unto thee, my son*. Joseph's favour, though he was *the lord of the land*, would do him little good, unless God were gracious to him. Many seek the ruler's favour, but he directs him to seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers. (2.) He shed some tears for him, v. 30. His natural affection to his brother, his joy to see him, his concern to see him and the rest of them in distress for bread, and the remembrance of his own griefs since he last saw him, produced a great agitation in him, which perhaps was the more uneasy, because he endeavoured to stifle and suppress it; but he was forced to retire into his closet, there to give vent to his feelings by tears. Note, [1.] Tears of tenderness and affection are no disparagement at all, even to great and wise men. [2.] Gracious weepers should not proclaim their tears, *My soul shall weep in secret*, says the prophet, Jer. 13. 17. *Peter went out and wept bitterly*. See Matt. 26. 75.

3. His kind entertainment of them all; when his weeping had subsided so that he could refrain himself, he sat down to dinner with them, treated them nobly, and yet contrived every thing to amuse them. (1.) He ordered three tables to be spread, one for his brethren, another for the Egyptians that dined with him, (for so different were their customs, that they did not care to eat together,) another for himself, who durst not own himself a Hebrew, and yet would not sit with the Egyptians. See here an instance, [1.] Of hospitality and good house-keeping, which is a very commendable thing, according as the ability is. [2.] Of compliance with people's humours, even whimsical ones, as Bishop Patrick calls this of the Egyptians not eating with the Hebrews. Though Joseph was *the lord of the land*, and orders were given that all people should obey him; yet he would not force the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews, against their minds, but let them enjoy their humours; spirits truly generous hate to impose. [3.] Of the early distance between Jews and Gentiles; one table would not hold them. (2.) He placed his brethren according to their seniority, (v. 33.) as if he *could certainly divine*. Some think they placed themselves so, according to their custom; but if so, I see not why such particular notice is taken of it, especially as a thing they marvelled at. (3.) He gave them a very plentiful entertainment, sent messes to them from his own table, v. 34. This was the more generous in him, and the more obliging to them, because of the present scarcity of provisions. In a day of famine, it is enough to be fed; but they here were feasted. Perhaps they had not had such a good dinner for many months. It is said, *They drank and were merry*; their cares and fears were now over, and they ate their bread with joy, concluding they were now upon good terms with *the man, the lord of the land*. If God accept our works, *our present*, we have reason to be cheerful. Yet when we sit, as they here did, to eat with a ruler, we should consider what is before us, and not indulge our appetite, or be desirous of dainties. Prov. 23. 1-3. Joseph gave them to understand that Benjamin was his favourite; for his mess was *five times as much as any of their's*, not as if he

would have him eat so much more than the rest, for then he must eat more than would do him good; (and it is no act of friendship, but an injury and unkindness rather, to press any either to eat or drink to excess;) but thus he would testify his particular respect for him, that he might try whether his brethren would envy Benjamin his larger messes, as formerly they had envied him his finer coat. And it must be our rule, in such cases, to be content with what we have, and not to grieve at what others have.

### CHAP. XLIV.

Joseph having entertained his brethren, dismissed them; but here we have them brought back in a greater fright than any they had been in yet. Observe, I. What method he took, both to humble them further, and also to try their affection to his brother Benjamin, by which he would be able to judge of the sincerity of their repentance for what they had done against him, which he was desirous to be satisfied of, before he manifested his reconciliation to them. This he contrived to do by bringing Benjamin into distress, *r. 1. . 17. II.* The good success of the experiment; he found them all heartily concerned, and Judah particularly, both for the safety of Benjamin and for the comfort of their aged father, *v. 18 . . 34.*

1. **AND** he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks *with* food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. 2. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. 3. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. 4. *And* when they were gone out of the city, *and not yet far off*, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? 5. *Is not this it* in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing. 6. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. 7. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: 8. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks' mouths we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? 9. With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. 10. And he said, Now also *let it be* according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. 11. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. 12. And he searched, *and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest*: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. 13. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and

returned to the city. 14. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he *was* yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. 15. And Joseph said unto them, what deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? 16. And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we *are* my lord's servants, both we, and *he* also with whom the cup is found. 17. And he said, God forbid that I should do so: *but the man* in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Here,

I. Joseph heaps further kindnesses upon his brethren, fills their sacks, returns their money, and sends them away full of gladness. But,

II. He exercises them with further trials. Our God thus humbles those whom he loves, and loads with benefits. Joseph ordered his steward to put a fine *silver cup* which he had, (and which it is likely, was used at his table when they dined with him,) into Benjamin's sack's mouth, that it might seem as if he had stolen it from the table, and put it there himself, after his corn was delivered him. If Benjamin had stolen it, it had been the basest piece of dishonesty and ingratitude that could be; and if Joseph, by ordering it to be put there, had designed really to take advantage against him, it had been in him most horrid cruelty and oppression; but it proved in the issue, that there was no harm done, nor any designed on either side. Observe,

1. How the pretended criminals were pursued and arrested, on suspicion of having stolen a *silver cup*. The steward charged them with ingratitude, *rewarding evil for good*; with folly, in taking away a cup of daily use, and which therefore would soon be missed, and *diligent search made for it*; for so it may be read, (*v. 5.*) *Is not this it in which my lord drinketh*, (as having a particular fondness for it,) *and for which he would search thoroughly?* Or, "by which, leaving it carelessly at your table, he would make trial whether you were honest men or no?"

2. How they pleaded for themselves; they solemnly protested their innocence, and detestation of so base a thing; (*v. 7.*) urged it as an instance of their honesty, that they had brought their money back; (*v. 8.*) and offered to submit to the severest punishment, if they should be found guilty, *v. 9, 10.*

3. How the theft was fastened upon Benjamin; in *his* sack the cup was found, to whom Joseph had been particularly kind. Benjamin, no doubt, was ready to deny upon oath, the taking of the cup, and we may suppose him as little liable to suspicion as any of them; but it is in vain to confront such notorious evidence, the cup is found in his custody; they dare not arraign Joseph's justice, nor so much as suggest that perhaps he that had put their money in their sacks' mouths, had put the cup there; but they throw themselves upon Joseph's mercy. And,

4. Here is their humble submission, *v. 16.* (1.) They acknowledge the righteousness of God, *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants*; perhaps referring to the injury they had formerly done to Joseph, for which they thought God was now rec-

oning with them. Note, Even in those afflictions wherein we apprehend ourselves wronged by men, yet we must own that God is righteous, and finds out our iniquity. (2.) They surrender themselves prisoners to Joseph, *We are my lord's servants*. Now Joseph's dreams were accomplished to the utmost; their bowing so often, and doing obeisance, might be looked upon as a compliment, and no more than what other strangers did: but the construction they themselves, in their pride, had put upon his dreams, was, *Shalt thou have dominion over us?* ch. 37. 8. And in that sense it is now at length fulfilled, they own themselves his vassals; since they did invidiously so understand it, so it shall be fulfilled in them.

5. Joseph with an air of justice, gives sentence, that Benjamin only should be kept in bondage, and the rest should be dismissed; for why should any suffer but the guilty? Perhaps Joseph intended hereby to try Benjamin's temper, whether he could bear such a hardship as this, with the calmness and composure of mind that became a wise and good man; in short, whether he was indeed his own brother, in *spirit*, as well as *blood*; for Joseph himself had been falsely accused, and had suffered hard things in consequence, and yet kept possession of his own soul: however, it is plain, he intended hereby to try the affection of his brethren to him, and to their father. If they had gone away contentedly, and left Benjamin in bonds, no doubt but Joseph would soon have released and promoted him, and sent notice to Jacob, and would have left the rest of his brethren justly to suffer for their hard-heartedness; but they proved to be better affected to Benjamin than he feared. Note, We cannot judge what men are, by what they have been formerly; nor what they *will* do, by what they *have* done: age and experience may make men wiser and better. They that had sold Joseph, yet would not now abandon Benjamin: the worst may mend in time.

18. Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou *art* even as Pharaoh. 19. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? 20. And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. 21. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. 22. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for *if* he should leave his father, *his father* would die. 23. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. 24. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. 26. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our

youngest brother *be* with us. 27. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two *sons*: 28. And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: 29. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. 30. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad *be* not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; 31. It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad *is* not *with* us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. 33. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. 34. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad *be* not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

We have here a most ingenious and pathetic speech which Judah made to Joseph on Benjamin's behalf, to obtain his discharge from the sentence passed upon him: either Judah was a better friend to Benjamin than the rest were, and more solicitous to bring him off; or, he thought himself under greater obligations to endeavour it than the rest, because he had passed his word to his father for his safe return; or, the rest chose him for their spokesman, because he was a man of better sense, and better spirit, and had a greater command of language than any of them. His address, as it is here recorded, is so very natural, and so expressive of his present feelings, that we cannot but suppose Moses, who wrote it so long after, to have written it under the special direction of him that *made man's mouth*. A great deal of unaffected art, and unstudied unforced rhetoric, there is in this speech.

I. He addresses himself to Joseph with a great deal of respect and deference; calls him his *lord*, himself and his brethren his *servants*, begs his patient hearing, and ascribes sovereign authority to him, "*Thou art even as Pharaoh*; whose favour we desire, and whose wrath we dread, as we do Pharaoh's." Religion does not destroy good manners, and it is prudence to speak obligingly to those at whose mercy we lie: titles of honour to those that are entitled to them, are not flattering titles.

II. He represented Benjamin as one well worthy of his compassionate consideration: (v. 20.) he was a *little one*, compared with the rest of them; the youngest, not acquainted with the world, nor ever inured to hardship, having always been brought up tenderly with his father, it made the case more pitiable, that he alone was left of his mother, and his brother was dead, namely, *Joseph*; little did Judah think, what a tender point he touched on now. Judah knew that Joseph was sold, and therefore had reason enough to think that he was alive; however, he could not be sure that he was dead, but they had made their father believe he was dead; and now they had told that lie so long, that

they had forgotten the truth, and began to believe the lie themselves.

III. He urged it very closely, that Joseph had himself constrained them to bring Benjamin with them, had expressed a desire to see him, (v. 21.) and had forbidden them his presence, unless they brought Benjamin with them, (v. 23, 26.) all which intimated that he designed him some kindness, and must he be brought with so much difficulty to the preferment of a perpetual slavery? Was he not brought to Egypt, in obedience, purely in obedience, to the command of Joseph; and would he not show him some mercy? Some observe, that Jacob's sons, in reasoning with their father, had said, *We will not go down, unless Benjamin go with us*, (ch. 43. 5.) but that when Judah comes here to relate the story, he expresses it more decently, "*We cannot go down*, with any expectation to speed well." Indecent words spoken in haste to our superiors, should be recalled and amended.

IV. The great argument he insists upon, was, the insupportable grief it would be to his aged father, if Benjamin should be left behind in servitude; *His father loveth him*, v. 20. This they had pleaded against Joseph's insisting on his coming down, (v. 22.) "*If he should leave his father, his father would die*; much more if now he be left behind, never more to return to him." This the old man, of whom they spake, had pleaded against his going down, (v. 29.) *If any mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs*, that crown of glory, *with sorrow to the grave*. This therefore Judah presses with a great deal of earnestness, "*His life is bound up in the lad's life*; (v. 30.) when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will faint away, and die immediately, (v. 31.) or will abandon himself to such a degree of sorrow, as will, in a few days, make an end of him." And *lastly*, Judah pleads, that, for his part, he could not bear to see this, (v. 34.) *Let me not see the evil that shall come on my father*. Note, It is the duty of children to be very tender of their parents' comfort, and to be afraid of every thing that may be an occasion of grief to them. Thus the love that descended first, must again ascend, and something must be done towards a recompense for their care.

V. Judah, in honour to the justice of Joseph's sentence, and to show his sincerity in this plea, offers himself to become a bondman instead of Benjamin, v. 33. Thus the law would be satisfied; Joseph would be no loser; (for we may suppose Judah a more able-bodied man than Benjamin, and fitter for service;) and Jacob would better bear the loss of him than of Benjamin. Now, so far was he from grieving at his father's particular fondness for Benjamin, that he is himself willing to be a bondman, to indulge it.

Now, had Joseph been as Judah supposed him, an utter stranger to the family, yet even common humanity could not but be wrought upon by such powerful reasonings as these; for nothing could be said more moving, more tender; it was enough to melt a heart of stone: but to Joseph, who was nearer akin to Benjamin than Judah himself was, and who, at this time, felt a greater affection both for him and his aged father, than Judah did, nothing could be more pleasingly or more happily said. Neither Jacob nor Benjamin needed an intercessor with Joseph; for he himself loved them.

Upon the whole matter, let us take notice, 1. How prudently Judah suppressed all mention of the crime that was charged upon Benjamin. Had he said any thing by way of acknowledgment of it, he had reflected on Benjamin's honesty, and seemed too forward to suspect that; had he said any thing by way of denial of it, he had reflected on Joseph's justice, and the sentence he had passed: therefore

he wholly waves that head, and appeals to Joseph's pity. Compare with this that of Job, in humbling himself before God, (Job 9. 15.) *Though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, I would not argue, but petition, I would make supplication to my judge*. 2. What good reason dying Jacob had to say, *Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise*, (ch. 49. 8.) for he excelled them all in boldness, wisdom, eloquence, and especially tenderness for their father and family. 3. Judah's faithful adherence to Benjamin, now in his distress, was recompensed long after by the constant adherence of the tribe of Benjamin to the tribe of Judah, when all the other ten tribes had deserted it. 4. How fitly does the apostle, when he is discoursing of the mediation of Christ, observe, that our *Lord sprang out of Judah*; (Heb. 7. 14.) for, like his father Judah, he not only made intercession for the transgressors, but he became a surety for them, as it follows there, (v. 22.) testifying therein a very tender concern, both for his father and for his brethren.

## CHAP. XLV.

It is a pity that this chapter and that foregoing should be parted, and read asunder. There we had Judah's intercession for Benjamin, with which, we may suppose, the rest of his brethren signified their concurrence; Joseph let him go on without interruption, heard all he had to say, and then answered it all in one word, *I am Joseph*. Now, he found his brethren humbled for their sins, mindful of himself, (for Judah had mentioned him twice in his speech,) respectful to their father, and very tender of their brother Benjamin; now, they were ripe for the comfort he designed them, by making himself known to them, which we have the story of in this chapter: it was to Joseph's brethren as clear shining after rain, nay, it was to them as life from the dead. Here is, I. Joseph's discovery of himself to his brethren, and his discourse with them upon that occasion, v. 1. . 15. II. The orders Pharaoh, hereupon, gave to fetch Jacob and his family down to Egypt, and Joseph's despatch of his brethren, accordingly, back to his father with those orders, v. 16. . 24. III. The joyful tidings of this brought to Jacob, v. 25. . 28.

1. **THEN** Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3. And Joseph said unto his brethren, *I am Joseph*; Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, *I am Joseph your brother*, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6. For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither be caring nor harvest. 7. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8. So now *it was* not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house



and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: 11. And there will I nourish thee; for yet *there are five years* of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that *it is my mouth* that speaketh unto you. 13. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Judah and his brethren were waiting for an answer, and could not but be amazed to discover instead of the gravity of a judge, the natural affection of a father or brother.

I. Joseph ordered all his attendants to withdraw, v. 1. The private conversations of friends are the most free: when Joseph would put on love, he puts off state; which it was not fit his servants should be witnesses of. Thus Christ graciously manifests himself and his loving kindness to his people, out of the sight and hearing of the world.

II. Tears were the preface or introduction to his discourse, v. 2. He had dammed up this stream a great while, and with much ado; but now it swelled so high, that he could no longer contain, but *he wept aloud*, so that those whom he had forbidden to see him, could not but hear him. These were tears of tenderness and strong affection, and with these he threw off that austerity with which he had hitherto carried himself toward his brethren; for he could bear it no longer. This represents the divine compassion toward returning penitents, as much as that of the father of the prodigal, Luke 15. 20. Hos. 11. 8, 9.

III. He very abruptly (as one uneasy till it was out) tells them who he was, *I am Joseph*. They knew him only by his Egyptian name, *Zaphnath-paaneah*, his Hebrew name being lost and forgotten in Egypt; but now he teaches them to call him by that, *I am Joseph*: nay, that they might not suspect it was another of the same name, he explains himself, (v. 4.) *I am Joseph, your brother*. This would both humble them yet more for their sin in selling him, and would encourage them to hope for kind treatment. Thus when Christ would convince Paul, he said, *I am Jesus*; and when he would comfort his disciples, he said, *It is I, be not afraid*. This word, at first, startled Joseph's brethren; they started back through fear, or, at least, stood still astonished; but Joseph called kindly and familiarly to them, *Come near, I pray you*. Thus when Christ manifests himself to his people, he encourages them to draw near to him with a true heart. Perhaps being about to speak of their selling of him, he would not speak aloud, lest the Egyptians should overhear, and it should make the Hebrews to be

yet more an abomination to them; therefore he would have them come near, that he might whisper with them, which, now that the tide of his passion was a little over, he was able to do, whereas, at first, he could not but cry out.

IV. He endeavours to soften their grief for the injuries they had done him, by showing them, that whatever they designed, God meant it for good, and had brought much good out of it, (v. 5.) *Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves*. Sinners must grieve and be angry with themselves, for their sins; yea, though God, by his power, bring good out of them, for that is no thanks to the sinner, but true penitents should be greatly affected with it, when they see God bringing good out of evil, *meat out of the eater*. Though we must not with this consideration extenuate *our own sins*, and so take off the edge of our repentance; yet it may do well thus to extenuate the *sins of others*, and so take off the edge of our angry resentments. Thus Joseph does here; his brethren needed not to fear that he would avenge upon them an injury which God's providence had made to turn so much to his advantage, and that of his family. Now he tells them how long the famine was likely to last, *five years*; yet, (v. 6.) what a capacity he was in of being kind to his relations and friends, which is the greatest satisfaction that wealth and power can give to a good man, v. 8. See what a favourable colour he puts upon the injury they had done him, *God sent me before you*, v. 5, 7. Note,

1. God's Israel is the particular care of God's providence. Joseph reckoned that his advancement was designed, not so much to save a whole kingdom of Egyptians, as to preserve a small family of Israelites: *for the Lord's portion is his people*; whatever goes with others, they shall be secured.

2. Providence looks a great way forward, and has a long reach; even long before the years of plenty, Providence was preparing for the supply of Jacob's house in the years of famine. The Psalmist praises God for this, (Ps. 105. 17.) *He sent a man before them, even Joseph*. God sees his work from the beginning to the end, but we do not, Eccl.

3. 11. How admirable are the projects of Providence! How remote its tendencies! What wheels are there within wheels, and yet all directed by the eyes in the wheels, and the spirit of the living creature! Let us therefore judge nothing before the time.

3. God often works by contraries; the envy and contention of brethren threaten the ruin of families, yet, in this instance they prove the occasion of preserving Jacob's family. Joseph had never been the *shepherd and stone of Israel*, if his brethren had not shot at him, and hated him; even those that had wickedly sold Joseph into Egypt, yet themselves reaped the benefit of the good God brought out of it; as those that put Christ to death, were many of them saved by his death.

4. God must have all the glory of the seasonable preservations of his people, by what way sever they are effected, (v. 8.) *It was not you that sent me hither, but God*. As, on the one hand, they must not fret at it, because it ended so well; so, on the other hand, they must not be proud of it, because it was God's doing, and not theirs. They designed, by selling him into Egypt, to defeat his dreams, but God thereby designed to accomplish them. Isa. 10. 7, *Howbeit he meaneth not so*.

V. He promises to take care of his father and all the family during the rest of the years of famine.

1. He desires that his father might speedily be made glad with the tidings of his life and dignity. His brethren must hasten to Canaan, and must acquaint Jacob that his son Joseph was *lord of all*.

*Egypt*; (v. 9.) they must tell him of all his glory there, v. 13. He knew it would be a refreshing oil to his hoary head, and a sovereign cordial to his spirits. If any thing would make him young again, this would. He desires them to give themselves, and take with them to their father, all possible satisfaction of the truth of these surprising tidings, (v. 12.) *Your eyes see that it is my mouth.* If they would recollect themselves, they might remember something of his features, speech, &c. and be satisfied.

2. He is very earnest that his father and all his family should come to him to Egypt; *Come down unto me, tarry not*, v. 9. He allots his dwelling in Goshen, that part of Egypt which lay toward Canaan, that they might be mindful of the country from which they were to come out, v. 10. He promises to provide for him, (v. 11.) *I will nourish.* Note, It is the duty of children, if the necessity of their parents do at any time require it, to support and supply them to the utmost of their ability; and *Corban* will never excuse them, Mark 7. 11. This is showing piety at home, 1 Tim. 5. 4. Our Lord Jesus being, like Joseph, exalted to the highest honours and powers of the upper world, it is his will that all that are his, should be with him where he is, John 17. 24. This is his commandment, that we be with him now in faith and hope, and a heavenly conversation; and this is his promise, that we shall be for ever with him.

VI. Endearments were interchanged between him and his brethren. He began with the youngest, his own brother Benjamin, who was but about a year old when he was separated from his brethren; they wept on each other's neck, (v. 14.) perhaps to think of their mother Rachel, who died in travail of Benjamin. Rachel, in her husband Jacob, had been lately weeping for her children, because, in his apprehension, they were not, Joseph gone, and Benjamin going; and now they are weeping for her, because she was not. After he had embraced Benjamin, he, in like manner, caressed them all; (v. 15.) and then, *his brethren talked with him* freely and familiarly of all the affairs of their father's house. After the tokens of true reconciliation, follow the instances of a sweet communion.

16. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. 17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; 18. And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your's. 21. And the children of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver, and five changes of raiment. 23. And to his father he sent

after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. 24. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.

Here is,

I. The kindness of Pharaoh to Joseph, and to his relations, for his sake; he bade his brethren welcome, (v. 16.) though it was a time of scarcity, and they were likely to be a charge to him. Nay, because it pleased Pharaoh, it pleased his servants too, at least they pretended to be pleased, because Pharaoh was. He engaged Joseph to send for his father down to Egypt, and promised to furnish them with all conveniences both for his removal thither, and his settlement there. *If the good of all the land of Egypt* (as it was now better stocked than any other land, thanks to Joseph, under God,) would suffice him, he was welcome to it all, it was all his own, even *the fat of the land*, (v. 18.) so that they need not *regard their stuff*, v. 20. What they had in Canaan he reckoned but stuff, in comparison with what he had for them in Egypt; and therefore if they should leave some of that behind them, let them not be discontented; Egypt would afford them enough to make up the losses of their remove. Thus those for whom Christ intends shares in his heavenly glory, ought not to regard the stuff of this world; the best of its enjoyments are but *stuff*, but *lumber*; we cannot make sure of it while we are here, much less can we carry it away with us; let us not therefore be solicitous about it, nor set our eyes or hearts upon it: there are better things reserved for us in that blessed land, whither our Joseph is gone to prepare a place.

II. The kindness of Joseph to his father and brethren. Pharaoh was respectful to Joseph, in gratitude, because he had been an instrument of much good to him and his kingdom, not only preserving it from the common calamity, but helping to make it considerable among the nations; for all their neighbours would say, "Surely the Egyptians are a wise and understanding people, that are so well stocked in a time of scarcity." For this reason, Pharaoh never thought any thing too much he could do for Joseph. Note, There is a gratitude owing even to inferiors; and when any have showed us kindness, we should study to requite it, not only to them, but to their relations. And Joseph likewise was respectful to his father and brethren in duty, because they were his near relations, though his brethren had been his enemies, and his father long a stranger.

1. He furnished them for necessity, v. 21. He gave them wagons and provisions for the way, both going and coming; for we never find that Jacob was very rich, and at this time, when the famine prevailed, we may suppose that he was rather poor.

2. He furnished them for ornament and delight. To his brethren he gave two suits a piece of good clothes, to Benjamin five suits, and money besides in his pocket, v. 22. To his father he gave a very handsome present of the varieties of Egypt, v. 23. Note, Those that are wealthy, should be generous, and devise liberal things; what is an abundance good for but to do good with it?

3. He dismissed them with a seasonable caution, (v. 24.) *See that ye fall not out by the way.* He knew they were but too apt to be quarrelsome; and what had lately passed, which revived the remembrance of what they had done formerly against their brother, might give them occasion to quarrel. Joseph had observed them contend about it, ch. 42. 22.

To one they would say, "It was you that first upbraided him with his dreams;" to another, "It was you that said, Let us kill him;" to another, "It was you that stript him of his fine coat;" to another, "It was you that threw him into the pit," &c. Now Joseph having forgiven them all, lays this obligation upon them, not to upbraid one another. This charge our Lord Jesus has given us, *that we love one another*, that we live in peace, that, whatever occurs, or whatever former occurrences are remembered, we *fall not out*. For, (1.) We are brethren, we have all one father. (2.) We are *his* brethren, and we shame our relation to him *who is our Peace*, if we fall out. (3.) We are guilty, *verily guilty*, and, instead of quarrelling with one another, have a great deal of reason to fall out with ourselves. (4.) We are, or hope to be, forgiven of God whom we have all offended, and therefore should be ready to forgive one another. (5.) We are *by the way*, a way that lies through the land of Egypt, where we have many eyes upon us, that seek occasion and advantage against us; a way that leads to Canaan, where we hope to be for ever in perfect peace.

25. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26. And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28. And Israel said, *It is enough*; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

We have here the good news brought to Jacob.

1. The relation of it, at first, sunk his spirits: when, without any preamble, his sons came in, crying, *Joseph is yet alive*, each striving which should first proclaim it, perhaps he thought they bantered him, and the affront grieved him; or, the very mention of Joseph's name revived his sorrow, so that his heart fainted; (v. 26.) it was a good while before he came to himself. He was in such care and fear about the rest of them, that, at this time, it would have been joy enough to him to hear that Simeon is released, and Benjamin is come safe home; (for he had been ready to despair concerning both these;) but to hear that *Joseph is yet alive*, is too good news to be true; he faints, for he believes it not. Note, We faint, because we do not believe; David himself had fainted, if he had not believed, Ps. 27. 13.

2. The confirmation of it, by degrees, revived his spirit; Jacob had easily believed his sons formerly, when they told him, *Joseph is dead*; but he can hardly believe them now that they tell him, *Joseph is alive*. Weak and tender spirits are influenced more by fear than hope, and are more apt to receive impressions that are discouraging than those that are encouraging. But, at length, Jacob is convinced of the truth of the story, especially when he sees the wagons which were sent to carry him; for seeing is believing; then his *spirit revived*. Death is as the wagons that are sent to fetch us to Christ: the very sight of it approaching should revive us. Now Jacob is called *Israel*, (v. 28.) for he begins to recover his wonted vigour. (1.) It pleases him to think that *Joseph is alive*. He says nothing of *Joseph's glory*, which they told him of; it was enough

to him that *Joseph was alive*. Note, Those that would be content with lesser degrees of comfort, are best prepared for greater. (2.) It pleases him to think of going to see him. Though he was old, and the journey long, yet he would go to see Joseph, because Joseph's business would not permit him to come to see him. Observe, He says, "*I will go and see him*," not, "*I will go and live with him*;" Jacob was old, and did not expect to live long: "But I will go and see him before I die, and then let me depart in peace; let my eyes be refreshed with this sight before they are closed, and then it is enough, I need no more to make me happy in this world." Note, It is good for us all to make death familiar to us, and to speak of it as near, that we may think how little we have to do before we die, that we may do it with all our might, and may enjoy our comforts as those that must quickly die, and leave them.

## CHAP. XLVI.

Jacob is here removing to Egypt in his old age, forced thither by a famine, and invited thither by a son. Here, I. God sends him thither, v. 1..4. II. All his family goes with him thither, v. 5..27. III. Joseph bids him welcome thither, v. 28..34.

1. **A**ND ISRAEL took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. 2. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. 3. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: 4. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

The divine precept is, *In all thy ways acknowledge God*; and the promise annexed to it is, *He shall direct thy paths*. Jacob has here a very great concern before him, not only a journey, but a remove, to settle in another country; a change which was very surprising to him, (for he never had any other thoughts than to live and die in Canaan,) and which would be of great consequence to his family for a long time to come; now here we are told,

1. How he acknowledged God in this way. He came to Beer-sheba, from Hebron, where he now dwelt, and there he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac, v. 1. He chose that place, in remembrance of the communion which his father and grandfather had with God in that place. Abraham called on God there, (ch. 21. 33,) so did Isaac; (ch. 26. 25.) and therefore Jacob made it the place of his devotion, the rather because it lay in his way. In his devotion, 1. He had an eye to God as the God of his father Isaac, that is, a God in covenant with him; for by Isaac the covenant was entailed upon him. God had forbidden Isaac to go down to Egypt, when there was a famine in Canaan, (ch. 26. 2.) which perhaps Jacob calls to mind, when he consults God as the God of his father Isaac, with this thought, "Lord, though I am very desirous to see Joseph, yet if thou forbid me to go down to Egypt, as thou didst my father Isaac, I will submit, and very contentedly stay where I am." 2. He offered sacrifices, extraordinary sacrifices, beside those at his stated times; these sacrifices were offered, (1.) *By way of thanksgiving* for the late blessed change of the face of his family, for the good news he had received concerning Joseph, and for the hopes he had of seeing him. Note, We should give God thanks for the beginnings of mercy,

though they are not yet perfected; and this is a decent way of begging further mercy. (2.) *By way of petition* for the presence of God with him in his intended journey; he desired by these sacrifices to make his peace with God, to obtain the forgiveness of sin, that he might take no guilt along with him in this journey, for that is a bad companion. By Christ, the great Sacrifice, we must reconcile ourselves to God, and offer up our requests to him. (3.) *By way of consultation*; the Heathen consulted their oracles by sacrifice. Jacob would not go till he had asked God's leave; "Shall I go down to Egypt, or back to Hebron?" Such must be our inquiries in doubtful cases; and though we cannot expect immediate answers from Heaven, yet if we diligently attend to the directions of the word, conscience, and providence, we shall find it is not in vain to ask counsel of God.

II. How God did direct his paths. *In the visions of the night*, (probably, the very next night after he had offered his sacrifices, as 2 Chron. 1. 7.) *God spoke unto him, v. 2.* Note, Those who desire to keep up communion with God, shall find that it never fails on his side. If we speak to him as we ought, he will not fail to speak to us. God called him by name, by his old name, *Jacob, Jacob*, to remind him of his low estate; his present fears did scarcely become an *Israel*. Jacob, like one well acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, and ready to obey them, answers, "*Here am I, ready to receive orders*;" and what has God to say to him?

1. He renews the covenant with him; *I am God, the God of thy father, (v. 3.)* that is, "I am what thou owest me to be: thou shalt find me a God, a divine wisdom and power engaged for thee; and thou shalt find me the *God of thy father*, true to the covenant made with him."

2. He encourages him to make this remove of his family; *Fear not to go down into Egypt.* It seems, though Jacob, upon the first intelligence of Joseph's life and glory in Egypt, resolved, without any hesitation, *I will go and see him*; yet, upon second thoughts, he saw some difficulties in it, which he knew not well how to get over. Note, Even those changes which seem to have in them the greatest joys and hopes, yet have an alloy of cares and fears, *Nulla est sincera voluptas—There is no unmingled pleasure.* We must always rejoice with trembling. Jacob had many careful thoughts about this journey, which God took notice of. (1.) He was old, 130 years old; and it is mentioned as one of the infirmities of old people, that they are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way, Eccl. 12. 5. It was a long journey, and Jacob was unfit for travel, and perhaps remembered that his beloved Rachel died in a journey. (2.) He feared lest his sons should be tainted with the idolatry of Egypt, and forget the God of their fathers, or enamoured with the pleasures of Egypt, and forget the land of promise. (3.) Probably, he thought of what God had said to Abraham concerning the bondage and affliction of his seed, (ch. 15. 13.) and was apprehensive that his remove to Egypt would issue in that. Present satisfactions should not take us off from the consideration and prospect of future inconveniences, which possibly may arise from that which now appears most promising. (4.) He could not think of laying his bones in Egypt. But whatever his discouragements were, this was enough to answer them all, *Fear not to go down into Egypt.*

3. He promises him comfort in the rem. ve. (1.) That he should multiply in Egypt; "*I will there, where thou fearest that thy family will sink, and be lost, make it a great nation.*" That is the place Infinite Wisdom has chosen for the accomplishment of that promise." (2.) That he should have God's presence with him; *I will go down with thee into*

*Egypt.* Note, Those that go whither God sends them, shall certainly have God with them; and that is enough to secure them wherever they are, and to silence their fears; we may safely venture into Egypt, if God go down with us. (3.) That neither he nor his should be lost in Egypt; *I will surely bring thee up again.* Though Jacob died in Egypt, yet this promise was fulfilled, [1.] In the bringing up his body, to be buried in Canaan, about which it appears he was very solicitous, ch. 49. 29. 32. [2.] In the bringing up of his seed to be settled in Canaan. Whatever low or darksome valley we are called into at any time, we may be confident, if God go down with us into it, that he will surely bring us up again. If he go with us down to death, he will surely bring us up again to glory. (4.) That, living and dying, his beloved Joseph should be a comfort to him; *Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.* This is a promise that Joseph should live as long as he lived, that he should be with him at his death, close his eyes with all possible tenderness and respect, as the dearest relations used to do. Probably Jacob, in the multitude of his thoughts within him, had been wishing that Joseph might do this last office of love for him; *Ille meos oculos comprimat—Let him close my eyes*; and God thus answered him in the letter of his desire. Thus God sometimes gratifies the innocent wishes of his people, and makes not only their death happy, but the very circumstances of it agreeable.

5. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt. Jacob, and all his seed with him. 7. His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. 8. And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob's first-born. 9. And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi. 10. And the sons of Simeon; Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman. 11. And the sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12. And the sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul. 13. And the sons of Issachar; Tola, and Phuvah, and Job, and Shimon. 14. And the sons of Zebulun; Sereed, and Elon, and Jabeel. 15. These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters, were thirty and three. 16. And the sons of Gad; Ziphion, and Haggai, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Areli. 17. And the sons of Asher; Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Issu, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons

of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel. 18. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bare unto Jacob, *even sixteen souls*. 19. The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin. 20. And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asepath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him. 21. And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard. 22. These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen. 23. And the sons of Dan; Hushim. 24. And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem. 25. These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. 26. All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were three-score and six; 27. And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three-score and ten.

Old Jacob is here fitting; little did he think of ever leaving Canaan; he expected, no doubt, to die in his nest, and to leave his seed in actual possession of the promised land: but Providence orders it otherwise. Note, Those that think themselves well-settled, may yet be unsettled in a little time; even old people, who think of no other remove than that to the grave, (which Jacob had much upon his heart, *ch. 37. 35.—42. 38.*) sometimes live to see great changes in their family. It is good to be ready, not only for the grave, but for whatever may happen betwixt us and the grave.

Observe,

I. How Jacob was conveyed; not in a chariot, though chariots were then used, but in a wagon, *v. 5*. Jacob had the character of a plain man, who did not affect any thing stately or magnificent; his son rode in a chariot, (*ch. 41. 43.*) but a wagon would serve him.

II. The removal of what he had with him; 1. His effects, (*v. 6.*) *cattle and goods*; these he took with him, that he might not wholly be beholden to Pharaoh for a livelihood, and that it might not afterwards be said of them, "that they came beggars to Egypt." 2. His family, *all his seed, v. 7*. It is probable that they had continued to live together in common with their father; and therefore, when he went, they all went; which perhaps they were the more willing to do, because, though they had heard that the land of Canaan was promised them, yet, to this day, they had none of it in possession. We have here a particular account of the names of Jacob's family; *his sons' sons*, most of which are afterward mentioned as heads of houses in the several tribes. See Numb. 26, 5, &c. Bishop Patrick observes, that Issachar called his eldest son *Tola*, which signifies a *worm*, probably, because, when he was born, he was a very little weak child, a worm, and no man, not likely to live; and yet there sprang from him a very numerous offspring, 1 Chron. 7. 2. Note, Living and dying do not go by probability.

The whole number that went down into Egypt were sixty-six, (*v. 26.*) to which add Joseph and his two sons, who were there before, and Jacob himself, the head of the family, and you have the number of seventy, *v. 27*. The LXX. makes them seventy-five, and Stephen follows it, Acts 7. 14. The reason of which we leave to the conjecture of the critics;\* but let us observe, (1.) That masters of families ought to take care of all under their charge, and to provide for these of their own house, food convenient both for body and soul; when Jacob himself removed to a land of plenty, he would not leave any of his children behind him to starve in a barren land. 2. Though the accomplishment of promises is always sure, yet it is often slow. It was now 215 years since God had promised Abraham to make of him a great nation; (*ch. 12. 2.*) and yet that branch of his seed on which the promise was entailed, was as yet increased but to seventy, of which this particular account is kept, that the power of God in multiplying these seventy to so vast a multitude, even in Egypt, may appear the more illustrious; when he pleases, *a little one shall become a thousand*, Isa. 60. 22.

28. And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. 31. And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32. And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34. That ye shall say, Thy servant's trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

I. We have here the joyful meeting between Jacob and his son Joseph; in which observe,

1. Jacob's prudence in sending Judah before him to Joseph, to give him notice of his arrival in Goshen. This was a piece of respect owing to the government, under the protection of which these strangers were come to put themselves. *v. 28*. We should be very careful not to give offence to any, especially not to the higher powers.

2. Joseph's filial respect to him. He went in his chariot to meet him, and, in the interview showed,

\* Dr Doddridge's solution is this—"Stephen speaks of all that went down with him, (Jacob,) and so excludes Jacob himself, and the two afterward born, (Hezon and Hamul,) and Joseph and his children, which reduces the number thus: The eleven brethren, with Dinah their sister, and fifty-two that had descended from them, amount to sixty-four; to which adding eleven wives, some of the patriarchs having, probably, buried theirs, and but few of their children being yet married,) they amount in all to seventy-five."—Ed

(1.) How much he *honoured* him; he *presented himself unto him*. Note, It is the duty of children to reverence their parents, yea, though Providence, as to outward condition, has advanced them above their parents. (2.) How much he *loved* him; time did not wear out the sense of his obligations, but his tears which he shed abundantly upon his father's neck, for joy to see him, were real indications of the sincere and strong affection he had for him. See how near sorrow and joy are to each other in this world, when tears serve for the expressions of both: in the other world, weeping will be restrained to sorrow only; in heaven there is perfect joy, but no tears of joy; *all tears, even those*, shall there be wiped away, because the joys there are, as no joys here are, without any alloy. It was observed, when Joseph embraced Benjamin, that he *wept upon his neck*, but when he embraced his father, he *wept upon his neck a good while*; his brother Benjamin was dear, but his father Jacob must be dearer.

3. Jacob's great satisfaction in this meeting; (v. 30.) *Now let me die*. Not but that it was further desirable to live with Joseph, and to see his honour and usefulness; but he had so much pleasure and satisfaction in this first meeting, that he thought it too much to desire or expect any more in this world, where our comforts must always be imperfect. Jacob wished to die immediately, and yet lived seventeen years longer, which, as our lives go now, is a considerable part of a man's age. Note, Death will not always come just when we call for it, whether in a passion of sorrow, or in a passion of joy. Our times are in God's hand, and not in our own; we must die just when God pleases, and not either just when we are surfeited with the pleasures of life, or just when we are overwhelmed with its griefs.

II We have here Joseph's prudent care concerning his brethren's settlement. It was justice to Pharaoh, to let him know that such a colony was come to settle in his dominions. Note, If others repose a confidence in us, we must not be so base and disingenuous, as to abuse it by imposing upon them. If Jacob and his family should come to be a charge to the Egyptians, yet it should never be said, that they came among them clandestinely and by stealth. Thus Joseph took care to pay his respects to Pharaoh, v. 31. But how shall he dispose of his brethren? Time was, when they were contriving to be rid of him; now he is contriving to settle them to their satisfaction and advantage; this is rendering good for evil. Now, 1. He would have them to live by themselves, separate as much as might be from the Egyptians, *in the land of Goshen*, which lay nearest to Canaan, and which perhaps was more thinly peopled by the Egyptians, and well furnished with pastures for cattle. He desired they might live separately, that they might be in less danger both by being infected by the *vices* of the Egyptians, and of being insulted by the *malice* of the Egyptians. Shepherds, it seems, *were an abomination to the Egyptians*, that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and scorned to converse with them; and he would not send for his brethren to Egypt, to be trampled upon. And yet, 2. He would have them to continue shepherds, and not to be ashamed to own that as their occupation before Pharaoh. He could have employed them under himself in the corn-trade, or perhaps, by his interest in the king might have procured places for them at court or in the army, and some of them at least, were deserving enough; but such preferments would have exposed them to the envy of the Egyptians, and would have tempted them to forget Canaan, and the promise made unto their fathers; therefore he contrives to continue them in their old

employment. Note, (1.) An honest calling is no disparagement, nor ought we to account it so either in ourselves, or in our relations, but rather reckon it a shame to be idle, or to have nothing to do. (2.) It is generally best for people to abide in the callings that they have been bred to, and used to, 1 Cor. 7. 24. What employment and condition God, in his providence, has allotted for us, let us accommodate ourselves to, and satisfy ourselves with, and *not mind high things*. It is better to be the credit of a mean post than the shame of a high one.

## CHAP. XLVII.

In this chapter, we have instances, 1. of Joseph's kindness, and affection to his relations; presenting his brethren first, and then his father to Pharaoh, (v. 1. . 10.) settling them in Goshen, and providing for them there, (v. 11, 12.) and paying his respects to his father when he sent for him, v. 27. . 31. II. Of Joseph's justice between prince and people in a very critical affair; selling Pharaoh's corn to his subjects with reasonable profits to Pharaoh, and yet without any wrong to them, v. 13. . 26. Thus he approved himself wise and good, both in his private and in his public capacity.

1. **W**HEN Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they *are* in the land of Goshen. 2. And he took some of his brethren, *even* five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. 3. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What *is* your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants *are* shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine *is* sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. 5. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee; 6. The land of Egypt *is* before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest *any* men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. 7. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old *art* thou? 9. And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. 11. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12. And Joseph



nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to *their families*.

Here is,

I. The respect Joseph, as a subject, showed to his prince. Though he was his favourite, and prime-minister of state, and had had particular orders from him to send for his father down to Egypt, yet he would not suffer him to settle, till he had given notice of it to Pharaoh, *v. 1*. Christ, or Joseph, disposes of his followers in his kingdom as it is prepared of his Father, saying, *It is not mine to give*, Matt. 20. 23.

II. The respect Joseph, as a brother, showed to his brethren, notwithstanding all the unkindness he had formerly received from them.

1. Though he was a great man, and they were comparatively mean and despicable, especially in Egypt, yet he owned them. Let those that are rich and great in the world, learn hence not to overlook or despise their poor relations. Every branch of the tree is not a top branch; but, because it is a lower branch, is it therefore not a tree? Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, is not *ashamed to call us brethren*.

2. They being strangers and no courtiers, he introduced some of them to Pharaoh, *to kiss his hand*, as we say, intending thereby to put an honour upon them among the Egyptians. Thus Christ presents his brethren in the court of heaven, and improves his interest for them, though in themselves unworthy, and an *abomination to the Egyptians*. Being presented to Pharaoh, according to the instructions which Joseph had given them, they tell him, (1.) What was their business; that they were shepherds, *v. 3*. Pharaoh asked them, (and Joseph knew it would be one of his first questions, *ch. 46. 33*.) *What is your occupation?* He takes it for granted they had something to do; else Egypt should be no place for them, no harbour for idle vagrants. If they would not work, they should not eat of his bread in this time of scarcity. Note, [1.] All that have a place in the world, should have an employment in it according to their capacity, some occupation or other, mental or manual. Those that need not work for their bread, yet must have something to do, to keep them from idleness. [2.] Magistrates should inquire into the occupation of their subjects, as those that have the care of the public welfare; for idle people are as drones in the hive, unprofitable burthens of the commonwealth. (2.) What was their business in Egypt; to sojourn in the land, (*v. 4*.) not to settle there for ever, only to sojourn there for a time, while the famine prevailed in Canaan, which lay high, so that it was not habitable for shepherds, the grass being burnt up much more than in Egypt, which lay low, and where the *corn* chiefly failed, while there was tolerable *good pasture*.

3. He obtained for them a grant of a settlement in the land of Goshen, *v. 5, 6*. This was an instance of Pharaoh's gratitude to Joseph; because he had been such a blessing to him and his kingdom, he would be kind to his relations, purely for his sake. He offered them preferment as shepherds over his cattle, provided they were men of activity; for it is the man who is diligent in his business, that shall stand before kings. And whatever our profession or employment is, we should aim to be excellent in it, and to prove ourselves ingenious and industrious.

III. The respect Joseph, as a son, showed to his father.

1. He presented him to Pharaoh, *v. 7*. And here,

(1.) Pharaoh asks Jacob a common question; *How old art thou?* *v. 8*. A question usually put to old men, for it is natural to us to admire old age, and to

reverence it, (Lev. 19. 32.) as it is very unnatural and unbecoming to despise it, Isa. 3. 5. Jacob's countenance, no doubt, showed him to be very old; for he had been a man of labour and sorrow: in Egypt, people were not so long-lived as in Canaan, and therefore Pharaoh looks upon Jacob with wonder; he was a show in his court. When we are reflecting upon ourselves, this should come into the account; "How old are we?"

(2.) Jacob gives Pharaoh an uncommon answer, *v. 9*. He speaks as became a patriarch, with an air of seriousness, for the instruction of Pharaoh. Though our speech be not always of grace, yet it must thus be always with grace. Observe here, [1.] He calls his life a *pilgrimage*, looking upon himself as a stranger in this world, and a traveller towards another world: this earth his inn, not his home. To this the apostle refers: (Heb. 11. 13.) *They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims*. He not only reckoned himself a pilgrim, now that he was in Egypt, a strange country in which he never was before; but his life, even in the land of his nativity, was a pilgrimage, and those who so reckon it, can the better bear the inconvenience of banishment from their native soil; they are but pilgrims still, and so they were always. [2.] He reckons his life by *days*; for even so, it is soon reckoned, and we are not sure of the continuance of it for a day to an end, but may be turned out of this tabernacle at less than an hour's warning. Let us therefore *number our days*, (Ps. 90. 12.) and *measure them*, Ps. 39. 4. [3.] The character he gives of them was, *First*, That they were *few*. Though he had now lived *one hundred and thirty years*, they seemed to him but a few days, in comparison with the days of eternity, the eternal God, and the eternal state, in which a thousand years (longer than ever any man lived) are but as one day. *Secondly*, That they were *evil*; this is true concerning man in general; (Job 14. 1.) *he is of few days, and full of trouble*; since his days are *evil*, it is well they are *few*; Jacob's life, particularly, had been made up of evil days; and the pleasantest days of his life were yet before him. *Thirdly*, That they were short of the days of his fathers; not so many, not so pleasant, as their days. Old age came sooner upon him than it had done upon some of his ancestors. As the young man should not be proud of his strength or beauty, so the old man should not be proud of his age, and the crown of his hoary hairs, though others justly reverence it; for those who are accounted very old, attain not to the years of the patriarchs. The hoary head is *then* only a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness.

(3.) Jacob both addresses himself to Pharaoh, and takes leave of him with a blessing, *v. 7*. *Jacob blessed Pharaoh*, and again, *v. 10*. which was not only an act of *civility*, (he paid him respect, and returned him thanks for his kindness,) but an act of *piety*, he prayed for him, as one having the authority of a prophet and a patriarch. Though in worldly wealth, Pharaoh was the greater, yet in interest with God, Jacob was the greater; he was God's *anointed*, Ps. 105. 15. And a patriarch's blessing was not a thing to be despised, no, not by a potent prince. Darius valued the prayers of the church for himself and for his sons, Ezra 6. 10. Pharaoh kindly received Jacob, and, whether in the name of a prophet or no, thus he had a prophet's reward, which sufficiently recompensed him, not only for his courteous converse with him, but for all the other kindnesses he showed to him and his.

2. He provided well for him and his; *placed him in Goshen*, (*v. 11*.) *nourished him* and all his with food convenient for them, *v. 12*. This bespeaks, not only Joseph a good man, who took this tender care of his poor relations, but God a good God, who

raised him up for this purpose, and put him into a capacity of doing it, as Esther came to the kingdom for such a time as this. What God here did for Jacob, he has, in effect, promised to do for all his, that serve him and trust in him, Ps. 37. 19, *In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*

13. And *there was* no bread in all the land; for the famine *was* very sore, so that the land of Egypt and *all* the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. 14. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? For the money faileth. 16. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle for that year. 18. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide *it* from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19. Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give *us* seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. 20. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. 21. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from *one* end of the borders of Egypt even to the *other* end thereof. 22. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion *assigned* *them* of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. 23. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land, for Pharaoh: lo, *here is* seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the *fifth part* unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. 25. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we

will be Pharaoh's servants. 26. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, *that* Pharaoh should have the *fifth part*; except the land of the priests only, *which* became not Pharaoh's.

Care being taken of Jacob and his family, the preservation of which was especially designed by Providence in Joseph's advancement, an account is now given of the saving of the kingdom of Egypt too from ruin; for God is King of nations, as well as King of saints, and provideth food for all flesh. Joseph now returns to the management of that great trust which Pharaoh had lodged in his hand. It would have been pleasing enough to him to have gone and lived with his father and brethren in Goshen; but his employment would not permit it. When he had seen his father, and seen him well-settled, he applied himself as closely as ever to the execution of his office. Note, Even natural affection must give way to necessary business. Parents and children must be content to be absent one from another, when it is necessary, on either side, for the service of God, or their generation. In Joseph's transactions with the Egyptians, observe,

I. The great extremity that Egypt, and the parts adjacent, were reduced to by the famine. There was no bread, and they *fainted*, (v. 13.) they were ready to die, v. 15, 19. 1. See here what a dependence we have upon God's providence; if that suspend its usual favours but for a while, we die, we perish, we all perish. All our wealth would not keep us from starving, if the rain of heaven were but withheld for two or three years. See how much we lie at God's mercy, and let us keep ourselves always in his love. 2. See how much we smart by our own improvidence; if all the Egyptians had done for themselves in the seven years of plenty, as Joseph did for Pharaoh, they had not been now in these straits; but they regarded not the warning they had of the years of famine, concluding that tomorrow shall be as this day, next year as this, and much more abundant. Note, Because man knows not his time, (his time of gathering when he has it,) therefore his misery is great upon him, when the spending time comes, Eccl. 8. 6, 7. 3. See how early God put a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites, as afterwards in the plagues, Exod. 8. 22.—9. 4, 26.—10. 23. Jacob and his family, though strangers, were plentifully fed on free cost, while the Egyptians were dying for want. See Isa. 65. 13, *My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry. Happy art thou, O Israel.* Whoever wants, God's children shall not, Ps. 34. 10.

II. The price they were come up to, for their supply, in this exigence. 1. They parted with all their money, which they had hoarded up, v. 14. Silver and gold would not feed them, they must have corn. All the money of the kingdom was by this means brought into the exchequer. 2. When the money failed, they parted with all their cattle, those for labour, as the horses and asses; and those for food, as the flocks and the herds, v. 17. By this it should seem, that we may better live upon bread without flesh, than upon flesh without bread. We may suppose they parted the more easily with their cattle, because they had little or no grass for them; and now Pharaoh saw in reality what he had before seen in vision, nothing but lean kine. 3. When they had sold their stocks off their land, it was easy to persuade themselves (rather than starve) to sell their land too; for what good would that do them, when they had neither corn to sow it, nor cattle to eat it? They therefore sold that next, for a further supply of corn. 4. When their land was sold, so that they had nothing to live on, they must of course

sell themselves, that they might live purely upon their labour, and hold their lands by the base tenure of villanage, at the courtesy of the crown. Note, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath*, even liberty and property, (those darling twins,) *will he give for his life*; for that is sweet. There are few, (though perhaps there are some,) who would even dare to die, rather than live in slavery and dependence on an arbitrary power. And perhaps there are those who, in that case, could die by the sword, in a heat, who yet could not deliberately die by famine, which is much worse, Lam. 4. 9. Now it was a great mercy to the Egyptians, that, in this distress, they could have corn at any rate; if they had all died for hunger, their lands perhaps would have escheated to the crown of course, for want of heirs; they therefore resolved to make the best of bad.

III. The method which Joseph took to accommodate the matter between prince and people, so that the prince might have his just advantage, and yet the people not be quite ruined.

1. For their *lands*, he needed not come to any bargain with them, while the years of famine lasted; but when these were over, (for God will not contend for ever, nor will he be always wroth,) he came to an agreement, which it seems, both sides were pleased with, that the people should occupy and enjoy the lands, as he thought fit to assign them, and should have seed to sow them with out of the king's stores, for their own proper use and behoof, yielding and paying only a fifth part of the yearly profits as a chief rent to the crown. This became a standing law, v. 26. And it was a very good bargain to have food for their lands, when otherwise they and their's must have starved, and then to have lands again upon such easy terms. Note, Those ministers of state are worthy of double honour both for wisdom and integrity, that keep the balance even between prince and people, so that liberty and property may not intrench upon prerogative, nor the prerogative bear hard upon liberty and property: in the multitude of such counsellors there is safety. If afterward the Egyptians thought it hard to pay so great a duty to the king out of their lands, they must remember, not only how just, but how kind, the first imposing of it was. They might thankfully pay a fifth when all was due. It is observable, how faithful Joseph was to him that appointed him; he did not put the money into his own pocket, nor entail the lands upon his own family; but converted both entirely to Pharaoh's use; and therefore we do not find that his posterity went out of Egypt any richer than the rest of their poor brethren. Those in public trusts, if they raise great estates, must take heed that it be not at the expense of a good conscience, which is much more valuable.

2. For their *persons*, he removed them to cities, v. 21. He transplanted them, to show Pharaoh's sovereign power over them, and that they might, in time, forget their titles to their lands, and be the more easily reconciled to their new condition of servitude. The Jewish writers say, "He removed them thus from their former habitations, because they reproached his brethren as strangers; to silence which reproach, they were all made, in effect, strangers." See what changes a little time may make with a people, and how soon God can empty those from vessel to vessel, who were settled upon their lees. How hard soever this seems to have been upon them, they themselves were at this time sensible of it as a very great kindness, and were thankful they were not worse used; (v. 25.) *Thou hast saved our lives*. Note, There is good reason that the Saviour of our lives, should be the Master of our lives. "Thou hast saved us, do what thou wilt with us."

IV. The reservation he made in favour of the

priests. They were maintained on free cost, so that they needed not to sell their lands, v. 22. *All people will thus walk in the name of their God*; they will be kind to those that attend the public service of their God, and that minister to them in holy things; and we should, in like manner, honour our God, by esteeming his ministers highly in love for their work's sake.

27. And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. 28. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. 29. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: 30. But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31. And he said, Swear unto me. And he swore unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's-head.

Observe,

1. The comfort Jacob lived in, (v. 27, 28.) while the Egyptians were impoverished in their own land, Jacob was replenished in a strange land. He lived seventeen years after he came into Egypt, far beyond his own expectation; seventeen years he had nourished Joseph, (for so old he was when he was sold from him, ch. 37. 2.) and now, by way of requital, seventeen years Joseph nourished him. Observe how kindly Providence ordered Jacob's affairs; that when he was old, and least able to bear care and fatigue, he had least occasion for it, being well-provided for by his son without his own forecast. Thus God considers the frame of his people.

2. The care Jacob died in. At last, (v. 29.) *The time drew nigh that Israel must die*. Israel, a prince with God, that had power over the angel, and prevailed, yet must yield to death. There is no remedy, he *must die*: it is appointed for all men, therefore for him; and there is no discharge in that war. Joseph supplied him with bread, that he might not die by famine; but that did not secure him from dying by age or sickness. He died by degrees; his candle was not blown out, but gradually burnt down to the socket, so that he saw, at some distance, the time drawing nigh. Note, It is an improvable advantage, to see the approach of death, before we feel its arrests, that we may be quickened to do what our hand finds to do, with all our might: however, it is not far from any of us. Now Jacob's care, as he saw the day approaching, was about his burial, not the pomp of it, (he was no way solicitous about that,) but the place of it.

(1.) He would be buried in Canaan; this he resolved on, not from mere humour, because Canaan was the land of his nativity, but in faith, because it was the land of promise, (which he desired thus, as it were, to keep possession of, till the time should come when his posterity should be masters of it,) and because it was a type of heaven, that better country which he that said these things, declared plainly that he was in expectation of, Heb. 11. 14. He aimed at a good land, which would be his rest and bliss on the other side death.

(2.) He would have Joseph sworn to bring him thither to be buried, (v. 29, 31.) that Joseph being under such a solemn obligation to do it, might have that to answer to the objections which otherwise might have been made against it, and for the greater satisfaction of Jacob now in his dying minutes. Nothing will better help to make a death-bed easy, than the certain prospect of a rest in Canaan after death.

(3.) When this was done, *Israel bowed himself upon the bed's-head*, yielding himself, as it were, to the stroke of death; ("Now let it come, and it shall be welcome;") or worshipping God, as it is explained, Heb. 11. 21, giving God thanks for all his favours, and particularly for this, that Joseph was ready, not only to put his hand upon his eyes to close them, but under his thigh to give him the satisfaction he desired concerning his burial. Thus they that go down to the dust, should with humble thankfulness, bow before God, the God of their mercies, Ps. 22. 29.

### CHAP. XLVIII.

The time drawing nigh that Israel must die, having in the former chapter given order about his burial, in this, he takes leave of his grand-children by Joseph, and in the next, of all his children. Thus Jacob's dying words are recorded, because he then spake by a spirit of prophecy; Abraham's and Isaac's are not. God's gifts and graces shine forth much more in some saints than in others upon their death-beds. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth. In this chapter, I. Joseph, hearing of his father's sickness, goes to visit him, and takes his two sons with him, v. 1, 2. II. Jacob solemnly adopts his two sons, and takes them for his own, v. 3-7. III. He blesses them, v. 8-16. IV. He explains and justifies the crossing of his hands in blessing them, v. 17-20. V. He leaves a particular legacy to Joseph, v. 21, 22.

1. **AND** it came to pass after these things, *that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.* 2. *And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.* 3. *And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,* 4. *And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.* 5. *And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.* 6. *And thy issue, which thou begettest after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.* 7. *And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come into Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Beth-lehem.*

Here,

I. Joseph, upon notice of his father's illness, goes to see him; though a man of honour and business, yet he will not fail to show this due respect to his

aged father, v. 1. Visiting the sick, to whom we lie under obligations, or may have opportunity of doing good, either for body or soul, is our duty. The sick bed is a proper place both for giving comfort and counsel to others, and receiving instruction ourselves. Joseph took his two sons with him, that they might receive their dying grandfather's blessing, and that what they might see in him, and hear from him, might make an abiding impression upon them. Note, 1. It is good to acquaint young people that are coming into the world, with the aged servants of God that are going out of it, whose dying testimony to the goodness of God, and the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, may be a great encouragement to the rising generation. Manasseh and Ephraim (I dare say) would never forget what passed at this time. 2. Pious parents are desirous of a blessing, not only for themselves, but for their children. "O that they may live before God!" Joseph had been, above all his brethren, kind to his father, and therefore had reason to expect particular favour from him.

II. Jacob, upon notice of his son's visit, prepared himself as well as he could to entertain him, v. 2. He did what he could to rouse his spirits, and to stir up the gift that was in him; what little was left of bodily strength, he put forth to the utmost, and *sat upon the bed.* Note, It is very good for sick and aged people to be as lively and cheerful as they can, that they may not faint in the day of adversity. *Strengthen thyself*, as Jacob here, and God will strengthen thee; *hearten thyself* and *help thyself*, and God will help and *hearten thee.* Let the Spirit sustain the infirmity.

III. In recompense to Joseph for all his attentions to him, he adopted his two sons. In this charter of adoption, there is,

1. A particular recital of God's promise to him, to which this had reference. "*God blessed me;*" (v. 3.) and let that blessing be entailed upon them." God had promised him two things, a numerous issue, and Canaan for an inheritance; (v. 4.) and Joseph's sons, pursuant hereunto, should each of them multiply into a tribe, and each of them have a distinct lot in Canaan, equal with Jacob's own sons. See how he blessed them by faith in that which God had said to him, Heb. 11. 21. Note, In all our prayers, both for ourselves and for our children, we ought to have a particular eye to, and remembrance of, God's promises to us.

2. An express reception of Joseph's sons into his family, "*Thy sons are mine,*" (v. 5.) not only my grand-children, but as my own children." Though they were born in Egypt, and their father was then separated from his brethren, which might seem to have cut them off from the heritage of the Lord, yet Jacob takes them in, and owns them for visible church-members. He explains it; (v. 16.) *Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers;* as if he had said, "Let them not succeed their father in his power and grandeur here in Egypt; but let them succeed me in the inheritance of the promise made to Abraham," which Jacob looked upon as much more valuable and honourable, and would have them to prize and covet accordingly. Thus the aged dying patriarch teaches these young persons, now that they were come of age, (being about twenty-one years old,) not to look upon Egypt as their own, nor to incorporate themselves with the Egyptians, but to take their lot with the people of God, as Moses afterward in the like temptation, Heb. 11. 24, 26. And because it would be a piece of self-denial in them, who stood so fair for preferment in Egypt, to adhere to the despised Hebrews; to encourage them, he constitutes each of them the head of a tribe. Note, Those are worthy of double honour, who,

through God's grace, break through the temptations of worldly wealth and preferment, to embrace religion in disgrace and poverty. Jacob will have Ephraim, and Manasseh to believe, that it is better to be low, and in the church, than high, and out of it; that to be called by the name of *poor Jacob*, is better than to be called by the name of *rich Joseph*.

3. A proviso inserted concerning the children he might afterward have; they should not be accounted heads of tribes, as Ephraim and Manasseh were, but should fall in with the one or the other of their brethren, v. 6. It does not appear that Joseph had any more children; however, it was Jacob's prudence to give this direction, for the preventing of contest and mismanagement. Note, In making settlements, it is good to take advice, and to provide for what *may* happen, while we cannot foresee what *will* happen. Our prudence must attend God's providence.

4. Mention is made of the death and burial of Rachel, Joseph's mother, and Jacob's best-beloved wife, (v. 7.) referring to that story, *ch.* 35. 19. Note, (1.) When we come to die ourselves, it is good to call to mind the death of our dear relations and friends, that are gone before us, to make death and the grave the more familiar to us. See Numb. 27. 13. Those that were to us as our own souls, are dead and buried; and shall we think much to follow them in the same path? (2.) The removal of dear relations from us, is an affliction the remembrance of which cannot but abide with us a great while. Strong affections in the enjoyment, cause long afflictions in the loss.

8. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, *Who are these?* 9. And Joseph said unto his father, *They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place.* And he said, *Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.* 10. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, *so that* he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11. And Israel said unto Joseph, *I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed.* 12. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh *was* the first-born. 15. And he blessed Joseph, and said, *God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day,* 16. The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. 17. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head

of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he laid up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. 18. And Joseph said unto his father, *Not so, my father: for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head.* 19. And his father refused, and said, *I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.* 20. And he blessed them that day, saying, *In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.* 21. And Israel said unto Joseph, *Behold, I die; but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.* 22. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

Here is,

1. The blessing with which Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, which is the more remarkable, because the apostle makes such particular mention of it, (Heb. 11. 21.) when he says nothing of the blessing which Jacob pronounced on the rest of his sons, though that also was done in faith.

Observe here,

1. That Jacob was blind for age, v. 10. It is one of the common infirmities of old age; *They that look out of the windows are darkened*, Eccl. 12. 3. It is folly to walk in the sight of our eyes, and to suffer our hearts to go after them, while we know death will shortly close them, and we do not know but some accident between us and death may darken them. Jacob, like his father before him, when he was old, was dim-sighted. Note, (1.) Those that have the honour of age, must therewith be content to take the burthen of it. (2.) The eye of faith may be very clear, even then when the eye of the body is very much clouded.

2. That Jacob was very fond of Joseph's sons. *He kissed them, and embraced them*, v. 10. It is common for old people to have a very particular affection for their grand-children, perhaps more than they had for their own when they were little; which Solomon gives a reason for, (Prov. 17. 6.) *Children's children are the crown of old men.* With what satisfaction does Jacob say here, (v. 11.) *I had not thought to see thy face*, (having, many years, given him up for lost,) *and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed!* See here, (1.) How these two good men owe God in their comforts. Joseph says, (v. 9.) *They are my sons whom God has given me*, and, to magnify the favour, he adds, *"In this place of my banishment, slavery, and imprisonment."* Jacob says here, *God hath showed me thy seed.* Our comforts are then doubly sweet to us, when we see them coming from God's hand. (2.) How often God, in his merciful providences, outdoes our expectations, and thus greatly magnifies his favours! He not only prevents our fears, but exceeds our hopes. We may apply this to the promise which is made to us and to our children. We could not have thought that *we* should have been taken into covenant with God ourselves, considering how guilty and corrupt we are; and yet, lo, he has showed us our *seed* also in covenant with him.

3. That before he entails his blessing, he recounts his experiences of God's goodness to him. He has spoken (v. 3.) of God's appearing to him. The particular visits of his grace, and the special communion we have sometimes had with him, ought never to be forgotten. But (v. 15, 16.) he mentions the constant care which the Divine Providence had taken of him all his days. (1.) He had *fed him all his life long unto this day*, v. 15. Note, As long as we have lived in this world, we have had continual experience of God's goodness to us, in providing for the support of our natural life. Our bodies have called for daily food, and no little has gone to feed us, yet we have never wanted food convenient. He that has fed us *all our life long*, surely will not fail us at last. (2.) He had by his angel *redeemed him from all evil*, v. 16. A great deal of hardship he had known in his time, but God had graciously kept him from the evil of his troubles. Now that he was dying, he looked upon himself as *redeemed from all evil*, and bidding an everlasting farewell to sin and sorrow. Christ, the Angel of the covenant, is he that redeems us from all evil, 2 Tim. 4. 18. Note, [1.] It becomes the servants of God, when they are old and dying, to witness for our God that they have found him gracious. [2.] Our experiences of God's goodness to us are improvable, both for the encouragement of others to serve God, and for encouragement to us in blessing them, and praying for them.

4. That when he confers the blessing and name of Abraham and Isaac upon them, he recommends the pattern and example of Abraham and Isaac to them, v. 15. He calls God, *the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked*, that is, in whom they believed, whom they observed and obeyed, and with whom they kept up communion in instituted ordinances, according to the condition of the covenant. *Walk before me*, ch. 17. 1. Note, (1.) Those that would inherit the blessing of their godly ancestors, and have the benefit of God's covenant with them, must tread in the steps of their piety. (2.) It should recommend religion and the service of God to us, that God was the God of our fathers, and that they had satisfaction in walking before him.

5. That in blessing them, he *crossed hands*. Joseph placed them so as that Jacob's right hand should be put on the head of Manasseh the eldest, v. 12, 13. But Jacob would put it on the head of Ephraim the youngest, v. 14. This displeased Joseph, who was willing to support the reputation of his first-born, and would therefore have removed his father's hands, v. 17, 18. But Jacob gave him to understand that he knew what he did, and that he did it neither by mistake, nor in a humour, nor from a partial affection to one more than the other, but from a spirit of prophecy, and in compliance with the divine counsels. Manasseh should be great, but truly Ephraim should be greater. When the tribes were mustered in the wilderness, Ephraim was more numerous than Manasseh, had the standard of that squadron, (Numb. 1. 32, 33, 35.—2. 18, 20.) and is named first, Ps. 80. 2. Joshua was of that tribe, so was Jeroboam. The tribe of Manasseh was divided, one half on one side Jordan, the other half on the other side, which made it the less powerful and considerable. In the foresight of this, *Jacob crossed hands*. Note, (1.) God, in bestowing his blessings upon his people, gives more to some than to others, more gifts, graces, and comforts, and more of the good things of this life. (2.) He often gives most to those that are least likely. *He chooses the weak things of the world*, raises the poor out of the dust. Grace observes not the order of nature, nor does God prefer those whom we think fittest to be preferred, but as

it pleases him. It is observable, how often God, by the distinguishing favours of his covenant, advanced the younger above the elder; Abel above Cain, Shem above Japheth, Abraham above Nahor and Haran, Isaac above Ishmael, Jacob above Esau; Judah and Joseph were preferred before Reuben; Moses before Aaron; David and Solomon before their elder brethren. See 1 Sam. 16. 7. He tied the Jews to observe the birth-right, (Deut. 21. 17.) but he never tied himself to observe it. Some make this typical of the preference given to the Gentiles above the Jews; the Gentile converts were much more numerous than those of the Jews. See Gal. 4. 27. Thus free grace becomes more illustrious.

II. The particular tokens of his favour to Joseph.

1. He left with him the promise of their return out of Egypt, as a sacred trust; (v. 21.) *I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again*. Accordingly, Joseph, when he died, left it with his brethren, ch. 50. 24. This assurance was given them, and carefully preserved among them, that they might neither love Egypt too much when it favoured them, nor fear it too much when it frowned upon them. These words of Jacob furnish us with comfort in reference to the death of our friends; *they die*. But, (1.) *God shall be with us*, and his gracious presence is sufficient to make up the loss. They leave us, but he will never fail us. (2.) He will *bring us to the land of our fathers, the heavenly Canaan*, whither our godly fathers are gone before us. If God be with us while we stay behind in this world, and will receive us shortly to be with them that are gone before to a better world, we ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope.

2. He bestowed one portion upon him above his brethren, v. 22. The lands bequeathed are described to be those which he *took out of the hand of the Amorite, with his sword, and with his bow*. He purchased them first, (Josh. 24. 32.) and it seems, was afterward dispossessed of them by the Amorites, but retook them by the sword, repelling force by force, and recovering his right by violence, when he could not otherwise recover it. These lands he settled upon Joseph; mention is made of this grant, John 4. 5. Pursuant to it, this parcel of ground was given to the tribe of Ephraim, as their right, and the lot was never cast upon it; and in it Joseph's bones were buried, which perhaps Jacob had an eye to, as much as to any thing, in this settlement. Note, It may sometimes be both just and prudent to give some children portions above the rest; but a grave is that which we can most count upon as our own in this earth.

## CHAP. XLIX.

This chapter is a prophecy: the likeliest to it we have yet met with, was that of Noah, ch. 9. 25, &c. Jacob is here upon his death-bed, making his will: he put it off till now, because dying men's words are apt to make deep impressions, and to be remembered long: what he said here, he could not say when he would, but as the Spirit gave him utterance, who chose this time, that divine strength might be perfected in his weakness. The twelve sons of Jacob were, in their day, men of renown, but the twelve tribes of Israel, which descended and were denominated from them, were much more renowned; we find their names upon the gates of the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 12, in the prospect of which, their dying father says something remarkable of each son, or of the tribe that bore his name. Here is, I. The preface, v. 1, 2. II. The prediction concerning each tribe, v. 3.—28. III. The charge repeated concerning his burial, v. 29.—32. IV. His death, v. 33.

1. **AND** Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you *that* which shall befall you in the last days. 2. Gather yourselves to-



gether, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. 3. Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power. 4. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

Here is,

I. The preface to the prophecy, in which, 1. The congregation is called together; (v. 2.) *Gather yourselves together*, let them all be sent for from their several employments, to see their father die, and to hear his dying words. It was a comfort to Jacob, now that he was dying, to see all his children about him, and none missing, though he had sometimes thought himself bereaved. It was of use to them, to attend him in his last moments, that they might learn of him how to die, as well as how to live: what he said to each, he said in the hearing of all the rest; for we may profit by the reproofs, counsels, and comforts, that are principally intended for others. His calling upon them once and again, to *gather together*, intimated both a precept to them to unite in love, to keep together, not to mingle with the Egyptians, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, and a prediction that they should not be separated from each other, as Abraham's sons and Isaac's were, but should be incorporated, and all make one people. 2. A general idea is given of the intended discourse, (v. 1.) *That I may tell you that which shall befall you*, (not your persons, but your posterity,) *in the last days*; this prediction would be of use to those that came after them, for the confirming of their faith, and the guiding of their way, on their return to Canaan, and their settlement there. We cannot tell our children what shall befall them, or their families in this world; but we can tell them, from the word of God, what will befall them in the last day of all, according as they conduct themselves in this world. 3. Attention is demanded; (v. 2.) *"Hearken to Israel your father; let Israel, that has prevailed with God, prevail with you."* Note, Children must diligently hearken to what their godly parents say, particularly when they are dying; *Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father*, which carries with it both authority and affection, Prov. 4. 1.

II. The prophecy concerning Reuben; he begins with him, (v. 3, 4.) he was the *first-born*; but by committing uncleanness with his father's wife, to the great reproach of the family which he ought to have been an ornament to, he forfeited the prerogatives of the birth-right; and his dying father here solemnly degrades him, though he does not disown or disinherit him: he shall have all the privileges of a son, but not of a first-born. We have reason to think Reuben had repented of his sin, and it was pardoned; yet it was a necessary piece of justice, in detestation of the villany, and for warning to others, to put the mark of disgrace upon him. Now according to the method of degrading, 1. Jacob here puts upon him the ornaments of the birth-right, (v. 3.) that he and all his brethren might see what he had forfeited, and, in that, might see the evil of the sin: as the first-born, he was his father's joy, almost his pride, being the *beginning of his strength*. How welcome he was to his parents, his name bespeaks, *Reuben*, *See a son*. To him belonged the excellency of his dignity, above his brethren, and some power over them. Christ Jesus is the First-born among many brethren, and to him, of right, belong the most excellent power and dignity: his

church also, through him, is a church of the *first-born*. 2. He then strips him of these ornaments; (v. 4.) lifts him up, that he may cast him down, by that one word, *"Thou shalt not excel"*; a being thou shalt have as a tribe, but not an excellency: no judge, prophet, or prince, is found of that tribe, nor any person of renown, only Dathan and Abiram, who were noted for their impious rebellion against Moses. That tribe, as not aiming to excel, meanly chose a settlement on the other side Jordan. Reuben himself seems to have lost all that influence upon his brethren, which his birth-right entitled him to; for *when he spake unto them, they would not hear*, ch. 42. 22. Those that have not understanding and spirit to support the honours and privileges of their birth, will soon lose them, and retain only the name of them. The character fastened upon Reuben, for which he is laid under this mark of infamy, is, that he was *unstable as water*. (1.) His *virtue* was unstable; he had not the government of himself and his own appetites: sometimes he would be very regular and orderly, but at other times he deviated into the wildest courses. Note, Instability is the ruin of men's excellency. Men do not thrive, because they do not fix. (2.) His *honour* consequently was unstable; it departed from him, vanished into smoke, and became as water spilt upon the ground. Note, Those that throw away their virtue, must not expect to save their reputation. Jacob charges him particularly with the sin for which he was thus disgraced; *Thou wentest up to thy father's bed*. It was forty years ago that he had been guilty of this sin, yet now it is remembered against him. Note, As time will not of itself wear off the guilt of any sin from the conscience, so there are some sins whose stains it will not wipe off from the good name, especially seventh-commandment-sins. Reuben's sin left an indelible mark of infamy upon his family; a dishonour that was a wound not to be healed without a scar, Prov. 6. 32, 33. Let us never do evil, and then we need not fear being told of it.

✓ 5. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. 6. O my soul, come not thou into their secret unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. 7. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

These were next in age to Reuben, and they also had been a grief and shame to Jacob, when they treacherously and barbarously destroyed the Shechemites, which he here remembers against them. Children should be afraid of incurring their parents' just displeasure, lest they fare the worse for it long afterward, and, when they would inherit the blessing, be rejected.

Observe,

1. The character of Simeon and Levi; they were brethren in disposition; but, unlike their father, they were passionate and revengeful, fierce and uncontrollable; their swords, which should have been only weapons of defence, were (as the margin reads it, v. 5.) *weapons of violence*, to do wrong to others, not to save themselves from wrong. Note, It is no new thing for the temper of children to differ very much from that of their parents; we need not think it strange, it was so in Jacob's family. It is not in the power of parents, no, not by education, to form the dispositions of their children; Jacob bred his sons to

every thing that was mild and quiet, and yet they proved to be thus furious.

II. A proof of this is the murder of the Shechemites, which Jacob deeply resented at the time, (*ch.* 34. 30.) and still continued to resent. They slew a man, Shechem himself, and many others; and, to effect that, they digged down a wall, broke the houses, to plunder them, and murder the inhabitants. Note, The best governors cannot always restrain those under their charge from committing the worst villainies. And when two in a family are mischievous, they commonly make one another so much the worse, and it were wisdom to part them. Simeon and Levi, it is probable, were most active in the wrong done to Joseph, which some think Jacob has here some reference to; for in their anger they would have slain *that man*. Observe what a mischievous thing self-will is in young people: Simeon and Levi would not be advised by their aged and experienced father; no, they would be governed by their own passion, rather than by his prudence. Young people would better consult their own interest, if they would less indulge their own will.

III. Jacob's protestation against this barbarous act of their's, *O my soul, come not thou into their secret*. Hereby he professes not only his abhorrence of such practices in general, but his innocence particularly in that matter. Perhaps he had been suspected as, under-hand, aiding and abetting; he therefore thus solemnly expresses his detestation of the fact, that he might not die under that suspicion. Note, 1. Our soul is our *honour*; by its powers and faculties we are distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts that perish. 2. We ought, from our hearts, to detest and abhor all society and confederacy with bloody and mischievous men. We must not be ambitious of coming into their secret, or knowing the depths of Satan.

IV. His abhorrence of those brutish lusts that led them to this wickedness; *Cursed be their anger*. He does not curse their persons, but their lusts. Note, 1. Anger is the cause and original of a great deal of sin, and exposes us to the curse of God, and his judgment, *Matt.* 5. 22. 2. We ought always, in the expressions of our zeal, carefully to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, so as not to love or bless the sin for the sake of the person, nor to hate or curse the person for the sake of the sin.

V. A token of displeasure which he foretells their posterity should lie under for this; *I will divide them*: The Levites were scattered throughout all the tribes, and Simeon's lot lay not together, and was so strait, that many of the tribe were forced to disperse themselves in quest of settlements and subsistence. This curse was afterwards turned into a blessing to the Levites; but the Simeonites, for Zimri's sin, (*Numb.* 25. 14.) had it bound on. Note, Shameful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions and confederacies.

8. Judah, *thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies: thy father's children shall bow down before thee*. 9. *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?* 10. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*. 11. *Binding his fole unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments*

in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12. *His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk*.

Glorious things are here said of Judah. The mention of the crimes of the three eldest of his sons, had not so put the dying patriarch out of humour, but that he had a blessing ready for Judah, to whom blessings belonged. Judah's name signifies *praise*, in allusion to which, he says, *Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, v. 8*. God was praised for him, (*ch.* 29. 35.) praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him. Note, Those that are to God for a praise, shall be the praise of their brethren.

It is prophesied,

1. That the tribe of Judah should be victorious and successful in war! *Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies*. This was fulfilled in David, *Ps.* 18. 40.

2. That it should be superior to the rest of the tribes; not only in itself more numerous and illustrious, but having a dominion over them; *Thy father's children shall bow down before thee*: Judah was the *lawgiver*, *Ps.* 60. 7. That tribe led the van through the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan, *Judg.* 1. 2. The prerogatives of the birth-right which Reuben had forfeited, the excellency of dignity and power, were thus conferred upon Judah. Observe, "Thy brethren shall bow down before thee, and yet shall praise thee, reckening themselves happy in having so wise and bold a commander." Note, Honour and power are then a blessing to those that have them, when they are not grudged and envied, but praised and applauded, and cheerfully submitted to.

3. That it should be a strong and courageous tribe, and so qualified for command and conquest; (*v.* 9.) *Judah is a lion's whelp*. The lion is the king of beasts, the terror of the forest when he roars; when he seizes his prey, none can resist him; when he goes up from the prey, none dares pursue him to revenge it. By this it is foretold that the tribe of Judah should become very formidable, and should not only obtain great victories, but should peaceably and quietly enjoy what was got by those victories; that they should make war, not for the sake of war, but for the sake of peace. Judah is compared, not to a lion *rampant*, always tearing, always raging, always ranging; but to a lion *couchant*, enjoying the satisfaction of his power and success, without creating vexation to others: this is to be truly great.

4. That it should be the royal tribe, and the tribe from which Messiah the Prince should come; (*v.* 10.) *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come*. Jacob here foresees and foretells, (1.) That the sceptre should come out of the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, in whose family the crown was entailed. (2.) That Shiloh should be of this tribe; his Seed, that promised Seed, in whom the earth should be blessed; *that peaceable and prosperous one, or the Saviour*, so others translate it, he shall come of Judah. Thus dying Jacob, at a great distance, saw Christ's day, and it was his comfort and support on his death-bed. (3.) That after the coming of the sceptre into the tribe of Judah, it should continue in that tribe, at least, a government of their own, till the coming of the Messiah, in whom, as the King of the church, and the great High-Priest, it was fit that both the priesthood and the royalty should determine. Till the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah, and from thence governors of that tribe, or of the Levites that adhered to it, (which was equivalent,) till Judea became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and

was at that time taxed as one of the provinces, Luke 2. 1. And at the time of his death the Jews expressly owned, *We have no king but Cæsar*. Hence it is undeniably inferred against the Jews, that our Lord Jesus is he that should come, and that we are to look for no other; for he came exactly at the time appointed. Many excellent pens have been admirably well employed in explaining and illustrating this famous prophecy of Christ.

5. That it should be a very fruitful tribe, especially that it should abound with milk for babes, and wine to make glad the heart of strong men, v. 11, 12. *Vines*, so common in the hedge-rows, and so strong, that they should tie their asses to them, and so fruitful, that they should load their asses from them. *Wine*, as plentiful as water, so that the men of that tribe should be very healthful and lively, their eyes brisk and sparkling, their *teeth white*. Much of that which is here said concerning Judah, is to be applied to our Lord Jesus. (1.) He is the Ruler of all his father's children, and the conqueror of all his father's enemies; and he it is, that is the praise of all the saints. (2.) He is the *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, as he is called with reference to this here. (Rev. 5. 5.) who, having spoiled principalities and powers, went up a Conqueror, and couched so as none can stir him up, when he sat down on the right hand of the Father. (3.) To him belongs the sceptre; he is the *Law-giver*, and to him *shall the gathering of the people be*, as the Desire of all nations, (Hag. 2. 7.) who, being lifted up from the earth, should draw all men unto him, (John 12. 32.) and in whom the children of God, that are scattered abroad, should meet, as the centre of their unity, John 11. 52. (4.) In him there is plenty of all that which is nourishing and refreshing to the soul, and which maintains and cheers the divine life in it; in him we may have wine and milk, the riches of Judah's tribe, without money, and without price, Isa. 55. 1.

13. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he *shall be* for an haven of ships; and his border *shall be* unto Zidon. 14. Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: 15. And he saw that rest *was* good, and the land that it *was* pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute. 16. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 17. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. 18. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD. 19. Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. 20. Out of Asher his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. 21. Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

Here we have Jacob's prophecy concerning six of his sons.

I. Concerning Zebulun, (v. 13.) that his posterity should have their lot upon the sea-coast, and should be merchants and mariners, and traders at sea. This was fulfilled, when two or three hundred years after, the land of Canaan was divided by lot, and the border of Zebulun went up towards the sea, Josh. 19. 11. Had they chosen their lot themselves, or Joshua appointed it, we might have supposed it done with design to make Jacob's words

good; but, being done by lot, it appears that that was divinely disposed, and Jacob divinely inspired. Note, The lot of God's providence exactly agrees with the plan of God's counsel, like a true copy with the original. If prophecy says, *Zebulun shall be a haven of ships*, Providence will so plant him. Note, 1. God appoints the bounds of our habitation. 2. It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our lot, and to improve it. If Zebulun dwell at the haven of the sea, let him be for a haven of ships.

II. Concerning Issachar, v. 14, 15. 1. That the men of that tribe should be strong and industrious, fit for labour, and inclined to labour, particularly the toil of husbandry, like the ass, that patiently carries his burden, and, by using himself to it, makes it the easier. Issachar submitted to two burdens, tillage and tribute. It was a tribe that took pains, and, thriving thereby, was called upon for rent and taxes. 2. That they should be encouraged in their labour by the goodness of the land that should fall to their lot. (1.) *He saw that rest at home was good*. Note, The labour of the husbandman is really rest, in comparison with that of soldiers and seamen, whose hurries and perils are such, that those who tarry at home in the most constant service, have no reason to envy them. (2.) *He saw that the land was pleasant*, yielding not only pleasant prospects to charm the eye of the curious, but pleasant fruits to recompense his toils. Many are the pleasures of a country life, abundantly sufficient to balance the inconveniences of it, if we can but persuade ourselves to think so. Issachar, in prospect of advantage, *bowed his shoulder to bear*: let us, with an eye of faith, see the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant; and that will make our present services easy, and encourage us to bow our shoulder to them.

III. Concerning Dan, v. 16, 17. What is said concerning Dan, has reference either, 1. To that tribe in general; that though Dan was one of the sons of the concubines, yet he should be a tribe governed by judges of his own as well as other tribes; and should, by art, and policy, and surprise, gain advantages against his enemies, like a serpent suddenly biting the heel of the traveller. Note, (1.) In God's spiritual Israel there is no distinction made of *bond or free*, Col. 3. 11. Dan shall be incorporated by as good a charter as any of the other tribes. (2.) Some, like Dan, may excel in the subtlety of the serpent, as others, like Judah, in the courage of the lion; and both may do good service to the cause of God against the Canaanites. Or, it may refer, 2. To Samson, who was of that tribe, and judged Israel, that is, delivered them out of the hands of the Philistines, not as the other judges, by fighting them in the field, but by the vexations and annoyances he gave them underhand; when he pulled the house down under the Philistines that were upon the roof of it, he made the horse throw his rider.

Thus was Jacob going on with his discourse; but now, being almost spent with speaking, and ready to faint and die away, he relieves himself with those words which come in as a parenthesis, (v. 18.) *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord*; as those that are fainting, are helped by taking a spoonful of a cordial, or smelling at a bottle of spirits; or, if he must break off here, and his breath will not serve him to finish what he intended, with these words he pours out his soul into the bosom of his God, and even breathes it out. Note, The pious ejaculations of a warm and lively devotion, though sometimes they may be incoherent, yet they are not therefore to be censured as impertinent; that may be uttered affectionately, which does not come in methodically. It is no absurdity, when we are speaking to men, to lift up our hearts to God. The salvation we waited for, was, [1.] Christ, the promised Seed, whom

he had spoken of, *v.* 10. Now that he was going to be gathered to his people, he breathes after him to whom the gathering of the people shall be. [2.] *Heaven*, the better country, which he declared plainly that he sought, (*Heb.* 11. 13, 14.) and continued seeking, now that he was in Egypt. Now that he is going to enjoy the salvation, he comforts himself with this, that he had waited for the salvation. Note, *First*, It is the character of a living saint, that he waits for the salvation of the Lord. *Christ*, as our Way to heaven, is to be waited on; and *Heaven*, as our rest in Christ, is to be waited for. *Secondly*, It is the comfort of a dying saint thus to have waited for the salvation of the Lord; for then he shall have what he has been waiting for: long-looked for will come.

IV. Concerning *Gad*, *v.* 19. He alludes to his name, which signifies a *troop*, foresees the character of that tribe, that it should be a warlike tribe, and so we find, 1 Chron. 12. 8, the *Gadites were men of war fit for the battle*. He foresees that the situation of that tribe on the other side of Jordan, would expose it to the incursions of its neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites; and that they might not be proud of their strength and valour, he foretells that the troops of their enemies should in many skirmishes, overcome them; yet, that they might not be discouraged by their defeats, he assures them that they should *overcome at the last*, which was fulfilled when, in Saul's time and David's, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued; see 1 Chron. 5. 18, &c. Note, The cause of God and his people, though it may seem for a time to be baffled and run down, yet it will be victorious at last, *Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello—We are foiled in battle, but not in a campaign*. Grace in the soul is often foiled in its conflicts, troops of corruption overcome it, but the cause is God's, and grace will in the issue come off conqueror, yea, *more than conqueror*, Rom. 8. 37.

V. Concerning *Asher*, *v.* 20. That it should be a very rich tribe, replenished not only with bread for necessity, but with fatness, with *dainties, royal dainties*, (for the king himself is *served of the field*, Eccl. 5. 9.) and these exported out of Asher, to other tribes, perhaps to other lands. Note, The God of nature has provided for us, not only necessities but dainties, that we might call him a bountiful Benefactor; yet, whereas all places are competently furnished with necessities, only some places afford dainties. Corn is more common than spices. Were the supports of luxury as universal as the supports of life, the world would be worse than it is, and that it needs not be.

VI. Concerning *Naphtali*, *v.* 21. A tribe that carries struggles in its name; it signifies *wrestling*, and the blessing entailed upon it signifies *prevailing*; it is a *hind let loose*. Though we find not this prediction so fully answered in the event as some of the rest, yet, no doubt, it proved true, that those of this tribe were, 1. As the *loving* hind, (for that is her epithet, Prov. 5. 19.) friendly and obliging to one another, and to other tribes; their converse remarkably kind and endearing. 2. As the *loosened* hind, zealous for their liberty. 3. As the *swift* hind, (Ps. 18. 33.) quick in despatch of business; and perhaps, 4. As the *trembling* hind, timorous in times of public danger. It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends, are most formidable to their enemies. 5. That they should be *affable and courteous*, their language refined, and they complaisant, *giving goodly words*. Note, Among God's Israel there is to be found a great variety of dispositions, contrary to each other, yet all contributing to the beauty and strength of the body; Judah like a lion, Issachar like an ass, Dan like a serpent, Naphtali like a hind. Let not those of differ-

ent tempers and gifts censure one another, or envy one another, any more than those of different statures and complexions.

22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, *even* a fruitful bough by a well; *whose* branches run over the wall. 23. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: 24. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) 25. *Even* by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: 26. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. 27. Benjamin shall raven as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

He closes with the blessings of his best beloved sons, Joseph and Benjamin; with these he will breathe his last.

I. The blessing of *Joseph*, which is very large and full. He is compared (*v.* 22.) to a *fruitful bough*, or young tree; for God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction; he owned it, *ch.* 41. 52. His two sons were as *branches* of a vine, or other spreading plant, *running over the wall*. Note, God can make these fruitful, great comforts to themselves and others, who have been looked upon as dry and withered. More is recorded in the history concerning Joseph, than concerning any other of Jacob's sons; and therefore what Jacob says of him, is historical as well as prophetic. Observe,

1. The providences of God concerning Joseph, *v.* 23, 24. These are mentioned to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Jacob's faith: and hope, that God had blessings in store for his seed. Here observe, (1.) Joseph's straits and troubles, *v.* 23. Though he now lived at ease, and in honour, Jacob reminds him of the difficulties he had formerly waded through. He had had many enemies here called *archers*, being skilful to do mischief, masters of their art of persecution: they *hated him*, there persecution begins; they *shot their poisonous darts at him*, and thus they sorely grieved him. His brethren, in his father's house, were very spiteful toward him, mocked him, stripped him, threatened him, sold him, thought they had been the death of him. His mistress in the house of Potiphar, sorely grieved him, and *shot at him*, when she impudently assaulted his chastity; (temptations are fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, sorely grievous to gracious souls;) when she prevailed not in this, she *hated him* and *shot at him*, by her false accusations, arrows which there is little fence against, but the hold God has in the consciences of the worst of men. Doubtless he had enemies in the court of Pharaoh, that envied his preferment, and sought to undermine him. (2.) Joseph's strength and support under all these troubles; (*v.* 24.) *His bow abode in strength*, that is, his faith did not fail, but

he kept his ground, and came off a conqueror. The arms of his hands were made strong, that is, his other graces did their part, his wisdom, courage, and patience, which are better than weapons of war. In short, he maintained both his integrity and his comfort through all his trials; he bore all his burdens with an invincible resolution, and did not sink under them nor do any thing unbecoming him. (3.) The spring and fountain of this strength; it was by the hands of the mighty God, who was therefore able to strengthen him, and the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with him, and therefore engaged to help him. All our strength for the resisting of temptations, and the bearing of afflictions, comes from God: his grace is sufficient, and his strength is perfected in our weakness. (4.) The state of honour and usefulness he was advanced to after this; from thence, from this strange method of providence, he became the shepherd and stone, the feeder and supporter, of God's Israel, Jacob and his family. Herein Joseph was a type, [1.] Of Christ; he was shut at and hated, but borne up under his sufferings, (Isa. 50. 7. . 9.) and was afterward advanced to be the shepherd and stone. [2.] Of the church in general, and particular believers; hell shoots its arrows against the saints, but Heaven protects and strengthens them, and will crown them.

2. The promises of God to Joseph. See how these are connected with the former! (v. 25.) *Even by the God of thy father Jacob, who shall help thee.* Note, Our experiences of God's power and goodness in strengthening us hitherto, are our encouragements still to hope for help from him; he that has helped us will: we may build much upon our *Eben-Ezers*. See what Joseph may expect from the Almighty, even the God of his father. (1.) He shall help thee in difficulties and dangers which may yet be before thee, help thy seed in their wars. Joshua came from him, who commanded in chief in the wars of Canaan. (2.) He shall bless thee; and he only blesses indeed. Jacob prays for a blessing upon Joseph, but the God of Jacob commands the blessing. Observe the blessings conferred on Joseph; [1.] Various and abundant blessings. *Blessings of heaven above*; rain in its season, and fair weather in its season, and the benign influences of the heavenly bodies; *blessings of the deep that lieth under this earth*, which, compared with the upper world, is but a great deep, with subterraneous mines and springs. Spiritual blessings are blessings of heaven above, which we ought to desire and seek for, in the first place, and to which we must give the preference, while temporal blessings, those of this earth, must lie under in our account and esteem. *Blessings of the womb and the breasts* are given, when children are safely born; and comfortably nursed. In the word of God, by which we are born again, and nourished up, (1 Pet. 1. 23.—2. 2.) there are to the new man blessings both of the womb and the breasts. [2.] Eminent and transcendent blessings, which prevail above the blessings of thy progenitors, v. 26. His father Isaac had but one blessing, and when he had given that to Jacob, he was at a loss for a blessing to bestow upon Esau; but Jacob had a blessing for each of his twelve sons, and now, at the latter end, a copious one for Joseph. The great blessing entailed upon that family was increase, which did not so immediately and so signally follow the blessings which Abraham and Isaac gave to their sons, as it followed the blessing which Jacob gave to his; for, soon after his death, they multiplied exceedingly. [3.] Durable and extensive blessings; unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, including all the productions of the most fruitful hills, and lasting as long as they last, Isa. 54. 10. Note, The blessings of the everlasting

God include the riches of the everlasting hills, and much more. Well, if these blessings it is here said, *They shall be*, so it is a promise, or, *Let them be*, so it is a prayer, on the head of Joseph; to which let them be as a crown to adorn it, and a helmet to protect it. Joseph was separated from his brethren, (so we read it,) for a time; yet, as others read it, he was a Nazirite among his brethren, better and more excellent than they. Note, It is no new thing for the best men to meet with the worst usage; for Nazarites among their brethren to be cast out and separated from their brethren; but the blessing of God will make it up to them.

II. The blessing of Benjamin; (v. 27.) *He shall raven as a wolf*; it is plain by this, that Jacob was guided in what he said, by a spirit of prophecy, and not by natural affection; else he would have spoken with more tenderness of his beloved son Benjamin, concerning whom he only foresees and foretells this, that his posterity should be a warlike tribe, strong and daring, and that they should enrich themselves with the spoils of their enemies; that they should be active and busy in the world, and a tribe as much feared by their neighbours as any other; in the morning he shall devour the prey, which he seized and divided over-night. Or, in the first times of Israel, they shall be noted for activity, though many of them left-handed, Judg. 5. 15.—20. 16. Ehud, the second judge, and Saul, the first king, were of this tribe, and so also in the last times Esther and Mordecai were of this tribe, by whom the enemies of the Jews were destroyed. The Benjamites ravened like wolves, when they desperately espoused the cause of the men of Gibeah, those men of Belial, Judg. 20. 14. Blessed Paul was of this tribe, (Rom. 11. 1. Phil. 3. 5.) and he did in the morning of that day, devour the prey as a persecutor, but in the evening, divide the spoil as a preacher. Note, God can serve his own purposes by the different tempers of men; the deceived and the deceiver are his.

28. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. 29. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30. In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. 31. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. 32. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein, was from the children of Heth. 33. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Here is,

1. The summing up of the blessings of Jacob's sons, v. 28. Though Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were put under the marks of their father's displeasure, yet he is said to bless them every one according to his blessing; for none of them were rejected as Esau was. Note, Whatever rebukes of God's word or providence we are under at any time, yet, as long



as we have an interest in God's covenant, a place and a name among his people, and good hopes of a share in the heavenly Canaan, we must account ourselves blessed.

2. The solemn charge Jacob gave them concerning his burial, which is a repetition of what he had before given to Joseph. See how he speaks of death, now that he is dying; (*v. 29.*) *I am to be gathered unto my people.* Note, It is good to represent death to ourselves under the most desirable images, that the terror of it may be taken off. Though it separate us from our children and our people in this world, it gathers us to our fathers and to our people in the other world. Perhaps Jacob uses this expression concerning death, as a reason why his sons should bury him in Canaan; for says he, "*I am to be gathered unto my people, my soul must be gone to the spirits of just men made perfect:* and therefore bury me with my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and their wives," *v. 31.* Observe,

(1.) His heart was very much upon it, not so much from a natural affection to his native soil, as from a principle of faith in the promise of God, that Canaan should be the inheritance of his seed in due time. Thus he would keep up in his sons a remembrance of the promised land, and not only would have their acquaintance with it renewed by a journey thither on that occasion, but their desire towards it, and their expectation of it preserved.

(2.) He is very particular in describing the place, both by the situation of it, and by the purchase Abraham had made of it, for a burying-place, *v. 30, 32.* He was afraid lest his sons after seventeen years sojourning in Egypt, had forgotten Canaan, and even the burying-place of their ancestors there, or lest the Canaanites should dispute his title to it; and therefore he specifies it thus largely, and the purchase of it, even when he lies a-dying, not only to prevent mistakes, but to show how mindful he was of that country. Note, It is, and should be, a great pleasure to dying saints, to fix their thoughts upon the heavenly Canaan, and the rest they hope for there after death.

3. The death of Jacob, *v. 33.* When he had finished both his blessing and his charge, (both which are included in the commanding of his sons,) and so had finished his testimony, he addressed himself to his dying work. (1.) He put himself into a posture for dying; having, before, seated himself upon the bed-side, to bless his sons; (the spirit of prophecy bringing fresh oil to his expiring lamp, *Dan. 10. 19.*) when that work was done, *he gathered up his feet into the bed*, that he might lie along, not only as one patiently submitting to the stroke, but as one cheerfully composing himself to rest, now that he was weary. *I will lay me down, and sleep.* (2.) He freely resigned his spirit into the hand of God, the Father of spirits; *he yielded up the ghost.* (3.) His departed soul went to the assembly of the souls of *the faithful*, which, *after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity*; he was gathered to his people. Note, If God's people be our people, death will gather us to them.

## CHAP. L.

Here is, I. The preparation for Jacob's funeral, *v. 1. - 6.* II.

The funeral itself, *v. 7. - 14.* III. The settling of a good understanding between Joseph and his brethren after the death of Jacob, *v. 15. - 21.* IV. The age and death of Joseph, *v. 22. - 26.* Thus the book of Genesis, which began with the originals of light and life, ends with nothing but death and darkness; so sad a change has sin made.

1. **A**ND Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

2. And Joseph commanded his servants

the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3. And forty days were fulfilled for him; (for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed;) and the Egyptians mourned for him threescore and ten days. 4. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5. My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now, therefore, let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6. And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

Joseph is here paying his last respects to his deceased father.

1. With tears and kisses, and all the tender expressions of a filial affection, he takes leave of the deserted body, *v. 1.* Though Jacob was old and decrepit, and must needs die, in the course of nature; though he was poor comparatively, and a constant charge to his son Joseph, yet such an affection he had for a loving father, and so sensible was he of the loss of a prudent, pious, praying father, that he could not part with him without floods of tears. Note, As it is an honour to die lamented, so it is the duty of survivors to lament the death of those who have been useful in their day, though for some time they may have survived their usefulness. The departed soul is out of the reach of our tears and kisses, but with them it is proper to show our respect to the poor body, of which we look for a glorious and joyful resurrection. Thus Joseph showed his faith in God, and love to his father, by kissing his pale and cold lips, and so giving an affectionate farewell. Probably, the rest of Jacob's sons did the same, much moved, no doubt, with his dying words.

2. He ordered the body to be embalmed, (*v. 2.*) not only because he died in Egypt, and that was the manner of the Egyptians, but because he was to be carried to Canaan, which would be a work of time, and therefore it was necessary the body should be preserved as well as it might be from putrefaction. See how vile our bodies are, when the soul has forsaken them; without a great deal of art, and pains, and care, they will, in a very little time, become noisome. If the body have been dead four days, by that time it is offensive.

3. He observed the ceremony of solemn mourning for him, *v. 3.* Forty days were taken up in embalming the body, which the Egyptians (they say) had an art of doing so curiously, as to preserve the very features of the face unchanged; all this time, and thirty days more, seventy in all, they either confined themselves and sat solitary, or when they went out, appeared in the habit of close mourners, according to the decent custom of the country. Even the Egyptians, many of them, out of the great respect they had for Joseph, (whose good offices done for the king and country were now fresh in remembrance,) put themselves into mourning for his father. As with us, when the court goes into mourning, those of the best quality do so too. About ten weeks was the court of Egypt in mourning for Jacob. Note, What they did in state, we should do in sincerity, *weep with them*



that weep, and mourn with them that mourn, as being ourselves also in the body.

4. He asked and obtained leave of Pharaoh to go to Canaan, thither to attend the funeral of his father, *v. 4. . 6.* (1.) It was a piece of necessary respect to Pharaoh, that he would not go without leave; for we may suppose, that though his charge about the corn was long since over, yet he continued a prime-minister of state, and therefore would not be so long absent from his business without licence. (2.) He observed decorum, in employing some of the royal family, or some of the officers of the household, to intercede for this licence; either because it was not proper for him in the days of his mourning to come into the presence-chamber, or because he would not presume too much upon his own interest. Note, Modesty is a great ornament to dignity. (3.) He pleaded the obligation his father had laid upon him, by an oath, to bury him in Canaan, *v. 5.* It was not from pride or humour, but from his regard to an indispensable duty that he desired it. All nations reckon that oaths must be performed, and the will of the dead must be observed. (4.) He promised to return; *I will come again.* When we return to our own houses from burying the bodies of our relations, we say, "We have left them behind;" but if their souls be gone to our heavenly Father's house, we may say, with more reason, "They have left us behind." (5.) He obtained leave; (*v. 6.*) *Go, and bury thy father;* Pharaoh is willing his business should stand still so long; but the service of Christ is more needful, and therefore he would not allow one that had work to do for him, to go first and bury his father; no, *Let the dead bury their dead,* Matth. 8. 22.

7. And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt, 8. And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. 9. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. 10. And they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. 11. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan. 12. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13. For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. 14. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

We have here an account of Jacob's funeral.

Of the funerals of the kings of Judah, usually, no more is said than this, *They were buried with their fathers in the city of David;* but the funeral of the patriarch Jacob is more largely and fully described. 1. To show how much better God was to him than he expected; he had spoken more than once of dying for grief, and going to the grave bereaved of his children, but, behold, he dies in honour, and is followed to the grave by all his children. 2. Because his orders concerning his burial were given and observed in faith, and in expectation both of the earthly and of the heavenly Canaan.

Now,

1. It was a *stately* funeral: he was attended to the grave, not only by his own family, but by the courtiers, and all the great men of the kingdom, who in token of their gratitude to Joseph, showed this respect to his father for his sake, and did him honour at his death. Though the Egyptians had had an antipathy to the Hebrews, and had looked upon them with disdain, (*ch. 43. 32.*) yet now that they were better acquainted with them, they began to have a respect for them. Good old Jacob had conducted himself so well among them, as to gain universal esteem. Note, Professors of religion should endeavour, by wisdom and love, to remove the prejudices which many may have conceived against them, because they do not know them. There went abundance of chariots and horsemen, not only to attend them a little way, but to go through with them. Note, The decent solemnities of funerals, according to a man's situation, are very commendable; and we must not scorn of them, *To what purpose is this waste?* See Acts 8. 2. Luke 7. 12.

2. It was a *sorrowful* funeral; (*v. 10, 11.*) standers-by took notice of it as a grievous mourning. Note, The death of good men is a great loss to any place, and ought to be greatly lamented. Stephen dies a martyr, and yet devout men make great lamentations for him. The solemn mourning for Jacob gave a name to the place, *Abel-mizraim, The mourning of the Egyptians;* which served for a testimony against the next generation of the Egyptians, who oppressed the posterity of this Jacob to whom their ancestors showed such respect.

15. And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. 16. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17. So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. 18. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. 19. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? 20. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. 21. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

We have here the settling of a good correspondence between Joseph and his brethren, now that their father was dead. Joseph was at court, in the royal city; his brethren were in Goshen, remote in the country; yet the keeping up of a good understanding, and a good affection, between them, would be both his honour and their interest. Note, When Providence has removed the parents by death, the best methods ought to be taken, not only for the preventing of quarrels among the children, (which often happen about the dividing of the estate,) but for the preserving of acquaintance and love, that unity may continue, even when that centre of unity is taken away.

I. Joseph's brethren humbly make their court to him for his favour. 1. They began to be jealous of Joseph; not that he had given them any cause to be so, but the consciousness of guilt, and of their own inability in such a case to forgive and forget, made them suspicious of the sincerity and constancy of Joseph's favour; (*v. 15.*) *Joseph will peradventure hate us*; while their father lived, they thought themselves safe under his shadow; but now that he was dead, they feared the worst from Joseph. Note, A guilty conscience exposes men to continual frights, even where no fear is, and makes them suspicious of every body, as Cain, *ch. 4. 14.* Those that would be fearless, must keep themselves guiltless. If our heart reproach us not, then have we confidence both toward God and man. 2. They humbled themselves before him, confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. They did it by *proxy*; (*v. 17.*) they did it in *person*, *v. 18.* Now that the sun and moon were set, the eleven stars did obeisance to Joseph, for the further accomplishment of his dream. They speak of their former offence with fresh regret; *Forgive the trespass*: they throw themselves at Joseph's feet, and refer themselves to his mercy; *We be thy servants*.<sup>\*</sup> Thus we must bewail the sins we committed long ago, even those which we hope through grace are forgiven; and when we pray to God for pardon, we must promise to be his servants. 3. They pleaded their relation to Jacob, and to Jacob's God. (1.) *To Jacob*; urging, that he directed them to make this submission, rather because he questioned whether they would do their duty in humbling themselves, than because he questioned whether Joseph would do his duty in forgiving them: nor could he reasonably expect Joseph's kindness to them, unless they thus qualified themselves for it; (*v. 16.*) *Thy father did command*. Thus, in humbling ourselves to Christ by faith and repentance, we may plead that it is the command of his Father, and our Father, that we do so. (2.) *To Jacob's God*. They plead, (*v. 17.*) *We are the servants of the God of thy father*; not only children of the same Jacob, but worshippers of the same Jehovah. Note, Though we must be ready to forgive all that are any way injurious to us, yet we must especially take heed of bearing malice towards any that are *the servants of the God of our father*: such we should always treat with a peculiar tenderness; for we and they have the same master.

II. Joseph, with a great deal of compassion, confirms his reconciliation and affection to them; his compassion appears, *v. 17*, *He wept when they spake to him*. These were tears of sorrow for their suspicion of him, and tears of tenderness upon their submission. In his reply,

1. He directs them to look up to God in their repentance; (*v. 19.*) *Am I in the place of God?* He, in his great humility, thought they showed him too much respect, as if all their happiness were bound up in his favour; and said to them, in effect, as Peter to Cornelius, "*Stand up, I myself also am a man*. Make your peace with God, and then you will find it an easy matter to make your peace with me." Note,

When we ask forgiveness of those whom we have offended, we must take heed of putting them in the place of God, by dreading their wrath, and soliciting their favour more than God's. "Am I in the place of God, to whom alone vengeance belongs? No, I will leave you to his mercy." Those that avenge themselves, step into the place of God, *Rom. 12. 19.*

2. He extenuates their fault, from the consideration of the great good which God wonderfully brought out of it, which, though it should not make them the less sorry for their sin, yet it might make him the more willing to forgive it; (*v. 20.*) *Ye thought evil, to disappoint the dreams, but God meant it unto good*, in order to the fulfilling of the dreams, and the making of Joseph a greater blessing to his family than otherwise he could have been. Note, (1.) When God makes use of men's agency for the performance of his counsels, it is common for him to mean one thing, and *them* another, even the quite contrary; but God's counsels shall stand. See *Isa. 10. 7.* (2.) God often brings good out of evil, and serves the designs of his providence, even by the sins of men; not that he is the Author of sin, far be it from us to think so; but his infinite wisdom so overrules events, and directs the chain of them, that, in the issue, that ends in his praise, which in its own nature had a direct tendency to his dishonour; as the putting of Christ to death, *Acts 2. 23.* This does not make sin the less sinful, nor sinners the less punishable, but it redounds greatly to the glory of God's wisdom.

3. He assures them of the continuance of his kindness to them; *Fear not, I will nourish you*, *v. 21.* See what an excellent spirit Joseph was of, and learn of him to render good for evil. He did not tell them, they were upon their good behaviour, and he would be kind to them, if he saw they conducted themselves well; no, he would not thus hold them in suspense, nor seem jealous of them, though they had been suspicious of him; *he comforted them*, and to banish all their fears, *he spake kindly to them*. Note, Broken spirits must be bound up and encouraged. These we love and forgive, we must not only do well for, but speak kindly to.

22. And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. 23. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees. 24. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. 26. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Here is,

1. The prolonging of Joseph's life in Egypt; he lived to be an hundred and ten years old, *v. 22.* Having honoured his father, his days were long in the land, which, for the present, God had given him; and it was a very great mercy to his relations, that God continued him so long, a support and comfort to them.

2. The building up of Joseph's family; he lived

to see his great-grand-children by both his sons, (v. 23.) and, probably, he saw his two sons solemnly owned as heads of distinct tribes, equal to any of his brethren. It contributes much to the comfort of aged parents, if they see their posterity in a flourishing condition, especially if with it they see peace upon Israel, Ps. 128. 6.

3. The last will and testament of Joseph published in the presence of his brethren, when he saw his death approaching: those that were properly his brethren, perhaps were some of them dead before him, as several of them were elder than he; but to those of them who yet survived, and to the sons of those who were gone, who stood up in their fathers' stead, he said this.

(1.) He comforted them with the assurance of their return to Canaan in due time; (v. 24.) *I die, but God will surely visit you:* to this purport Jacob had spoken to him, ch. 48. 21. Thus must we comfort others with the same comforts with which we ourselves have been comforted of God, and encourage them to rest on those promises which have been our support. Joseph was, under God, both the protector and the benefactor of his brethren; and what would become of them, now that he was dying? Why, let this be their comfort, *God will surely visit you.* Note, God's gracious visits will serve to make up the loss of our best friends. They die; but we may live, and live comfortably, if we have the favour and presence of God with us. He bids them be confident; *God will bring you out of this land,* and therefore, [1.] They must not hope to settle there, nor look upon it as their rest for ever; they must set their hearts upon the land of promise, and call that their home. [2.] They must not fear sink-

ing, and being ruined there; probably he foresaw the ill usage they would meet with there after his death, and therefore gives them this word of encouragement; "*God will bring you in triumph out of this land at last.*" Herein he has an eye to the promise, ch. 15. 13, 14. and, in God's name, assures them of the performance of it.

(2.) For a confession of his own faith, and a confirmation of their's, he charges them to keep him unburied till that day, that glorious day should come, when they should be settled in the land of promise, v. 25. He makes them promise him with an oath, that they would bury him in Canaan. In Egypt they buried their great men very honourably, and with abundance of pomp; but Joseph prefers a significant burial in Canaan, and that deferred too almost two hundred years, before a magnificent one in Egypt. Thus Joseph, by faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, and the promise of Canaan, gave *commandment concerning his bones*, Heb. 11. 22. He dies in Egypt; but lays his bones at stake, that God will surely visit Israel, and bring them to Canaan.

4. The death of Joseph, and the reservation of his body for a burial in Canaan, v. 26. He was *put in a coffin in Egypt*, but not buried till his children had received their inheritance in Canaan, Josh. 24. 32. Note, (1.) If the separate soul, at death, do but return to its rest with God, the matter is not great, though the deserted body find not at all, or not quickly, its rest in the grave. (2.) Yet care ought to be taken of the dead bodies of the saints, in the belief of their resurrection; for there is a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered, and a commandment is given concerning the bones.

AN

# EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

## EXODUS.

Moses, (the *Servant of the Lord* in writing for him, as well as in *acting* for him—with the *pen* of God, as well as with the *rod* of God, in his hand,) having, in the first book of his history, preserved and transmitted the records of the church, while it existed in private families, comes, in this second book, to give us an account of its growth into a great nation; and as the former furnishes us with the best *Economics*, so this with the best *Politics*. The beginning of the former book shows us how God formed the *world* for himself; the beginning of this shows us how he formed *Israel* for himself, and both to show forth his praise, Isa. 43. 21. There we have the creation of the world in history, here the redemption of the world in type. The Greek translators called this book *Exodus*, (which signifies a *departure*, or *going out*,) because it begins with the story of the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt. Some allude to the names of this and the foregoing book, and observe, that immediately after *Genesis*, which signifies the *beginning*, or *original*, follows *Exodus*, which signifies a *departure*, for a *time to be born* is immediately succeeded by a *time to die*. No sooner have we made our entrance into the world, than we must think of making our exit, and going out of the world. When we begin to live, we begin to die. The forming of Israel into a people, was a new creation. As the earth was in the beginning, first fetched from under water, and then beautified and replenished; so Israel was