

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

WITH  
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,  
UPON THE FIRST BOOK OF  
S A M U E L.

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This book, and that which follows it, bear the name of *Samuel* in the title, not because he was the penman of them, (except of so much of them as fell within his own time, to the twenty-fifth chapter of the first book, in which we have an account of his death,) but because the first book begins with a large account of him, his birth and childhood, his life and government; and the rest of these two volumes that are denominated from him, contains the history of the reigns of *Saul* and *David*, who were both anointed by him. And because the history of these two kings takes up the greatest part of these books, the vulgar Latin calls them the *first* and *second Books of the Kings*; and the two that follow, the *third* and *fourth*, which the titles of our English Bibles take notice of with an *alias*, *otherwise called the first Book of the Kings*. The LXX call them the first and second Books of the Kingdoms. It is needless to contend about it, but there is no occasion to vary from the Hebrew verity. These two books contain the history of the two last of the judges, *Eli* and *Samuel*, who were not, as the rest, men of war, but priests; and so much of them is an entrance upon the history of the kings. They contain a considerable part of the sacred history, are sometimes referred to in the New Testament, and often in the title of *David's* Psalms, which, if placed in their order, would fall in, in these books. It is uncertain who was the penman of them; it is probable that *Samuel* wrote the history of his own time, and that, after him, some of the prophets that were with *David*, (*Nathan*, as likely as any,) continued it. The first book gives us a full account of *Eli's* fall, and *Samuel's* rise and good government, *ch.* 1..8. Of *Samuel's* resignation of the government, and *Saul's* advancement and mal-administration, *ch.* 9..15. The choice of *David*, his struggles with *Saul*, *Saul's* ruin at last, and the opening of the way for *David* to the throne, *ch.* 16..31. And these things are written for *our learning*.

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I. SAMUEL, I.

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CHAP. I.

The history of Samuel here begins as early as that of Samson did, even before he was born, as afterwards the history of John the Baptist and our blessed Saviour. Some of the scripture worthies drop out of the clouds, as it were, and their first appearance is in their full growth and lustre. But others are accounted for from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. It is true of all, what God says of the prophet Jeremiah, *Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee*, Jer. 1. 5. But some great men were brought into the world with more observation than others, and were more early distinguished from common persons, as Samuel for one. God, in this matter, acts as a free agent. The story of Samson introduces him as a child of promise, Judg. 13. But the story of Samuel introduces him as a child of prayer. Samson's birth was foretold by an angel to his mother; Samuel was asked of God by his mother: both together intimate what wonders are produced by the word and prayer. Samuel's mother was Hannah, the principal person concerned in the story of this chapter. I. Here is her affliction, she was childless, and this affliction aggravated by her rival's insolence, but in some measure balanced by her husband's kindness, v. 1..8. II. The prayer and vow

she made to God under this affliction, in which Eli the High Priest at first censured her, and afterward encouraged her, v. 9..18. III. The birth and nursing of Samuel, v. 19..23. IV. The presenting of him to the Lord, v. 24..28.

1. **N**OW there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of mount Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephrathite: 2. And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. 3. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship, and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the LORD, were

there. 4. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: 5. But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion: for he loved Hannah; but the LORD had shut up her womb. 6. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb. 7. And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat. 8. Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?

We have here an account of the state of the family into which Samuel the prophet was born. His father's name was Elkanah, a Levite, and of the family of the Koathites, (the most honourable house of that tribe,) as appears, 1 Chron. 6. 33, 34. His ancestor Zuph was an Ephrathite, that is, of Beth-lehem-Judah, which was called *Ephrathah*, Ruth 1. 2. There this family of the Levites was first seated, but one branch of it, in process of time, removed to mount Ephraim, from which Elkanah descended: Micah's Levite came from Beth-lehem to Mount Ephraim, Judg. 17. 8. Minister's families are as moveable as any. Perhaps notice is taken of their being originally Ephrathites, to show their alliance to David. This Elkanah lived at Ramah, or Ramathaim, which signifies *the double Ramah*, the higher and lower town, the same with Arimathæa of which Joseph was, here called *Ramathaim-zophim*. Zophim signifies *watchmen*; probably, they had one of the schools of the prophets there, for prophets are called *watchmen*; the Chaldee paraphrase calls Elkanah *a disciple of the prophets*. But it seems to me that it was in Samuel that prophecy was revived; before his time the *e* being, for a great while, no open vision, *ch.* 3. 1. Nor is there any mention of a prophet of the Lord from Moses to Samuel, except Judg. 6. 8. So that we have no reason to think that there was any nursery or college of prophets here, till Samuel himself founded one, *ch.* 19. 19, 20. This is the account of Samuel's parentage, and the place of his nativity.

Let us now take notice of the state of the family.

1. It was a devout family. All the families of Israel should be so, but Levites' families in a particular manner. Ministers should be patterns of family religion. Elkanah went up at the solemn fasts to the tabernacle at Shiloh, *to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts*. I think this is the first time in scripture, that God is called *the Lord of hosts*, *Jehovah Sabaoth*, a name by which he was afterward very much called and known. Probably, Samuel the prophet was the first that used this title of God, for the comfort of Israel, when in his time their hosts were few and feeble, and those of their enemies many and mighty; then it would be a support to them, to think that the God they served, was Lord of hosts, of all the hosts both of heaven and earth; of them he has a sovereign command, and makes what use he pleases of them. Elkanah was a country Levite, and, for aught that appears, had not any place or office which required his attendance at the tabernacle, but he went up as a common Israelite, with his own sacrifices, to encourage his neighbours and set them a good example. When he sacrificed, he worshipped, joining prayers and thanksgivings with his sacrifices. In

this course of religion he was constant, for he went up yearly.

And that which made it the more commendable in him was,

1. That there was a general decay and neglect of religion in the nation; some among them worshipped other gods, and the generality were remiss in the service of the God of Israel; and yet Elkanah kept his integrity; whatever others did, his resolution was, that he and his house should serve the Lord. 2. That Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were the men that were now chiefly employed in the service of the house of God; and they were men that conducted themselves very ill in their place, as we shall find afterward; yet Elkanah went up to sacrifice. God had then tied his people to one place and one altar, and forbidden them, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship elsewhere, and therefore, in pure obedience to that command, he attended at Shiloh; if the priests did not do their duty, he would do his. Thanks be to God, we, under the gospel, are not tied to any one place or family; but the pastors and teachers whom the exalted Redeemer has given to his church, are those only whose ministration tends to the *perfecting of the saints*, and the edifying of the *body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 11, 12. None have dominion over our faith; but our obligation is to those that are the helpers of our holiness and joy, not to any that by their scandalous immoralities, like Hophni and Phinehas, make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred; though still the validity and efficacy of the sacraments depend not on the purity of him that administers them.

II. Yet it was a divided family, and the divisions of it carried with them both guilt and grief. Where there is piety, it is pity but there should be unity. The joint devotions of a family should put an end to divisions in it.

1. The original cause of this division, was Elkanah's marrying two wives, which was a transgression of the original institution of marriage, to which our Saviour reduces it, Matt. 19. 5, 8, *From the beginning it was not so*. It made mischief in Abraham's family, and Jacob's, and here in Elkanah's; how much better does the law of God provide for our comfort and ease in this world than we should, if we were left to ourselves! It is probable that Elkanah married Hannah first, and because he had no children by her so soon as he hoped, he married Peninnah, who bare him children, indeed, but was in other things a vexation to him. Thus are men often beaten with rods of their own making.

2. That which followed upon this error, was, that the two wives could not agree. They had different blessings; Peninnah, like Leah, was fruitful and had many children, which should have made her easy and thankful, though she was but a second wife, and was less beloved; Hannah, like Rachel, was childless indeed, but she was very dear to her husband, and he took all occasions to let both her and others know that she was so, and many a *worthy portion* he gave her; *v.* 5. and this should have made her easy and thankful. But they were of different tempers; Peninnah could not bear the blessing of fruitfulness, but she grew haughty and insolent; Hannah could not bear the affliction of barrenness, but she grew melancholy and discontented; and Elkanah had a difficult part to act between them.

(1.) Elkanah kept up his attendance at God's altar, notwithstanding this unhappy difference in his family, and took his wives and children with him, that if they could not agree in other things, they might agree to worship God together. If the devotions of a family prevail not to put an end to its divisions, yet let not the divisions put a stop to the devotions.

(2.) He did all he could, to encourage Hannah, and to keep up her spirits under her afflictions, *v. 4, 5.* At the feasts, he offered peace-offerings, to supplicate for peace in his family; and when he and his family were to eat their share of the sacrifice, in token of their communion with God and his altar, though he carved to Peninnah and her children competent portions, yet to Hannah he gave a worthy portion, the choicest piece that came to the table, the piece (whatever it was) that used to be given on such occasions to those that were most valued: this he did, in token of his love to her, and to give all possible assurances of it. Observe, [1.] Elkanah loved his wife never the less for her being barren. *Christ loves his church*, notwithstanding her infirmities, her barrenness; and *so ought men to love their wives*, Eph. 5. 25. To abate our just love to any relation for the sake of any infirmity which they cannot help, and which is not their sin, but their affliction, is to make God's providence quarrel with his precept, and very unkindly to add affliction to the afflicted. (2.) He studied to show his love so much the more, because she was afflicted, insulted, and low-spirited. It is wisdom and duty to support the weakest, and to hold up those that are run down. (3.) He showed his great love to her, by the share he gave her of his peace-offerings. Thus we should testify our affection to our friends and relations, by abounding in prayer for them. The better we love them, the more room let us give them in our prayers.

(3.) Peninnah was extremely peevish and provoking. (1.) She upbraided Hannah with her affliction, despised her because she was barren, and gave her taunting language, as one whom Heaven did not favour. (2.) She envied the interest she had in the love of Elkanah, and the more kind he was to her, the more was she exasperated against her; which was all over base and barbarous. (3.) She did this most when they *went up to the house of the Lord*, perhaps, because then they were more together than at other times, or because then Elkanah showed his affection most to Hannah. But it was very sinful at such a time to show her malice, when pure hands were to be lifted up at God's altar *without wrath and quarrelling*. It was likewise very unkind at that time to vex Hannah, not only because then they were in company, and others would take notice of it, but then Hannah was to mind her devotions, and desired to be most calm and composed, and free from disturbance. The great adversary to our purity and peace is then most industrious to ruffle us, when we should be most composed. When the *sons of God* come to *present themselves before the Lord*, Satan will be sure to *come among them*, Job 1. 6. (4.) She continued to do this from year to year, not once or twice, but it was her constant practice; neither deference to her husband, nor compassion to Hannah, could break her of it; and *lastly*, That which she designed, was, to make her fret; perhaps in hopes to break her heart, that she might possess her husband's heart solely. Or, because she took a pleasure in her uneasiness: nor could Hannah gratify her more than by fretting. Note, It is an evidence of a bad disposition, to delight in grieving those that are melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and in putting those out of humour, that are apt to fret and be uneasy. We ought to bear one another's burthens, not add to them.

(4.) Hannah (poor woman) could not bear the provocation; *she wept, and did not eat*, *v. 7.* It made her uneasy to herself and to all her relations. She did not eat of the feast, her trouble took away her appetite, made her unfit for any company, and a jar in the harmony of family-joy. It was of the *feast upon the sacrifice* that she *did not eat*, for

they were not to *eat of the holy things in their mourning*, Deut. 26. 14. Lev. 10. 19. Yet it was her infirmity, so far to give way to the sorrow of the world, as to unfit herself for holy joy in God. Those that are of a fretful spirit, and are apt to lay provocations too much to heart, are enemies to themselves, and strip themselves very much of the comforts both of life and godliness. We find that God took notice of this ill effect of discontents and disagreements in the conjugal relation; the parties aggrieved, *covered the altar of the Lord with tears, insomuch that he regarded not the offering*, Mal. 2. 13.

(5.) Elkanah said what he could to her, to comfort her. She did not upbraid him with his unkindness in marrying another wife, as Sarah did, nor did she render to Peninnah railing for railing, but took the trouble wholly to herself, which made her an object of much compassion. Elkanah showed himself extremely grieved at her grief; (*v. 8.*) *Hannah why weepest thou?* [1.] He is much concerned to see her thus overwhelmed with sorrow. They that by marriage are made one flesh, ought thus far to be of one spirit too, to share in each other's troubles, so that one cannot be easy while the other is uneasy. [2.] He gives her a loving reproof for it, *Why weepest thou? And why is thy heart grieved?* As many as God loves he rebukes, and so should we. He puts her upon inquiring into the cause of her grief; though she had just reason to be troubled, yet let her consider whether she had reason to be troubled to such a degree; especially so much as to be taken off by it from eating of the holy things. Note, Our sorrow upon any account is then sinful and inordinate, when it diverts us from our duty to God, and embitters our comfort in him; when it makes us unthankful for the mercies we enjoy, and distrustful of the goodness of God to us in further mercies; when it casts a damp upon our joy in Christ and hinders us from doing the duty, and taking the comfort, of our particular relations. [3.] He intimates that nothing should be wanting on his part to balance her grief. *"Am not I better to thee than ten sons?"* Thou knowest thou hast my affection entire, and let that comfort thee." Note, We ought to take notice of our comforts, to keep us from grieving excessively for our crosses; for, our crosses we deserve, but our comforts we have forfeited. If we would keep the balance even, we must look at that which is for us, as well as that which is against us, else we are unjust to Providence, and unkind to ourselves. *God hath set the one over-against the other*, (Ecc. 7. 14.) and so should we.

9. So Hannah rose up, after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk: (now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD:) 10. And she *was* in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. 11. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth

13. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord; I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Elkanah had gently reproved Hannah for her inordinate grief, and here we find the good effect of the reproof.

I. It brought her to her meat. She ate and drank, *v. 9*. She did not harden herself in sorrow, nor grow sullen when she was reproved for it; but when she perceived her husband uneasy that she did not come and eat with them, she cheered up her own spirits as well as she could, and came to table. It is as great a piece of self-denial to control our passions, as it is to control our appetites.

II. It brought her to her prayers. It put her upon considering, "Do I well to be angry? Do I well to fret? What good does it do me? Instead of binding the burthen thus upon my own shoulders, had I not better ease myself of it, and cast it upon the Lord by prayer?" Elkanah had said, *Am not I better to thee than ten sons?* Which perhaps occasioned her to think with herself, "Whether *he* be so or no, *God* is, and therefore to him will I apply myself, and before him will I pour out my complaint, and try what relief that will give me." If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, and which was the *house of prayer*. They had lately offered their peace-offerings, to obtain the favour of God and all good, and in token of their communion with him; and, taking the comfort of their being accepted of him, they had feasted upon the sacrifice, and now it was proper to put up her prayer in virtue of that sacrifice; for the peace-offerings typified Christ's mediation, as well as the sin-offerings, for by it not only atonement is made for sin, but the audience and acceptance of our prayers, and an answer of peace to them, are obtained for us: to that Sacrifice, in all our supplications, we must have an eye.

Now concerning Hannah's prayer, we may observe,

1. The warm and lively devotion there was in it; which appeared in several instances, for our direction in prayer.

(1.) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit, for the exciting and quickening of her pious affection in prayers. *Being in bitterness of soul, she prayed, v. 10*. This good use we should make of our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our

blessed Saviour himself, *being in an agony, prayed more earnestly*, Luke 22. 44.

(2.) She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer; she wept sore; like a true Israelite, *She wept and made supplication*, (Hos. 12. 4.) with an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul; the prayer came from her heart, as the tears from her eyes.

(3.) She was very particular, and yet very modest, in her petition. She begged a child, a man child, that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle. God gives us leave, in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to mention that special good thing which we most need and desire. Yet she says not, as Rachel, *Give me children*, Gen. 30. 1. She will be very thankful for one.

(4.) She made a solemn vow or promise, that if God would give her a son, she would give *him up to God, v. 11*. He would be, by birth, a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God; but he should be, by her vow, a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred. It is probable she had acquainted Elkanah with her purpose before, and had his consent and approbation. Note, (1.) Parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, as living sacrifices and spiritual priests; and an obligation is thereby laid upon them to serve God faithfully *all the days of their life*. (2.) It is very proper, when we are in pursuit of any mercy, to bind our own souls with a bond, that if God give it us, we will devote it to his honour, and cheerfully use it in his service. Not that hereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it, and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy, let us promise duty.

(5.) She spoke all this so softly, that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but *her voice was not heard, v. 13*. Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart and its desires. Thoughts are words with him, nor is he one of those gods that must be cried aloud to, 1 Kings 18. 27. It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shame-facedness in her approach to God; she was none of those that *made her voice to be heard on high*, Isa. 58. 4. It was a secret prayer, and therefore, though made in a public place, yet was thus made secretly, and not, as the Pharisees prayed, *to be seen of men*. It is true, prayer is not a thing we have reason to be ashamed of, but we must avoid all appearances of ostentation. Let what passes between God and our souls, be kept to ourselves.

2. The hard censure she fell under for it. Eli was now High Priest, and Judge in Israel: he sat upon a seat in the temple, to oversee what was done there, *v. 9*. The tabernacle is here called the *temple*, because it was now fixed, and served all the purposes of a temple. There Eli sat to receive addresses and give direction, and somewhere, (it is probable,) in a private corner, he espied Hannah at her prayers, and, by her unusual manner, fancied she was drunken, and spoke to her accordingly; *v. 14, How long wilt thou be drunken?* —the very imputation that Peter and the apostles fell under, when the Holy Ghost *gave them utterance*, Acts 2. 4. Perhaps in this degenerate age, it was no strange thing to see drunken women at the door of the tabernacle; for, otherwise, one would think the vile lust of Hophni and Phinehas could not have found so easy a prey there, *ch. 2. 22*. Eli took Hannah for one of these. It is one bad effect of the abounding of iniquity, and its becoming fashionable, that it often gives occasion to suspect the innocent. When a disease is epidemical, every one is suspected to be tainted with it.

Now, (1.) This was Eli's fault; and a great fault it was, to pass so severe a censure without better



observation or information. If his own eyes were already waxen dim, he should have employed those about him to inquire. Drunkards are commonly noisy and turbulent, but this poor woman was silent and composed. His fault was the worse, that he was the priest of the Lord, who should have had *compassion on the ignorant*, Heb. 5, 2. Note, It ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in our censures of others, and to be forward to believe people guilty of bad things, while either the matter of fact on which the censure is grounded, is doubtful and unproved, or is capable of a good construction. Charity commands us to hope the best concerning all, and forbids censoriousness. Paul had very good information, when he did but *partly believe*, (1 Cor. 11. 18.) hoping it was not so. Especially we ought to be cautious how we censure the devotion of others, lest we call that *hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or superstition*, which is really the fruit of an honest zeal, and is accepted of God.

(2.) It was Hannah's affliction; and a great affliction it was, added to all the rest; vinegar to the wounds of her spirit. She had been reproved by Elkanah, because she would not eat and drink; and now to be reproached by Eli, as if she had eaten and drunk too much, was very hard. Note, It is no new thing for those that do well, to be ill thought of, and we must not think it strange if at any time it be our lot.

3. Hannah's humble vindication of herself from this crime with which she was charged. She bore it admirably well; she did not retort the charge, and upbraid him with the debauchery of his own sons; did not bid him look at home and restrain them; did not tell him how ill it became one in his place, thus to abuse a poor sorrowful worshipper at the throne of grace. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not recriminate, and return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to vindicate herself, and so must we, v. 15, 16. (1.) In justice to herself, she expressly denies the charge; speaks to him with all possible respect, calls him *My lord*; intimates how very desirous she was to stand well in his opinion; and how loath to lie under his censure. "No, my lord, it is not as you suspect, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, nor any at all," (though it was proper enough to be given to one of such a *heavy heart*, Prov. 31. 6.) "much less to any excess; therefore count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial." Note, Drunkards are children of Belial, women-drunkards particularly; children of the wicked one; children of disobedience; children that will not endure the yoke; (else they would not be drunk;) they are more especially what has just been stated, when actually drunk. They that cannot govern themselves, will not bear that any one else should. Hannah owns the crime had been very great, if she had indeed been guilty of it, and he might justly have shut her out of the courts of God's house; but the very manner of her speaking in her own defence, was sufficient to demonstrate that she was not drunk. 2. In justice to him, she accounts for the manner which had given occasion to his suspicion. "*I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit*, dejected and discomposed, and that is the reason I do not look as other people; the eyes are red, not with wine, but with weeping. And at this time, I have not been talking to myself, as drunkards and fools do, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord, who hears and understands the language of the heart, and this, out of the abundance of my complaint and grief." She had been, more than usual, fervent in prayer to God, and that, she tells him, was the true reason of the disorder she seemed to be in. Note, When we are

unjustly censured, we should endeavour, not only to clear ourselves, but to satisfy our brethren, by giving them a just and true account of that which they misapprehended.

4. The atonement Eli made for his rash unfriendly censure, by a kind and fatherly benediction, v. 17. He did not (as many are apt to do in such a case) take it for an affront to have his mistake rectified, and to be convinced of his error, nor did it put him out of humour. But, on the contrary, he now encouraged Hannah's devotions, as much as before he had discountenanced them; not only intimated that he was satisfied of her innocence by those words, *Go in peace*, but being High-priest, as one having authority, he blessed her in the name of the Lord, and though he knew not what the particular blessing was, that she had been praying for, yet he puts his *Amen* to it, so good an opinion had he now conceived of her prudence and piety. *The God of Israel grant thee thy petition*, whatever it is, *that thou hast asked of him*. Note, By our meek and humble carriage toward those that reproach us because they did not know us, we may perhaps make them our friends, and turn their censures of us into prayers for us.

5. The great satisfaction of mind with which Hannah now went away, v. 18. She begged the continuance of Eli's good opinion of her, and his good prayers for her, and then she went her way, and did eat of what remained of the peace-offerings, (none of which was to be left until the morning,) and *her countenance was no more sad*; no more as it had been, giving marks of inward trouble and discomposure; but she looked pleasant and cheerful, and all was well. Whence came this sudden happy change? She had by prayer committed her case to God, and left it with him, and now she was no more perplexed about it. She had prayed for herself, and Eli had prayed for her; and she believed that God would either give her the mercy she had prayed for, or make up the want of it to her some other way. Note, Prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul; the seed of Jacob have often found it so, being confident that God will never say unto them, *Seek ye me in vain*. See Phil. 4. 6, 7. Prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so.

19. And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. 20. Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying*, Because I have asked him of the Lord. 21. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22. But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him*, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. 23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24. And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and

one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young. 25. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. 26. And she said, Oh, my lord! *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. 27. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28. Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

Here is,

I. The return of Elkanah and his family to their own habitation, when the days appointed for the feast were over, *v.* 19. Observe how they improved their time at the tabernacle: every day they were there, even that which was fixed for their journey home, they worshipped God. And they rose up early to do it. It is good to begin the day with God. Let him that is the first, have the first. They had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, and yet they would not stir till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. They had spent several days now in religious worship, and yet they attended once more. We should not be weary of well-doing.

II. The birth and name of this desired son. At length the Lord remembered Hannah; the very thing she desired; (*v.* 11.) and more she needed not desire, that was enough, for then she conceived and bare a son. Though God seems long to forget his people's burthens, troubles, cares, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called *Samuel*, *v.* 20. Some make the etymology of it to be much the same with that of *Ishmael*, *heard of God*, because the mother's prayers were remarkably heard, and he was an answer to them. Others, because of the reason she gives for the name, make it to signify *asked of God*; it comes nearly to the same; she designed by it to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favour to her in answering her prayers. Thus she designed, upon every mention of his name, to take the comfort to herself, and to give God the glory of that gracious condescension. Note, Mercies in answer to prayer, are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, as *Ps.* 116. 1, 2. How many seasonable deliverances and supplies may we call *Samuel, asked of God*; and whatever is so, we are in a special manner engaged to devote to him. Hannah intended by this name to put her son in mind of the obligation he was under to be the Lord's, in consideration of this, that he was asked of God, and was at the same time dedicated to him. A child of prayer is in a special manner bound to be a good child. Lemuel's mother reminds him that he was the *son of her vows*, *Prov.* 31. 2.

III. The close attendance Hannah gave to the nursing of him, not only because he was dear to her, but because he was devoted to God, and for him she nursed him. She therefore nursed him herself, and did not hang him on another's breast. We ought to take care of our children, not only with an eye to the law of nature as they are our's, but with an eye to the covenant of grace as they are given up to God. See *Ezek.* 16. 20, 21. This sanctifies the nursing of them, when it is done as unto the Lord.

Elkanah went up every year to worship at the tabernacle, and particularly to perform his vow; perhaps some vow he had made distinct from Hannah's, if God would give him a son by her, *v.* 21. But Hannah, though she felt a warm regard for the courts of God's house, begged leave of her husband to stay at home; for the women were not under any obligation to go up to the three yearly feasts, as the men were. However, Hannah had been accustomed to go, but now desired to be excused, 1. Because she would not be so long absent from her nursery. *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* We may suppose she kept constant at home, for if she had gone any whither, she would have gone to Shiloh. Note, God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. These that are detained from public ordinances, by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that with an eye to God, he will graciously accept them therein; and though they tarry at home, they shall divide the spoil. 2. Because she would not go up to Shiloh till her son was big enough, not only to be taken thither, but to be left there; for if once she took him thither, she thought she could never find it in her heart to bring him back again. Note, Those who are steadfastly resolved to pay their vows, may yet see good cause to *defer* the payment of them. *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* No animal was accepted in sacrifice, till it had been for some time under its dam, *Lev.* 22. 27. Fruit is best when it is ripe. Elkanah agrees to what she proposes, *v.* 23, *Do what seemeth thee good.* So far was he from delighting to cross her, that he referred it entirely to her. *Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is,* when yoke-fellows thus draw even in the yoke, and accommodate themselves to one another; each thinking well of what the other does, especially in works of piety and charity. He adds a prayer, *Only the Lord establish his word*; that is, "God preserve the child through the perils of his infancy, that the solemn vow which God signified his acceptance of, by giving us the child, may be performed in its season, and so the whole matter may be accomplished." Note, Those that have in sincerity devoted their children to God, may with comfort pray for them, that God will establish the word sealed to them, at the same time that they were sealed for him.

IV. The solemn entering of this child into the service of the sanctuary. We may take it for granted that he was presented to the Lord at forty days old, as all the first-born were; (*Luke* 2. 22, 23.) but that is not mentioned, because there was nothing in it singular; but now that he was weaned, he was presented, not to be redeemed. Some think it was as soon as he was weaned from the breast, which, the Jews say, was not till he was three years old; it is said, She gave him suck till she had weaned him, *v.* 23. Others think it was not till he was weaned from childish things, at eight or ten years old. But I see no inconvenience in admitting such an extraordinary child as this, into the tabernacle, at three years old, to be educated among the children of the priests. It is said, *v.* 24, *The child was young*; but, being intelligent above his years, he was no trouble. None can begin too soon to be religious. *The child was a child*, so the Hebrew reads it, in his learning-age. *For whom shall he teach knowledge, but them that are newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts,* *Isa.* 28. 9.

Observe how she presented her child.

1. With a sacrifice; no less than three bullocks, with a meat-offering for each, *v.* 24. A bullock, perhaps, for each year of the child's life. Or, one for a burnt-offering, another for a sin-offering, and

the third for a peace-offering. So far was she from thinking that, by presenting her son to God, she made God her Debtor, that she thought it requisite by these slain offerings to seek God's acceptance of her living sacrifice. All our covenants with God for ourselves, and our's, must be made by sacrifice, the great Sacrifice.

2. With a grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness in answer to prayer. This she makes to Eli, because he had encouraged her to hope for an answer of peace; *v. 26, 27, For this child I prayed.* (Here it was obtained by prayer, and here it is resigned to the prayer-hearing God.) "You have forgotten me, my lord; but I who now appear so cheerful, am the woman, the very same, that, three years ago, stood by thee here, weeping and praying, and this was the child I prayed for." Answers of prayer may thus be humbly triumphed in to the glory of God. Here is a living testimony for God, "I am his witness that he is gracious." See Ps. 66. 16-19. "For this mercy, this comfort, I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition." See Ps. 34. 2, 4, 6. Hannah does not remind Eli of it by adverting to the suspicion he had formerly expressed; she does not say, "I am the woman whom you passed that severe censure upon; what do you think of me now?" Good men ought not to be upbraided with their infirmities and oversights; they have themselves repented of them, let them hear no more of them.

3. With a full surrender of all her interest in this child unto the Lord; *v. 28, I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth.* And she repeats it, because she will never revoke it, *he shall be* (a deodand) *lent or given to the Lord.* Not that she designed to call for him back, as we do what we lend, but she uses this word, *Shaol, he lent*, because it is the same word that she had used before, *v. 20. I asked him of the Lord, only in another conjugation.* And, *v. 27.* The Lord gave me the petition which *I asked*, (*Shaalti*, in Kal, therefore *I have lent him; Hishilti*, the same word in Hiphil:) and so it gives another etymology of his name, *Samuel*, not only *asked of God*, but *lent to God.* And observe, (1.) Whatever we give to God, may, upon this account, be said to be *lent* from him. All our gifts to him were first gifts to us. *Of thine own, Lord, have we given thee*, 1 Chron. 29. 14, 16. (2.) Whatever we give to God, may, upon this account, be said to be *lent* to him; that though we may not lend it as a thing lent, yet he will certainly repay it with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, particularly what is given to *his poor*, Prov. 19. 17. When by baptism we dedicate our children to God, let us remember that they were his before by a sovereign right, and that they are our's still so much the more to our comfort. Hannah resigns him to the Lord, not for a certain term of years, as children are sent apprentices, but *durante vita—as long as he liveth, he shall be lent unto the Lord*; a Nazarite for life. Such must our covenant with God be, a marriage-covenant; as long as we live, we must be his and never forsake him.

*Lastly*, The child Samuel did his part beyond what could have been expected from one of his years; for of him that seems to be spoken, *He worshipped the Lord there; that is, he said his prayers.* He was, no doubt, extraordinarily forward, (we have known children that have discovered some sense of religion very young,) and his mother, designing him for the sanctuary, took particular care to train him up to that which was to be his work in the sanctuary. Note, Little children should learn betimes to worship God. Their parents should instruct them in it, and bring them to it; put them upon doing it as well as they can, and God will graciously accept them, and teach them to do better.

## CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. Hannah's song of thanksgiving to God for his favour to her, in giving her Samuel, *c. 1. 1-10.* II. Their return to their family, with Eli's blessing, *v. 11. 1-20.* The increase of their family, (*v. 21.*) Samuel's growth and improvement, (*v. 11, 18, 21, 26.*) and the care Hannah took to clothe him, *v. 19.* III. The great wickedness of Eli's sons, *v. 12. 1-17, 22. IV.* The over mild reproof that Eli gave them for it, *v. 23. 1-25.* V. The justly dreadful message God sent him by a prophet, threatening the ruin of his family for the wickedness of his sons, *v. 27. 1-36.*

1. **A**ND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD; mine horn is exalted in the LORD; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. 2. *There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee; neither is there any rock like our God.* 3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. 5. *They that were full* have hired out themselves for bread; and *they that were hungry* ceased: so that the barren hath borne seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. 6. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. 10. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them; the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

We have here Hannah's thanksgiving, dictated, not only by the spirit of prayer, but by the spirit of prophecy. Her petition for the mercy she desired, we had before, (*ch. 1. 11.*) and here her return of praise; in both, *out of the abundance of a heart* deeply affected, (in the former, with her own wants, and in the latter, with God's goodness,) *her mouth spake.*

Observe in general, 1. When she had received mercy from God, she owned it, with thankfulness to his praise. Not like the nine lepers, Luke 17. 17. Praise is our rent, our tribute, we are unjust if we do not pay it. 2. The mercy she had received, was an answer to prayer, and therefore she thought herself especially obliged to give thanks for it. What we win by prayer, we may wear with comfort, and must wear with praise. 3. Her thanks-

giving is here called a *prayer*; *Hannah prayed*; for thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God, we must express a grateful regard to him as our Benefactor. Nay, and thanksgiving for mercies received, shall be accepted as a petition for further mercy. 4. From this particular mercy which she had received from God, she takes occasion, with an elevated and enlarged heart, to speak glorious things of God, and of his government of the world, for the good of his church. Whatever at any time gives rise to our praises, in this manner they should be raised. 5. Her *prayer* was mental, *her voice was not heard*; but in her *thanksgiving* she spake, that all might hear her. She made her supplication *with groanings that could not be uttered*, but now her lips were opened to *show forth God's praise*. 6. This thanksgiving is here left upon record for the encouragement of those of the weaker sex to attend the throne of grace; God will regard their prayers and praises. The virgin Mary's song has great affinity with this of Hannah, Luke 1. 46.

Three things we have in this thanksgiving.

I. Hannah's triumph in God, in his glorious perfections, and the great things he had done for her, v. 1. 3. Observe,

1. What great things she says of God. She takes little notice of the particular mercy she was now rejoicing in, does not commend Samuel for the prettiest child, the most toward and sensible of his age, or that she ever saw, as fond parents are apt to do; no, she overlooks the gift, and praises the Giver; whereas most forget the Giver, and fasten only on the gift. Every stream should lead us to the Fountain; and the favours we receive from God, should raise our admiration of the infinite perfections there are in God. There may be other Samuels, but no other Jehovah. *There is none beside thee*. Note, God is to be praised as a peerless Being, and of unparalleled perfection; this glory is due unto his name, to own, not only that there is *none like him, but that there is none beside him*. All others were pretenders, Ps. 18. 31.

Four of God's glorious attributes Hannah here celebrates the glory of. (1.) *His unspotted purity*. This is that attribute which is most praised in the upper world, by those that always behold his face, Isa. 6. 3. Rev. 4. 8. When Israel triumphed over the Egyptians, God was praised as *glorious in holiness*, Exod. 15. 11. So here, in Hannah's triumph, *There is none holy as the Lord*. It is the rectitude of his nature, his infinite agreement with himself, and the equity of his government and judgment, in all the administrations of both. At the remembrance of this, we ought to give thanks. (2.) *His almighty power*. *Neither is there any rock (or any strength, for so the word is sometimes rendered) like our God*. Hannah had experienced a mighty support by staying herself upon him, and therefore speaks as she had found, and seems to refer to that of Moses, Deut. 32. 31. (3.) *His unsearchable wisdom*. The Lord, the Judge of all, is a God of knowledge; he clearly and perfectly sees into the character of every person, and the merits of every cause, and he gives knowledge and understanding to those that seek it of him. (4.) *His unerring justice*. *By him actions are weighed*. His own are so, in his eternal counsels; the actions of the children of men are so, in the balance of his judgment; so that he will *render to every man according to his work*, and is not mistaken in what any man is, or does.

2. How she solaces herself in these things. What we give God the glory of, we may take the comfort of; Hannah does so, (1.) In holy joy. *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*; not so much in her son, as in her God; he is to be *the Gladness of our joy*, (Ps.

43. 4.) and our joy must not terminate in any thing short of him. *I rejoice in thy salvation*; not only in this particular favour to me, but in the salvation of thy people Israel, those salvations especially which this child will be an instrument of, and that above all, by Christ, which those are but the types of. (2.) In holy triumph. *My horn is exalted*; not only my reputation saved by my having a son, but greatly raised by having such a son." We read of some of the singers whom David appointed to lift up the horn, an instrument of music, in praising God; (1 Chron. 25. 5.) so that, *My horn is exalted*, means this, "My praises are very much elevated to an unusual strain." *Exalted in the Lord*; God is to have the honour of all our exaltations, and in him must we triumph. *My mouth is enlarged*; this is, "Now I have wherewith to answer them that reproached me;" he that has his quiver full of arrows, his house full of children, shall not be ashamed to *speak with the enemy in the gate*, Ps. 127. 5.

3. How she herewith silences those that set up themselves as rivals with God, and rebels against him; v. 3. *Talk no more so exceeding proudly*. Let not Peninnah and her children upbraid her any more with her confidence in God, and praying to him; at length she found it not in vain. See Mic. 7. 10, *Then she that is mine enemy, shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said, Where is my God?* Or, perhaps, it was below her to take so much notice of Peninnah, and her malice, in the song; but this is intended as a check to the insolence of the Philistines, and other enemies of God and Israel, that *set their mouth against the heavens*, Ps. 73. 9. "Let this put them to silence and shame; he that has thus judged for me against my adversary, will judge for his people against all theirs."

II. The notice she takes of the wisdom and sovereignty of the divine providence, in its disposal of the affairs of the children of men; such are the vicissitudes of them, and such the strange and sudden turns and revolutions of them, that it is often found a very short step between the height of prosperity and the depth of adversity; *God has not only set the one over against the other*, Eccl. 7. 14. but the one very near the other, and no gulf fixed between them, that we may *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not*.

1. The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleases, v. 4. On the one hand, if he speak the word, *the bows of the mighty men are broken*, they are disarmed, disabled to do as they have done, and as they have designed; they have been worsted in battle who seemed upon all accounts to have had the advantage on their side, and thought themselves sure of victory. See Ps. 46. 9.—37. 15, 17. Particular persons are soon weakened by sickness and age, and they find that the bow does not long abide in strength, many a mighty man who has gloried in his might, has found it a deceitful bow, that failed him when he trusted to it. On the other hand, if the Lord speak the word, they who stumbled through weakness, who were so feeble that they could not go straight or steady, are *girded with strength*, in body and mind, and are able to bring great things to pass. They who are weakened by sickness, return to their vigour, Job 33. 25. by sorrow shall recover their comfort; which will *confirm the weak hands and the feeble knees*, Isa. 35. 3. Victory turns in favour of that side that was given up for gone, and even *the lame take the prey*, Isa. 33. 23.

2. The rich are soon impoverished, and the poor strangely enriched of a sudden, v. 5. Providence sometimes does so blast men's estates, and cross their endeavours, and with a fire not blown consume their increase, that they who were full,

(their barns full, and their bags full, their *houses full of good things*, Job 22. 18. and their *bellies full of these hid treasures*, (Ps. 17. 14.) have been reduced to such straits and extremities as to want the necessary supports of life, and to *hire out themselves for bread*, and they must dig, since to *beg they are ashamed*. *Riches flee away*, (Prov. 23. 5.) and leave those miserable, who, when they had them, placed their happiness in them. To them that have been full and free, poverty and slavery must needs be doubly grievous. But, on the other hand, sometimes Providence so orders it, that *they who were hungry, ceased*, that is, ceased to hire out themselves for bread as they had done; having, by God's blessing on their industry, got before hand in the world, and enough to live upon at ease, *they shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more*. This is not to be ascribed to fortune, nor merely to men's wisdom or folly, *Riches are not to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill*; (Ecc. 9. 11.) nor is it always men's own fault that they become poor, but, (v. 7.) *The Lord maketh some poor, and maketh others rich*; the impoverishing of one is the enriching of another, and it is God's doing. To some he gives power to get wealth, from others he takes away power to keep the wealth they have. Are we poor? *God made us poor*, which is a good reason why we should be content, and reconcile ourselves to our condition. Are we rich? *God made us rich*, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and serve him cheerfully in the abundance of good things he gives us. It may be understood of the same person; those that were rich God makes poor, and after a while makes rich again, as Job: he gave, he takes away, and then gives again. Let not the rich be proud and secure, for God can soon make them poor; let not the poor despond and despair, for God can in due time enrich them again.

3. Empty families are replenished, and numerous families diminished and made few. This is the instance that comes close to the occasion of the thanksgiving. *The barren hath borne seven*, meaning herself, for though at present she had but one son, yet that one being a Nazarite, devoted to God, and employed in his immediate service, he was to her as good as seven. Or, it is the language of her faith; now that she has one, she hopes for more, and was not disappointed, she had five more; (v. 21.) so that if we reckon Samuel but for two, as we may well, she has the number she promised herself; the *barren hath borne seven*, while, on the other hand, *she that hath many children, is waxed feeble*, and hath left bearing; she says no more, Peninnah is now mortified, and crest-fallen. The tradition of the Jews, is, that when Hannah bore one child, Peninnah buried two. There are many instances both of the increase of families that were considerable, and the extinguishing of families that made a figure, Job 12. 23. Ps. 107. 38, &c.

4. God is the sovereign Lord of life and death; (v. 6.) *The Lord killeth and maketh alive*. Understand it, (1.) Of God's sovereign dominion and universal agency, in the lives and deaths of the children of men. He presides in births and burials. Whenever any die, it is God that directs the arrows of death, *the Lord killeth*, death is his messenger, strikes whom and when he bids; none are brought to the dust, but it is he that brings them down, for in his hand are the *keys of death, and the grave*, Rev. 1. 18. Whenever any are born, it is he that *makes them alive*; *none knows what is the way of the spirit*, but this we know, that it comes from the *Father of spirits*. Whenever any are recovered from sickness, and delivered from imminent perils, it is God that bringeth up, for *to him belong the issues from death*. (2.) Of the distinction he makes

between some and others; he *killeth* some, and *maketh*, that is, keepeth others *alive* that were in the same danger, in war, suppose, or pestilence. Two in a bed together, it may be; one taken by death, and the other yet alive; *even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes*. Some that were most likely to live, brought down to the grave, and others that were as likely to die, brought up; for living and dying do not go by likelihoods. God's providences towards some are killing, ruining to their comforts; and towards others at the same time reviving. (3.) Of the changes he makes with one and the same person. *He killeth and bringeth down to the grave*; that is, he brings even to death's doors, and then revives and raises up, when even life was despaired of, and a sentence of death received, 2 Cor. 1. 8, 9. *He turns to destruction*, and then says, *Return*, Ps. 90. 3. Nothing is too hard for God to do, no not the quickening of the dead, and putting life into dry bones.

5. Advancement and abasement are both from him. He brings some *low*, and *lifts up* others; (v. 7.) humbles the proud, and gives grace and honour to the lowly; lays those in the dust that would vie with the God above them, and trample upon all about them; (Job 40. 12, 13.) but lifts up those with his salvation, that humble themselves before him, Jam. 4. 10. Or, it may be understood of the same persons; these whom he had brought low, when they are sufficiently humbled, he lifts up. This is enlarged upon, v. 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust*, a low and mean condition, nay, from the dunghill, a base and servile condition, loathed, and despised, *to set them among princes*. See Ps. 113. 7, 8. Promotion comes not by chance, but from the counsel of God, which often prefers those that were very unlikely, and that men thought very unworthy. Joseph and Daniel, Moses and David, were thus strangely advanced, from a prison to a palace, from a sheep-hook to a sceptre. The princes they are set among, may be tempted to disdain them, but God can establish the honour which he gives thus surprisingly, and make them even to *inherit the throne of glory*. Let not these whom Providence has thus preferred, be upbraided with the dust and the dunghill they are raised out of, for the meaner their beginnings were, the more are they favoured, and God glorified, in their advancement, if it be by lawful and honourable means.

*Lastly*, A reason is given for all these dispensations, which obliges us to acquiesce in them, how surprising soever they are, *for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's*. (1.) If we understand it literally, it bespeaks God's almighty power, which cannot be controlled. He upholds the whole creation, founded the earth, and still sustains it by the word of his power. What cannot he do in the affairs of families and kingdoms far beyond our conception and expectation, *who hangs the earth upon nothing?* Job 26. 7. But, (2.) If we understand it figuratively, it bespeaks his incontestable sovereignty, which cannot be disputed. The princes and great ones of the earth, the directors of states and governments, are the *pillars of the earth*, Ps. 75. 3. On these hinges the affairs of the world seem to turn, but they are the *Lord's*, Ps. 47. 9. From him they have their power, and therefore he may advance whom he pleases; and who may say, *What dost thou?*

III. A prediction of the preservation and advancement of all God's faithful friends, and the destruction of all his and their enemies, having testified her joyful triumph in what God had done, and is doing, she concludes with joyful hopes of what he would do, v. 9, 10. Pious affections (says Bishop Patrick) in those days rose up many times to the height of prophecy, whereby God continued in that nation his true religion, in the midst of their idola

trous inclinations. This prophecy may refer, 1. More immediately to the government of Israel by Samuel, and David whom he was employed to anoint. The Israelites, God's saints, should be protected and delivered; the Philistines, their enemies, should be conquered and subdued, and particularly by *thunder*, ch. 7. 10. Their dominion should be enlarged, king David strengthened and greatly exalted, and Israel (that in the time of the judges had made so small a figure, and had much ado to subsist) should now shortly become great and considerable, and give law to all its neighbours. An extraordinary change that was, and the birth of Samuel was, at it were, the dawning of that day. But, 2. We have reason to think that this prophecy looks further, to the kingdom of Christ, and the administration of that kingdom of grace, of which she now comes to speak, having spoken so largely of the kingdom of providence. And here is the first time that we meet with the name *Messiah*, or *his Anointed*. The ancient expositors, both Jewish and Christian, make it to look beyond David, to the Son of David; glorious things are here spoken of the kingdom of the mediator, both before and since his incarnation; for the method of the administration of it, both by the eternal Word, and by that Word made flesh, is much the same.

Concerning that kingdom we are here assured,

(1.) That all the loyal subjects of it shall be carefully and powerfully protected; v. 9. *He will keep the feet of his saints*. There are a people in the world that are God's saints, his select and sanctified ones; and he will keep their feet, that is, all that belongs to them shall be under his protection, down to their very feet, the lowest part of the body. If he will keep their feet, much more their head and hearts; or, he will keep their feet, that is, he will secure the ground they stand on, and establish their goings, he will set a guard of grace upon their affections and actions, that their feet may neither wander out of the way, nor stumble in the way. When their feet are ready to slip, Ps. 73. 2. *his mercy holdeth them up*, Ps. 94. 18. and *keepeth them from falling*, Jude 24. While we keep God's ways, he will keep our feet. See Ps. 37. 23, 24.

(2.) That all the powers engaged against it shall not be able to effect the ruin of it. By strength no man shall prevail. God's strength is engaged for the church; and while it is so, man's strength shall not prevail against it. The church seems destitute of strength, her friends few and feeble; but prevalence does not go by human strength; Ps. 33. 16. God neither needs it for him, (Ps. 147. 10.) nor dreads it *against* him.

(3.) That all the enemies of it will certainly be broken and brought down; *The wicked shall be silent in darkness*; v. 9. they shall be struck both blind and dumb, not be able to see their way, nor have any thing to say for themselves. Darned sinners are sentenced to utter darkness, and in it they will be for ever speechless, Matth. 22. 12, 13. The wicked are called, *The adversaries of the Lord*, and it is foretold, v. 10. that they *shall be broken to pieces*. Their designs against his kingdom among men, will all be dashed, and they themselves destroyed; how can they speed better, that are in arms against Omnipotence? See Luke 19. 27. God has many ways of doing it, and, rather than fail, from *heaven shall be thunder upon them*, and so, not only put them in terror and consternation, but bring them to destruction. Who can stand before God's thunderbolts?

(4.) That the conquests and commands of this kingdom shall extend themselves to distant regions; *The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth*. David's victories and dominions reached far, but the *utmost parts of the earth* are promised to the Messiah

for his *possession*. Ps. 2. 8. to be either reduced to his golden sceptre, or ruined by his iron rod. God is Judge of all, and he will judge for his people, against his and their enemies, Ps. 110. 3, 6.

(5.) That the power and honour of Messiah the Prince shall grow and increase more and more. *He shall give strength unto his King* for the accomplishing of his great undertaking, Ps. 89. 21. and see Luke 22. 43. strengthen him to go through the difficulties of his humiliation, and in his exaltation he will lift up the head, (Ps. 110. 7.) lift up the horn, the power and honour of his *anointed*, and *make him higher than the kings of the earth*, Ps. 89. 27. This crowns the triumph, and is, more than any thing, the matter of her exaltation. *Her horn is exalted*, v. 1. because she foresees the horn of the Messiah will be so. This secures the hope; the subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruined, for the Anointed, the Lord Christ, is girt with strength, and is able to save and destroy unto the uttermost.

11. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house; and the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. 12. Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. 13. And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand; 14. And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. 15. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. 16. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. 17. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD; for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. 18. But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. 19. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20. And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. 21. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD. 22. Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 23. And he said unto them,



Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. 21. Nay, my sons: for *it is* no good report that I hear; ye make the LORD's people to transgress. 25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall entreat for him? Notwithstanding, they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. 26. (And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.)

In these verses we have the good character and posture of Elkanah's family, and the bad character and posture of Eli's family; the account of these two is observably interwoven throughout this whole paragraph; as if the historian intended to set the one over against the other, that they might set off one another. The devotion and good order of Elkanah's family aggravated the iniquity of Eli's house; while the wickedness of Eli's sons made Samuel's early piety shine the more bright and illustrious.

I. Let us see how well things went in Elkanah's family, and how much better than formerly.

1. Eli dismissed them from the house of the Lord, when they had entered their little son there, with a blessing, *v. 20.* He blessed as one having authority; *The Lord give thee more children of this woman, for the loan that is lent to the Lord.* If Hannah had then had many children, it had not been such a generous piece of piety to part with one out of many for the service of the tabernacle; but when she had but one, an only one, whom she loved, her Isaac, to present him to the Lord, was such an act of heroic piety as should by no means lose its reward. As when Abraham had offered Isaac, he received the promise of a numerous issue, (*Gen. 22. 16, 17.*) so did Hannah, when she had presented Samuel unto the Lord, a living sacrifice. Note, What is lent to the Lord will certainly be repaid with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, and oftentimes in kind. Hannah resigns one child to God, and is recompensed with five, for Eli's blessing took effect, (*v. 21.*) *she bare three sons and two daughters.* There is nothing lost by lending to God, or losing for him; it shall be repaid *a hundred fold*, *Matth. 19. 29.*

2. They returned to their own habitation; this is twice mentioned; (*v. 11.* and again *v. 20.*) it was very pleasant to attend at God's house, to bless him, and to be blessed of him. But they have a family at home that must be looked after, and thither they return, cheerfully leaving the dear little one behind them, knowing they left him in a good place; and it does not appear that he cried after them, but was as willing to stay as they were to leave him, so soon did he *put away childish things*, and behave like a man.

3. They kept up their constant attendance at the house of God, with their yearly sacrifice, *v. 19.* They did not think that their son's ministering there would excuse them, or that that offering must serve instead of other offerings, but having found the benefit of drawing near to God, they would omit no appointed season for it; and now they had one loadstone more in Shiloh to draw them thither. We may suppose they went thither to see their child oftener than once a year, for it was not ten miles from Ramah, but their annual visit is taken notice of, because then they brought their yearly sacrifice; and then Hannah fitted up her son (and some think oftener than once a year) with a new suit of clothes, *a little coat* (*v. 19.*) and every thing belonging to

it. She undertook to find him in clothes during his apprenticeship at the tabernacle, and took care he should be well provided, that he might appear the more decent and sightly in his ministration, and to encourage him in his towardly beginnings. Parents must take care that their children want nothing that is fit for them, whether they are with them or from them; but those that are dutiful and hopeful, and minister to the Lord, must be thought worthy of double care and kindness.

4. The child Samuel did very well. Four several times he is mentioned in these verses, and two things we are told of:

(1.) The service he did to the Lord. He did well indeed, for he *ministered to the Lord*, (*v. 11, 18.*) according as his capacity was; he learnt his catechism, and was constant to his devotions; soon learnt to read, and took a pleasure in the book of the law, and thus he *ministered to the Lord*. He ministered before Eli, that is, under his inspection, and as he ordered him, not before Eli's sons; all parties were agreed that they were unfit to be his tutors. Perhaps, he attended immediately on Eli's person, was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion, and that is called *ministering to the Lord*. Some little services perhaps he was employed in about the altar, though much under the age appointed by the law for the Levites' ministration. He could light a candle, or hold a dish, or run on an errand, or shut a door; and because he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it is called *ministering to the Lord*, and great notice is taken of it. After a while, he did his work so well, that Eli appointed that he should minister with a *linen ephod* as the priests did, (though he was no priest,) because he saw that God was with him. Note, Little children must learn betimes to *minister to the Lord*; parents must train them up to it, and God will accept them; particularly, let them learn to pay respect to their teachers as Samuel to Eli. None can begin too soon to be religious. See *Ps. 8. 2.* and *Matth. 21. 15, 16.*

(2.) The blessing he received from the Lord, *He grew before the Lord*, as a tender plant, (*v. 21.*) *grew on* (*v. 26.*) in strength and stature, and especially in wisdom and understanding, and fitness for business. Note, Those young people that serve God as well as they can, he will enable to improve, that they may serve him better. They that are planted in God's house, shall *flourish*, *Ps. 92. 13.* *He was in favour with God and with man.* Note, It is a great encouragement to children to be tractable, and virtuous, and good betimes, that if they be, both God and man will love them. Such children are the darlings both of heaven and earth. What is here said of Samuel, is said of our blessed Saviour, that great example, *Luke 2. 52.*

II. Let us now see how ill things went in Eli's family, though seated at the very door of the tabernacle. The nearer the church, the further from God.

1. The abominable wickedness of Eli's sons; (*v. 12.*) *The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.* It is emphatically expressed. Nothing appears to the contrary, but that Eli himself was a very good man, and, no doubt, had educated his sons well, giving them good instructions, setting them good examples, and putting up many a good prayer for them; and yet, when they grew up, they proved *sons of Belial*, profane wicked men, and arrant rakes; *They knew not the Lord.* They could not but have a notional knowledge of God and his law, a form of knowledge; (*Rom. 2. 20.*) yet because their practice was not accordingly, they are spoken of as wholly ignorant of God; they lived as if they knew nothing at all of God. Note, Parents cannot give grace to their children, nor does it run in the blood.



Many that are sincerely pious themselves, live to see those that come from them, notoriously impious and profane, *for the race is not to the swift*. Eli was High Priest and Judge in Israel; his sons were priests by their birth; their character was sacred and honourable, and obliged them, for their reputation's sake, to observe decorum: they were resident at the fountain-head both of magistracy and ministry, and yet they were *sons of Belial*, and their honour, power, and learning, made them so much the worse. They did not go to *serve other gods*, as those did that lived at a distance from the altar, for from the house of God they had their wealth and dignity; but, which was worse, they managed the service of God as if he had been one of the dunghill-deities of the heathen. It is hard to say which dishonours God more, idolatry, or profaneness, especially the profaneness of the priest.

Let us see the wickedness of Eli's sons; and it is a sad sight:

(1.) They profaned the offerings of the Lord, and made a gain to themselves, or rather a gratification of their own luxury, out of them. God had provided competently for them out of the sacrifices; *the offerings of the Lord made by fire*, were a considerable branch of their revenue, but that did not please them, they served not the God of Israel but their own bellies; (Rom. 16. 18.) such as the prophet calls *greedy dogs, that can never have enough*, Isa. 56. 11. [1.] They robbed the offerers, and seized for themselves some of their part of the sacrifice of the peace-offerings. The priests had for their share the *wave-breast* and the *heave-shoulder*, (Lev. 7. 34.) but that did not content them; when the flesh was boiling for the offerer to feast upon religiously with his friends, they sent a servant with a flesh-hook of three teeth, a trident, and that must be struck into the pot, and whatever that brought up the priest must have; (v. 13, 14.) and the people, out of their great veneration, suffered this to grow into a custom, so that after a while prescription was pleaded for this manifest wrong. [2.] They stepped in before God himself, and encroached upon his right too; *as if it were a small thing to weary men, they wearied my God also*, Isa. 7. 13. Be it observed to the honour of Israel, that though the people tamely yielded to their unwarrantable demands from them, yet they were very solicitous that God should not be robbed; *Let them not fail to burn the fat presently*, v. 16. Let the altar have its due, for that is the main matter; unless God have the fat, they can feast with little comfort upon the flesh: it was a shame that the priests should need thus to be admonished by the people of their duty; but they regarded not the admonition, the priest will be served first, and will take what he thinks fit of the fat too, for he is weary of boiled meat; he must have roast, and, in order to that, they must give it him raw; and if the offerer dispute it, though not in his own favour, (let him take what he pleases of his part,) but in favour of the altar, (let them be sure to *burn the fat* first,) even the priest's servant was grown so very imperious, that he would either have it now or take it by force; than which there could not be a greater affront to God, or a greater abuse to the people. The effect was, *First*, That God was displeased: *The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord*, v. 17. Nothing is more provoking to God than the profanation of sacred things, and men serving of their lusts with the offerings of the Lord. *Secondly*, That religion suffered by it; *Men abhorred the offerings of the Lord*. All good men abhorred their management of the offerings, and too many insensibly fell into a contempt of the offerings themselves for their sakes. It was the people's sin to think the worst of God's institutions, but it was the much greater sin of the priests,

that gave them occasion to do so. Nothing brings a greater reproach upon religion, than ministers' covetousness, sensuality, and imperiousness. In the midst of this sad story, comes in the repeated mention of Samuel's devotion, *But Samuel ministered before the Lord*, as an instance of the power of God's grace, in preserving him pure and pious, in the midst of this wicked crew; and that helped to keep up the sinking credit of the sanctuary in the minds of the people, who, when they had said all they could against Eli's sons, could not but admire Samuel's seriousness, and speak well of religion for his sake.

(2.) They debauched the women that came to worship at the door of the tabernacle; (v. 22.) they had wives of their own, but were like *fed horses*, Jer. 5. 8. To have gone to the harlots' houses, the common prostitutes, had been abominable wickedness; but to use the interest which as priests they had in those women that had devout dispositions, and were religiously inclined, and to bring them to commit this wickedness, was such horrid impiety, as one can scarcely think it possible that men who called themselves priests, should ever be guilty of. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth!* No words can sufficiently express the villany of such practices as these.

2. The reproof which Eli gave his sons for this their wickedness. *Eli was very old*, (v. 22.) and could not himself inspect the service of the tabernacle as he had done, but left all to his sons, who, because of the infirmities of his age, slighted him, and did what they would; however, he was told of the wickedness of his sons, and we may well imagine what a heart-breaking it was to him, and how much it added to the burthens of his age; but it should seem he did not so much as reprove them, till he heard of their debauching the women, and then he thought fit to give them a check. Had he rebuked them for their greediness and luxury, this might have been prevented. Young people should be told of their faults, as soon as it is perceived that they begin to be extravagant, lest their hearts be hardened. Now concerning the reproof he gave them, observe,

(1.) That it was very just and rational. That which he said, was very proper. [1.] He tells them that the matter of fact was too plain to be denied, and too public to be concealed; *"I hear of your evil dealings by all this people"*, v. 23. It is not the surmise of one or two, but the avowed testimony of many, all your neighbours cry out shame on you, and bring their complaints to me, expecting that I should redress the grievance." [2.] He shows them the bad consequences of it, that they not only sinned, but made Israel to sin, and would have the people's sin to answer for, as well as their own; *"You that should turn men from iniquity, (Mal. 2. 6.) you make the Lord's people to transgress, and corrupt the nation instead of reforming it; you tempt people to go serve other gods, when they see the God of Israel so ill served."* [3.] He warns them of the danger they brought themselves into by it; (v. 25.) he intimates to them what God afterward told him, that the *iniquity* would not be *purged with sacrifice nor offering*, ch. 3. 14. *If one man sin against another*, the judge, that is, the priest, who was appointed to be the judge in many cases, (Deut. 17. 9.) *shall judge him*, shall undertake his cause, arbitrate the matter, and make atonement for the offender; *but if a man sin against the Lord*, that is, if a priest profane the holy things of the Lord, if a man that deals with God for others, do himself affront him, *who shall entreat for him?* Eli was himself a judge, and had often made intercession for transgressors, but, says he, *"You that sin against the Lord,"* that is, *"against the law and honour of God, in those very things which immediately per-*

tain to him, and by which reconciliation is to be made, how can I entreat for you?" Their condition was deplorable indeed, when their own father could not speak a good word for them, nor could have the face to appear as their advocate. Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous; *treating under foot the blood of the covenant*; for then there *remains no more sacrifice*, Heb. 10. 26.

But, (2.) It was too mild and gentle. He should have rebuked them sharply; their crimes deserved it, their temper needed it; the softness of his dealing with them would but harden them the more. The animadversion was too easy, when he said, *It is no good report*: he should have said, "It is a shameful scandalous thing, and not to be suffered!" Whether it was because he loved them, or because he feared them, that he dealt thus tenderly with them, it was certainly an evidence of his want of zeal for the honour of God and his sanctuary. He bound them over to God's judgment, but he should have taken cognizance of their crimes himself, as High Priest and Judge, and have restrained and punished them. What he said was right, but it was not enough. Note, It is sometimes necessary that we put an edge upon the reproofs we give. There are those that must be *saved with fear*, Jude 23.

3. Their obstinacy against this reproof; his lenity did not at all work upon them; they *hearkened not to their father*, though he was also a Judge; they had no regard either to his authority, or to his affection, which was to them *an evident token of perdition*; it was *because the Lord would slay them*. They had long hardened their hearts, and now God, in a way of righteous judgment, hardened their hearts, and seared their consciences, and withheld from them the grace they had resisted and forfeited. Note, Those that are deaf to the reproofs of wisdom, are manifestly marked for ruin. The Lord has *determined to destroy them*, 2 Chron. 25. 16. See Prov. 29. 1. Immediately upon this, Samuel's tractableness is again mentioned, (v. 26.) to shame their obstinacy; *the child Samuel grew*. God's grace is his own; he denied it to the sons of the High Priest, and gave it to the child of an obscure country Levite.

27. And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28. And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? 29. Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? 30. Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed. 31. Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine

arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. 32. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. 34. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die both of them. 35. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart, and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever. 36. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

Eli reproved his sons too gently, and did not threaten them as he should, and therefore God sent a prophet to him to reprove him sharply, and to threaten him, because, by his indulgence of them, he had strengthened their hands in their wickedness. If good men be wanting in their duty, and by their carelessness and remissness contribute any thing to the sin of sinners they must expect both to hear of it, and to smart for it. Eli's family was now nearer to God than all the families of the earth, and therefore he will punish them, Amos 3. 2. The message is sent to Eli himself, because God would bring him to repentance and save him; not to his sons, whom he had determined to destroy. And it might have been a means of awakening him to do his duty at last, and so to have prevented the judgment; but we do not find it had any great effect upon him.

The message this prophet delivers from God, is very close.

I. He reminds him of the great things God had done for the house of his fathers, and for his family. He appeared to Aaron in Egypt, (Exod. 4. 27.) in the house of bondage, as a token of further favour which he designed for him, v. 28. He advanced him to the priesthood, entailed it upon his family, and thereby dignified it above any of the families of Israel. He intrusted him with honourable work, to offer on God's altar, to burn incense, and to wear that ephod in which was the breast-plate of judgment. He settled upon him an honourable maintenance, a share out of all the offerings made by fire, v. 28. What could he have done more for them, to engage them to be faithful to him? Note, The distinguishing favours we have received from God, especially those of the spiritual priesthood, are great aggravations of sin, and will be remembered against us in the day of account, if we profane our crown, and betray our trust, Deut. 32. 6. 2 Sam. 12. 7, 8.

II. He exhibits a high charge against him and his family; his children did wickedly, and he connived at it, and thereby involved himself in the guilt; the indictment therefore runs against them

all, v. 29. 1. His sons had impiously profaned the holy things of God; "*Ye kick at my sacrifice which I have commanded*; not only trample upon the institution as a mean thing, but spurn at it as a thing you hate to be tied up to." They did the utmost despite imaginable to the offerings of the Lord, when they committed all that outrage and rapine about them that we read of, and violently plundered the pots on which, in effect, *Holiness to the Lord* was written, (Zech. 14. 20.) and took that fat to themselves, which God had appointed to be burned on his altar. 2. Eli had bolstered them up in it, by not punishing their insolence and impiety; "Thou for thy part *honourest thy sons above me*;" that is, "Thou hadst rather see my offerings disgraced by their profanation of them, than see thy sons disgraced by a legal censure upon them for so doing, which ought to have been inflicted, even to suspension and deprivation *ab officio et beneficio*—of their office and its emoluments." Those that allow and countenance their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, do in effect *honour them more than God*, being more tender of their reputation than of his glory, and more desirous to humour them than to honour him. 3. They had all shared in the gains of the sacrilege. It is to be feared, that Eli himself, though he disliked and reproved the abuses they committed, yet did not forbear to eat of the roast meat they sacrilegiously got; (v. 15.) he was a *fat heavy man*; (ch. 4. 18.) and therefore it is charged upon the whole family, (though Hophni and Phinehas were principally guilty,) *Ye make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings*. God gave them sufficient to feed them, but that would not suffice; they made themselves fat, and served their lusts, with that which God was to be served with. See Hosea, 4. 8.

III. He declares the cutting off of the entail of the high-priesthood from his family; (v. 30.) "*The Lord God of Israel*, who is jealous for his own honour and Israel's, says, and lets thee know it, that thy commission is revoked and superseded." *I said, indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father Ithamar*, (for from that younger son of Aaron, Eli was descended,) *should walk before me for ever*. Upon what occasion the dignity of the high-priesthood was transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar, does not appear; but it seems it had been done, and Eli stood fair to have that honour perpetuated to his posterity; but observe, the promise carried its own condition along with it, *They shall walk before me for ever*; that is, They shall have the honour, provided they faithfully do the service; *walking before God* is the great condition of the covenant, Gen. 17. 1. Let them set me before their face, and I will set them before my face continually; (Ps. 41. 12,) otherwise not. But now the Lord says, *Be it far from me*: Now that ye cast me off, you can expect no more than that I should cast you off; you will not walk before me as you should, and therefore you shall not;" such wicked and abusive servants God will discard, and turn out of his service. Some think there is a further reach in this recall of the grant, and that it was not only to be fulfilled shortly in the deposing of the posterity of Eli, when Zadok, who descended from Eleazar, was put in Abiathar's room, but it was to have its complete accomplishment at length in the total abolishing of the Levitical priesthood by the priesthood of Christ.

IV. He gives a good reason for this revocation, taken from a settled and standing rule of God's government, according to which, all must expect to be dealt with; (like that by which Cain was tried, Gen. 4. 7.) *Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.*

Observe in general, 1. That God is the Fountain of honour and dishonour; he can exalt the meanest, and put contempt upon the greatest. 2. As we deal with God, we must expect to be dealt with by him, and yet, more favourably than we deserve. See Ps. 18. 25, 26. Particularly be it spoken, (1.) To the everlasting reputation of religion and serious godliness, that it gives honour to God, and puts honour upon men. By it we seek and serve the glory of God, and he will be behind him with none that do so, but here and hereafter will secure their glory. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good. If we humble and deny ourselves in any thing to honour God, and have a single eye to him in it, we may depend upon this promise, he will put the best honour upon us. See John 12. 26. (2.) Be it spoken to the everlasting reproach of impiety and profaneness, that this does dishonour to God, (despises the greatest and best of beings whom angels adore,) and will bring dishonour upon men, for they that do so, shall be lightly esteemed; not only God will lightly esteem them, (that, perhaps, they will not regard, as they that honour him value his honour, of whom therefore it is said, *I will honour them*), but they shall be lightly esteemed by all the world, the very honour they are proud of shall be laid in the dust; they shall see themselves despised by all mankind, their names a reproach; when they are gone, their memory shall rot, and when they rise again, it shall be to everlasting shame and contempt. The dishonour which their important malice puts upon God and his omnipotent justice, will return upon their own heads, Ps. 79. 12.

V. He foretells the particular judgments, which should come upon his family, to its perpetual ignominy. A curse should be entailed upon his posterity, and a terrible curse it is; and shows how jealous God is in the matters of his worship, and how ill he takes it, when those who are obliged by their character and profession to preserve and advance the interests of his glory, are false to their trust, and betray them. If God's ministers be vicious and profane, *how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy of*, here and for ever, than other sinners! Let such read the doom here passed on Eli's house and tremble. It is threatened,

1. That their power should be broken; (v. 31.) *I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house*; they should be stripped of all their authority, should be deposed, and have no influence upon the people as they had had; *God would make them contemptible and base*. See Mal. 2. 8, 9. The sons had abused their power to oppress the people and encroach upon their rights, and the father had not used his power as he ought to have done, to restrain and punish them, and therefore it is justly threatened, that the arm should be cut off, which was not stretched out as it should have been.

2. That their lives should be shortened: he was himself an old man; but instead of using the wisdom, gravity, experience, and authority, of his age, for the service of God and the support of religion, he had suffered the infirmities of age to make him more cool and remiss in his duty, and therefore it is here threatened, that none of his posterity should live to be old: (v. 31, 32.) it is twice spoken; *There shall not be an old man in thy house for ever*; and again, (v. 33.) *All the increase of thine house, from generation to generation, shall die in the flower of their age*, when they are in the midst of the years of their service; so that though the family should not be extinct, yet it should never be considerable, nor should any of it come to be eminent in their day. Bishop Patrick relates it, out of some of the Jewish writers, that, long after this, there being a family in Jerusalem, none of which commonly lived above

eighteen years, upon search it was found that they descended from the house of Eli, on which this sentence was passed.

3. That all their comforts should be imbittered. (1.) The comfort they had in the sanctuary, in its wealth and prosperity; *Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation.* This was fulfilled in the Philistines' invasions, and the mischiefs they did to Israel, by which the country was impoverished, (*ch.* 13. 19.) and, no doubt, the priests' incomes were thereby very much impaired. The captivity of the ark was such an act of hostility, committed upon God's habitation, as broke Eli's heart. As it is a blessing to a family to see *peace upon Israel*, (*Ps.* 128. 5, 6.) so the contrary is a sore judgment upon a family, especially a family of priests. 2. The comfort of their children. "The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off by an untimely death, shall live to be a blot and burthen to the family, a scandal and vexation to his relations; he shall be to consume thine eyes, and grieve thine heart, either for his foolishness, or his sickliness, or his wickedness, or his poverty." Grief for a dead child is great, but for a bad child often greater.

4. That their substance should be wasted, and they should be reduced to extreme poverty; (*v.* 36.) "He that is left alive in thy house, shall have little joy of his life, for want of a livelihood he shall come, and crouch to the succeeding family for a subsistence." (1.) He shall beg for the smallest alms, a piece of silver, and the word signifies the least piece, and a morsel of bread. See how this answered the sin. Eli's sons must have the best pieces of flesh, but their sons will be glad of a morsel of bread. Note, Want is the just punishment of wantonness. Those who could not be content without dainties and varieties, are brought, they or their's, to want necessities, and the Lord is righteous in it. (2.) He shall beg for the meanest office; Put me into somewhat belonging to the priesthood, as it is in the original, make me as one of the hired servants; the fittest place for a prodigal. Plenty and power are forfeited, when they are abused. They should not be able to pretend to any good preferment, not to any place at the altar, but should petition for some poor employment, be the work ever so hard and the wages ever so small, so they might but get bread. This, it is probable, was fully accomplished, when Abiathar, who was of Eli's race, was deposed by Solomon for treason, and he and his turned out of office in the temple, (1 Kings 2. 26, 27.) by which it is easy to think his posterity were reduced to the extremities here described.

5. That God would shortly begin to execute these judgments in the death of Hophni and Phinehas, the sad tidings of which Eli himself should live to hear; *This shall be a sign to thee, v.* 34. When thou hearest it, say, "Now the word of God begins to operate; here is one threatening fulfilled, from which I infer that all the rest will be fulfilled in their order." Hophni and Phinehas had many a time sinned together, and it is here foretold that they should die together both in one day. Bind these tares in a bundle for the fire. It was fulfilled, *ch.* 4. 11.

Lastly, In the midst of all these threatenings against the house of Eli, here is mercy promised to Israel; (*v.* 35.) *I will raise me up a faithful priest.* I. This was fulfilled in Zadoc, one of the family of Eleazar, who came into Abiathar's place, in the beginning of Solomon's reign, and was faithful to his trust; and the High Priests were of his posterity as long as the Levitical priesthood continued. Note, The wickedness of ministers, though it destroy themselves, yet it shall not destroy the ministry. How bad sever the officers are, the office

shall continue always to the end of the world. If some falsify their trust, yet others shall be raised up, that will be true to it. God's work shall never fall to the ground for want of hands to carry it on. The High Priest is here said to *walk before God's anointed*, that is, David and his seed, because he wore the breast-plate of judgment, which he was to consult, not in common cases, but for the king, in the affairs of state. Note, Notwithstanding the degeneracy we see and lament in many families, God will secure to himself a succession. If some grow worse than their ancestors, others, to balance that, shall grow better. 2. It has its full accomplishment in the priesthood of Christ, that merciful and faithful High Priest, whom God raised up when the Levitical priesthood was thrown off, who in all things did his father's mind, and for whom God would build a sure house, build it on a rock, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

### CHAP. III.

In the foregoing chapter we had Samuel a young priest, though by birth a Levite only, for he ministered before the Lord in a linen ephod; in this chapter we have him a young prophet, which was more; God in an extraordinary manner revealing himself to him, and in him reviving, if not commencing, prophecy in Israel. Here is, I. God's first manifestation of himself in an extraordinary manner to Samuel, *v.* 1. - 10. II. The message he sent by him to Eli, *v.* 11. - 14. III. The faithful delivery of that message to Eli, and his submission to the righteousness of God in it, *v.* 11. - 18. IV. The establishment of Samuel to be a prophet in Israel, *v.* 19. - 21.

1. **A**ND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision. 2. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli *was* laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, *that* he could not see; 3. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God *was*, and Samuel was laid down *to sleep*; 4. That the LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here *am* I. 5. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. 6. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. 8. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here *am* I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. 9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10. And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak: for thy servant heareth.

To make way for the account of God's revealing himself first to Samuel, we are here told, (v. 1.)

1. How industrious Samuel was in serving God, according as his place and capacity were; (v. 1.) *The child Samuel*, though but a child, *ministered unto the Lord before Eli*. It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons, that the child Samuel shamed them. They rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them, he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel, that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example, that he did not in the least fall off, but improved and went on. And it was a preparative for the honours God intended him; he that was thus faithful in a little, was soon after intrusted with much more. Let those that are young, be humble and diligent, and they will find that the surest way to preferment. Those are fittest to rule, that have learnt to obey. 2. How scarce a thing prophecy then was which made the call of Samuel to be the greater surprise to himself, and the greater favour to Israel; *The word of the Lord was precious in those days*. Now and then a man of God was employed, as a messenger upon an extraordinary occasion; (as *ch. 2. 27.*) but there was no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse for counsel, nor from whom they might expect the discoveries of the divine will. And the rarity of prophecy made it the more precious in the account of all those that know how to put a right value upon it. It was precious, for what there was, (it seems,) was private, *there was no open vision*, that is, there were none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps, the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and, no doubt, corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy; till the decree was gone forth for the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then, as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet was raised up.

The manner of God's revealing himself to Samuel is here related very particularly, for it was uncommon.

I. Eli was retired; Samuel had waited on him to his bed, and the rest that attended the service of the sanctuary, were gone, we may suppose, to their several apartments; (v. 2.) *Eli was laid down in his place*, he went to bed betimes, being unfit for business, and soon weary of it, and perhaps loving his ease too well. Probably, he kept his chamber much, which gave his sons the greater liberty. And he sought retirement the more, because his eyes began to wax dim, an affliction which came justly upon him for winking at his sons' faults.

II. Samuel was laid down to sleep, in some closet near to Eli's room, as his page of the back-stairs, ready within call, if the old man should want any thing in the night, perhaps to read to him, if he could not sleep. He chose to take Samuel into his office rather than any of his own family, because of the towardsly disposition he observed in him. When his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy. Let those that are afflicted in their children, thank God if they have any about them, in whom they are comforted. *Samuel was laid down ere the lamp of God went out*; (v. 3.) it should seem he lay somewhere so near the holy place, that he went to bed with that light, before any of the lamps in the branches of the candlestick went out, (for the main lamp never went out,) which, probably, was toward midnight; till that time, Samuel had been employing himself in some good exercise or other, reading and prayer, or perhaps cleaning or making ready the holy place; and then went softly to his bed. Then we may expect

God's gracious visits, when we are constant and diligent in our duty.

III. God called him by name, and he took it for Eli's call, and ran to him, v. 4, 5. Samuel lay awake in his bed, his thoughts, no doubt, well employed, (as David's, Ps. 63. 6.) when the Lord called to him, Bishop Patrick thinks, out of the most holy place; and so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *A voice was heard out of the temple of the Lord*; but Eli, though it is likely he lay nearer, heard it not; yet, possibly, it might come some other way. Hereupon, we have an instance, 1. Of Samuel's industry, and readiness to wait on Eli; supposing it was he that called him, he hastened out of his warm bed, and ran to him, to see if he wanted any thing, and perhaps fearing he was not well. "Here am I," said he. A good example to servants, to come when they are called; and to the younger, not only to submit to the elder, but to be careful and tender of them. 2. Of his infirmity, and unacquaintance with the visions of the Almighty, that he took that to be only Eli's call, which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftener than we think of. God calls to us by his word, and we take it to be only the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom that understands it to be his voice. Eli assured him he did not call him, yet did not chide him for disturbing him with being over officious; did not call him a fool, and tell him he dreamed, but mildly bade him lie down again, he had nothing for him to do. If servants must be ready at their masters' call, masters also must be tender of their servants' comfort, that thy *man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou*. So *Samuel went and lay down*. God calls many by the ministry of the word, and they say, as Samuel did, *Here am I*; but not looking at God, nor discerning his voice in the call, the impressions of it are soon lost; they lay down again, and their convictions come to nothing.

IV. The same call was repeated, and the same mistake made, a second and third time, v. 6-9. 1. God continued to call the child: *yet again*, (v. 6.) and *again the third time*, v. 8. Note, The call which divine grace designs to make effectual, shall be repeated till it is so; that is, till we come at the call, for the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand. 2. Samuel was still ignorant that it was the Lord that called him; (v. 7.) *Samuel did not yet know the Lord*. He knew the written word, and was acquainted with the mind of God in that, but he did not yet apprehend the way in which God reveals himself to his servants the prophets, especially by a *still small voice*; this was altogether new and strange to him; perhaps he had been sooner aware of a divine revelation, had it come in a dream or a vision; but this was a way he had not only not known himself, but not heard of. Those that have the greatest knowledge of divine things, must remember the time when they were as babes, unskilful in the word of righteousness. *When I was a child, I understood as a child*. Yet let us not despise the day of small things; *Thus did Samuel*, (so the margin reads it,) *before he knew the Lord, and before the word of the Lord was revealed unto him*; thus he blundered one time after another, but afterward he understood better. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful, is often thus mistaken, by which means they lose the comfort of it; and the strivings of the Spirit with the consciences of sinners are likewise often mistaken, and so the benefit of their convictions is lost: *God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not*, Job 33. 14. 3. Samuel went to

Eli this second and third time, the voice perhaps resembling his, and the child being very near to him: and he tells him with great assurance, "*Thou didst call me*; (v. 6-8.) it could be no one else." Samuel's disposition to come when he was called, though by Eli, proving him dutiful and active, qualified him for the favour, now to be showed him; God chooseth to employ such. But there was a special providence in it, that he should go thus often to Eli; for hereby, at length, *Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child*, v. 8. And, (1.) This would be a mortification to him, and he would apprehend it to be a step toward his family's being degraded, that when God had something to say, he should choose to say it to the child Samuel, his servant that waited on him, and not to him. And it would humble him the more, when afterward he found it was a message to himself, and yet sent him by a child. He had reason to look upon this as a further token of God's displeasure. (2.) This would put him upon inquiring what it was that God said to Samuel, and would abundantly satisfy him of the truth and certainty of what should be delivered, and no room would be left for him to suggest that it was but a fancy of Samuel's; for before the message was delivered, he himself perceived that God was about to speak to him, and yet must not know what it is, till he had it from Samuel himself. Thus even the infirmities and mistakes of those whom God employs, are overruled by infinite Wisdom, and made serviceable to his purposes.

V. At length, Samuel was put into a posture to receive a message from God, not to be lodged with himself and go no further, but that he might be a complete prophet, to be published and made an open vision. 1. Eli, perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, gave him instructions what to say, v. 9. This was honestly done; that though it was a disgrace to him for God's call to pass him by, and be directed to Samuel, yet he put him in a way how to entertain it. Had he been envious of this honour done to Samuel, he would have done what he could to deprive him of it, and since he did not perceive it himself, would have bidden him lie down and sleep, and never heed it, it was but a dream; but he was of a better spirit than to act so; he gave him the best advice he could, for the forwarding of his advancement. Thus the elders should, without grudging, do the utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up, though they see themselves likely to be darkened and eclipsed by them. Let us never be wanting to inform and instruct those that are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, John 1. 30. The instruction Eli gave him, was, when God called the next time, to say, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth*. He must call himself God's servant, must desire to know the mind of God. "*Speak, Lord, speak to me, speak now*;" and he must prepare to hear, and promise to attend, *thy servant heareth*. Note, *Then* we may expect that God will speak to us, when we set ourselves to hearken to what he says, Ps. 85. 8. Hab. 2. 1. When we come to read the word of God, and to attend on the preaching of it, we should come thus disposed, submitting our souls to the commanding light and power of it; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. 2. It should seem that God spake the fourth time, in a way somewhat different from the other; though the call was, at other times, a call to him by name, yet now *he stood and called*; which intimates, that there was now some visible appearance of the divine glory to Samuel, a vision that stood before him, like that before Eliphaz, though he *could not discern the form thereof*, Job 4. 16. This satisfied him that it was not Eli that called, for he now *saw the voice that spake with him*, as it is expressed, "ev. 1. 12.

Now also the call was doubled, *Samuel, Samuel*, as if God delighted in the mention of his name; or to intimate that now he should be made to understand who spake to him. *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this*, Ps. 62. 11. It was an honour to him, that God was pleased to *know him by name*; (Exod. 33. 12.) and then his call was powerful and effectual, when he called him by name, and so brought it particularly to him, as *Saul, Saul*. Thus God called to Abraham by name, Gen. 22. 1. 3. Samuel said as he was taught, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*. Note, Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, and apt expressions of pious and devout affections, by which they may be prepared for a better acquaintance with divine things, and trained up to a holy converse with them. Teach young people what they shall say, *for they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness*. Samuel did not now rise and run as before, when he thought Eli called, but lay still and listened. The more sedate and composed our spirits are, the better prepared they are for divine discoveries. Let all tumultuous thoughts and passions be kept under, and every thing be quiet and serene in the soul, and then we are fit to hear from God. All must be silent, when he speaks. But Observe, Samuel left out one word; he did not say, *Speak, Lord*, but only, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*; perhaps, as Bishop Patrick suggests, out of uncertainty whether it was God that spoke to him or no. However, by this answer, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*, way was made for the message he was now to receive, and Samuel was brought acquainted with the words of God, and visions of the Almighty; and *this ere the lamp of God went out*, (v. 3.) *in the temple of the Lord*, which some of the Jewish writers put a mystical sense upon: before the fall of Eli, and the eclipsing of the Urim and Thummim for some time thereby, God called Samuel and made him an oracle; whence they have an observation among their doctors, *That the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down*; (Eccl. 1. 5.) that is, say they, Ere God maketh the sun of one righteous man to set, he makes the sun of another righteous man to rise. *Smith ex Kimchi*.

11. And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. 12. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. 14. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. 15. And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD: and Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. 16. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. 17. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee. 18. And Samuel told him every



whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, *It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.*

Here is,

I. The message which, after all this introduction, God delivered to Samuel concerning Eli's house. God did not come to him now, to tell him how great a man he should be in his day, what a figure he should make, and what a blessing he should be in Israel. Young people have commonly a great curiosity to be told their fortune, but God came to Samuel, not to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in his service, and send him on an errand to another person, which was much better; and yet the matter of this first message, which, no doubt, made a very great impression upon him, might be of good use to him afterward, when his own sons proved, though not so bad as Eli's, yet not so good as they should have been, *ch.* 8. 3.

The message is short, not near so long as that which the man of God brought; (*ch.* 2. 27.) for Samuel being a child, it could not be expected he should remember a long message, and God considered his frame. The memories of children must not be overcharged, no not with divine things. But it is a sad message, a message of wrath, to ratify the message in the former chapter, and to bind the sentence there pronounced, because perhaps Eli did not give so much regard to that as he ought to have done. Divine threatenings, the less they are heeded, the surer they will come, and the heavier they will fall. Reference is here had to what was there said concerning both the sin and the punishment.

1. Concerning the sin, it is the *iniquity that he knoweth*, *v.* 13. The man of God told him of it, and many a time his own conscience had told him of it. O what a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us, concerning which we may say, "*It is the iniquity which our own heart knoweth*; we are conscious to ourselves of it!" In short, the iniquity was this, *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.* Or, as it is in the Hebrew, *he frowned not upon them.* If he did show his dislike of their wicked courses, yet not to that degree that he ought to have done: he did reprove them, but he did not punish them, for the mischief they did, nor deprive them of their power to do mischief, which, as a father, High Priest, and judge, he might have done. Note, (1.) Sinners do by their own wickedness make themselves vile. They debauch themselves, for every man is tempted, *when he is drawn aside of his own lusts*; (*Jam.* 1. 14.) and thereby they debase themselves, and make themselves not only mean, but odious to the holy God, and holy men and angels. Sin is a vile thing, and vilifies men more than any thing, *Ps.* 15. 4. Eli's sons made light of God, and made his offerings vile in the people's eyes; but the shame returned into their own bosom, they *made themselves vile.* (2.) Those that do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in the power of their hand to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as accessaries. Those in authority will have a great deal to answer for, if they make not the sword they bear, a *terror to evil workers.*

2. Concerning the punishment, it is that *which I have spoken concerning his house*; (*v.* 12. and *v.* 13.) *I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever*; that is, that a curse should be entailed upon his family from generation to generation. The particulars of this curse we had before; they are not here repeated, but it is added,

(1.) That when that sentence began to be executed, it would be very dreadful and amazing to all Israel; (*v.* 11.) *Both the ears of every one that hears*

*it shall tingle.* Every Israelite would be struck with terror and astonishment, to hear of the slaying of Eli's sons, the breaking of Eli's neck, and the dispersion of Eli's family. Lord, how terrible art thou in thy judgments! If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Note, God's judgments upon others should affect us with a holy fear, *Ps.* 119. 120.

(2.) That these direful first-fruits of the execution would be certain earnest of the progress and full accomplishment of it. "*When I begin, I will proceed, and make an end of all I have threatened,*" *v.* 12. It is intimated that it might, possibly, be some time before he would begin, but let them not call that forbearance an acquittance, nor that require a pardon; for when at length he does begin, he will make thorough work of it, and though he stay long, he will strike home.

(3.) That no room should be left for hope that this sentence might be reversed, and the execution stayed or mitigated, *v.* 14. [1.] God would not revoke the sentence, for he backed it with an oath; *I have sworn to the house of Eli:* and God will not go back from what he hath sworn, either in mercy or judgment. [2.] He would never come to a composition for the forfeiture. *The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.* No atonement shall be made for the sin, nor any abatement of the punishment. This was the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, that there were iniquities which they did not reach, which they would not purge; *but the blood of Christ cleanses from sin*, and secures all those that by faith are interested in it, from that eternal death which is the wages of sin.

II. The deliverer of this message to Eli. Observe,

1. Samuel's modest concealment of it, *v.* 15. (1.) *He lay till the morning*, and we may well suppose he lay awake pondering on what he had heard, repeating it to himself, and considering what use he must make of it. After we have received the spiritual food of God's word, it is good to compose ourselves and give it time to digest. (2.) *He opened the doors of the house of the Lord*, in the morning, as he used to do, being up first in the tabernacle. That he should do so at other times, was an instance of extraordinary towardness in a child, but that he should do so this morning, was an instance of great humility. God had highly honoured him above all the children of his people, yet he was not proud of the honour, nor puffed up with it; did not think himself too great and too good to be employed in these mean and servile offices, but, as cheerfully as ever, went and opened the doors of the tabernacle. Note, Those whom God manifests himself to, he makes and keeps low in their own eyes, and willing to stoop to any thing by which they may be serviceable to his glory, though but as door-keepers in his house. One would have expected that Samuel should have been so full of his vision, as to forget his ordinary service; that he should have gone among his companions, as one in ecstacy, to tell them what converse he had with God this night; but he modestly keeps it to himself, tells the vision to no man, but silently goes on in his business. Our secret communion with God is not to be proclaimed on the house tops. (3.) *He feared to show Eli the vision.* If he was afraid that Eli would be angry with him, and chide him, it will give us cause to suspect that Eli used to be as severe with this towardly child, as he was indulgent to his own wicked sons, and that will bear hard upon him. But we will suppose it was rather because he was afraid to grieve and trouble the good old man, that he was so shy. If he had run immediately with the tidings to Eli, it would have looked as if he de-



sired the woful day, and hoped to build his own family upon the ruin of Eli's, therefore it became him not to be forward to do it; no good man can take pleasure in bringing evil tidings, especially not Samuel to Eli, the pupil to the tutor whom he loves and honours.

2. Eli's careful inquiry into it; (v. 16, 17.) as soon as ever he heard Samuel stirring, he called for him, probably, to his bed-side; and having perceived before, that God had spoken to him, he obliged him, not only by importunity, *I pray thee, hide it not from me*, but, finding him timorous and backward, by an adjuration likewise, *God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me!* He had reason enough to fear that the message prophesied no good concerning him, but evil; and yet, because it was a message from God, he could not contentedly be ignorant of it. A good man desires to be acquainted with all the will of God, whether it make for him, or against him. His adjuration, *God do so to thee, if thou hide any thing from me*, may intimate the fearful doom of unfaithful watchmen; if they warn not sinners, they bring upon themselves that wrath and curse, which they should have denounced in God's name, against those that *go on still in their trespasses*.

3. Samuel's faithful delivery of his message at last; (v. 18.) *He told him every whit*; when he saw that he must tell him, he never minced the matter, nor offered to make it better than it was, to blunt that which was sharp, or to gild the bitter pill, but delivered the message as plainly and fully as he received it, *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God*. Christ's ministers must deal thus faithfully.

4. Eli's pious acquiescence in it: he did not question Samuel's integrity, was not cross with him, nor had he any thing to object against the equity of the sentence; he did not complain of the punishment, as Cain did, that it was greater than either he deserved or could bear, but patiently submitted, and accepted the punishment of his iniquity; *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. He understood the sentence to intend only a temporal punishment, and the entail of disgrace and poverty upon his posterity, and not a final separation of them from the favour of God, and therefore he cheerfully submitted; did not repine, because he knew the demerits of his family; nor did he now intercede for the reversing of the sentence, because God had ratified it with a solemn oath, of which he would not repent: he therefore composes himself into an humble resignation to God's will, as Aaron, in a case not much unlike; (Lev. 10. 3.) *He held his peace*. In a few words, (1.) He lays down this satisfying truth, "*It is the Lord*"; it is he that pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal, and against whose sentence there lies no exception. It is he that will execute the judgment, whose power cannot be resisted, or justice arraigned, or sovereignty contested. *It is the Lord*, who will thus sanctify and glorify himself, and it is highly fit he should. *It is the Lord*, with whom there is no unrighteousness, who never did nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves." (2.) He infers from it this satisfying conclusion, "*Let him do what seemeth him good*"; I have nothing to say against his proceedings; he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore *his will be done*. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*." Thus we ought to quiet ourselves under God's rebukes, and never to *strive with our Maker*.

19. And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words

fall to the ground. 20. And all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. 21. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD

Samuel being thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, we have here an account of the further honour done him as a prophet.

1. God did him honour. Having begun to favour him, he carried on and crowned his own work in him; (v. 19.) *Samuel grew, for the Lord was with him*. All our increase in wisdom and grace, is owing to the presence of God with us; it is all in all to our growth. God honoured Samuel, (1.) By further manifestations of himself to him. Samuel had faithfully delivered the messages he was intrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service; v. 21, *The Lord revealed him again to Samuel in Shiloh*. Note, God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright. (2.) By fulfilling what he spake by him; v. 19, *God did let none of his words fall to the ground*; whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true, and was accomplished in its season. Probably, there were some remarkable instances of the truth of Samuel's predictions, that happened soon after, which confirmed those that were afterward to be fulfilled, and gave general satisfaction as to his mission. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsels of his messengers, (Isa. 44. 26,) and do what he hath said.

2. Israel did him honour. They all knew, and owned that *Samuel was established to be a prophet*, v. 20. (1.) He grew famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship, took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they came home. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people, and bring them, as much as any thing, and as soon, into reputation. Them that honour God he will honour. (2.) He grew useful and very serviceable to his generation. He that began betimes to be good, soon came to do good. His established commission from God, and established reputation with the people, gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel. When old Eli was rejected, young Samuel was established; for God will never leave himself without a witness, nor his church without a guide.

## CHAP. IV.

The predictions in the foregoing chapter, concerning the ruin of Eli's house, here begin to be fulfilled; how long after, does not appear; but it was not long. Such sinners God often makes quick work with. Here is, I. The disgrace and loss Israel sustained in an encounter with the Philistines, v. 1, 2. II. Their foolish project to fortify themselves, by bringing the ark of God into their camp upon the shoulders of Hophni and Phinehas, v. 3, 4, which made them secure, v. 5, and struck a fear into the Philistines, but such a fear as roused them, v. 6-9. III. The fatal consequences of it; Israel was beaten, and the ark taken prisoner, v. 10, 11. IV. The tidings of this brought to Shiloh, and the sad reception of those tidings. 1. The city was put into confusion, v. 12, 13. 2. Eli fainted away, fell, and broke his neck, v. 14-18. 3. His daughter-in-law fell in labour upon it, bore a son, but died immediately, v. 19-22. These were the things which would make the ears of those that heard them, to tingle.

1. **A**ND the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer; and the Philistines pitched in

Aphek. 2. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines; and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. 3. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. 4. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth *between* the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, *were* there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. 6. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. 7. And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9. Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The first words which relate to Samuel, that *his words came to all Israel*, seem not to have any reference to the following story, as if it was by any direction of his, that the Israelites went out against the Philistines; had they consulted him, though but newly initiated as a prophet, it might have stood them in more stead than the ark did; but perhaps the princes of Israel despised his youth, and would not have recourse to him as an oracle, and he did not as yet interpose in public affairs; nor do we find any mention of his name from henceforward, till some years after; (*ch. 7. 3.*) only *his word came to all Israel*; that is, people from all parts, that were piously disposed, had recourse to him as a prophet, and advised with him. Perhaps, it is meant of his prophecy against the house of Eli, that was generally known and talked of, and all that were serious and observing, compared the events here related, when they came to pass, with that prophecy, and saw it accomplished in them.

Here is,

I. A war entered into with the Philistines, *v. 1.* It was an attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppression, and would have succeeded better, if they had first repented and reformed, and so begun their work at the right end. It is computed that this was about the middle of the forty years' dominion

that the Philistines had over Israel, (*Judg. 13. 1.*) and soon after the death of Samson; so Bishop Patrick, who thinks the slaughter he made at his death, might encourage this attempt: but Dr. Lightfoot reckons it forty years after Samson's death, for so long Eli judged, *v. 18.*

II. The defeat of Israel in that war, *v. 2.* Israel, who were the aggressors, were smitten, and had four thousand men killed upon the spot. God had promised that one of them should chase a thousand; but now it is quite the contrary, *Israel is smitten before the Philistines.* *Sr.*, the accursed thing, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage against them, they could wish for.

III. The measures they concerted for another engagement; a council of war was called, and, instead of resolving to fast and pray, and amend their lives, so ill taught were they, (and no wonder, when they had such teachers,) that, 1. They quarrelled with God for appearing against them; (*v. 3.*) *Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us?* If they meant this as an inquiry into the cause of God's displeasure, they needed not to go far to find that out; it was plain enough Israel had sinned, though they were not willing to see it and own it; but it rather seems that they expostulate boldly with God about it, are displeased at what God had done, and dispute it with him. They own the hand of God in their trouble, (so far was right,) "It is the Lord that has smitten us;" but, instead of submitting to it, they quarrel with it, and speak as those that were angry at him and his providence, and not aware of any just provocation they had given him. "Wherefore shall we, that are Israelites, be smitten before the Philistines? How absurd and unjust is it!" Note, The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart *frets against the Lord*, (*Prov. 19. 3.*) and finds fault with him. 2. They imagined that they could oblige him to appear for them the next time, by bringing the ark into their camp. The elders of Israel were so ignorant and foolish as to propose it, (*v. 3.*) and the people soon put it into execution; (*v. 4.*) they sent to Shiloh for the ark, and Eli had not courage enough to oppose it, but sent his ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas, along with it, at least permitted them to go, though he knew that wherever they went, the curse of God went along with them. Now see here, (1.) The profound veneration they had for the ark. "O send for that, and that will do wonders for us." The ark was, by institution, a visible token of God's presence. God had said that he would dwell *between the cherubims*, which were over the ark, and were carried along with it; now they thought that, by paying a great respect to this sacred chest, they should prove themselves to be Israelites indeed, and effectually engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. Note, It is common for those that have estranged themselves from the vitals of religion, to discover a great fondness for the ritual and external observance of it; for those that even *deny the power of godliness*, not only to have, but to have in admiration the form of it. The temple of the Lord is cried up, and the ark of the Lord stickled for, with a great deal of seeming zeal, by multitudes, that have no regard at all for the Lord of the temple, and the god of the ark; as if a fiery concern for the name of christianity, would atone for a profane contempt of the thing. And yet indeed they did but make an idol of the ark, and looked upon it to be as much an image of the God of Israel, as those which the heathen worshipped, were of their gods. To worship the true God, and not to worship him as God, is, in effect, not to worship him at all. (2.) Their egregious folly in thinking that if they had that in their camp, it would certainly *save them out of the hands of their enemies*, and bring victory back

to their side. For, [1.] When the ark set forward, Moses prayed, *Rise up Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered*; well knowing that it was not the ark moving with them, but God appearing for them, that must give them success; and here was no proper means used to engage God to favour them with his presence; what good then would the ark do them, the shell without the kernel? [2.] They were so far from having God's leave to remove his ark, that he had plainly enough intimated to them in his law, that when they were settled in Canaan, his ark should be settled in the place that he should choose, (Deut. 12. 5, 11.) and that they must come to it, and not it to them. How then could they expect any advantage by it, when they had not a just and legal possession of it, nor any warrant to stir it from its place? Instead of honouring God by what they did, they really affronted him. Nay, [3.] If there had been nothing else to invalidate their expectations from the ark, how could they expect it should bring a blessing, when Hophni and Phinehas were the men that brought it? It would have given too much countenance to their villany, if the ark had done any kindness to Israel, while it was in the hands of those graceless priests.

IV. The great joy that was in the camp of Israel, when the ark was brought into it; (v. 5.) *they shouted so that the earth rang again*. Now they thought themselves sure of victory, and therefore gave a triumphant shout before the battle, as if the day was without fail their own, intending by this mighty shout to animate themselves and their own forces, and to intimidate their adversaries. Note, Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them, as if those would infallibly save them; and as if the ark, God's throne, in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh be upon the throne in the heart.

V. The consternation which the bringing of the ark into the camp of Israel put the Philistines into. The two armies lay so near encamped, that the Philistines heard the shout the Israelites gave on this great occasion. They soon understood what it was they triumphed in, (v. 6.) and were afraid of the consequences. For, 1. It had never been done before in their days. *God is come into the camp*, and therefore *woe unto us*; (v. 7.) and again, *woe unto us*, v. 8. The name of the God of Israel was formidable even to those that worshipped other gods, and some apprehensions, even the infidels had, of the danger of contending with him. Natural conscience suggests this, that those are in a woful condition, who have God against them; yet see what gross notions they had of the divine presence, as if the God of Israel was not so much in the camp before the ark came thither; which may very well be excused in them, since the notions the Israelites themselves had of that presence were no better. "O," say they, "this is a new design upon us, more frightful than all their stratagems, for *there has not been such a thing heretofore*; this was the most effectual course they could take to dispirit our men, and weaken their hands." 2. When it had been done in the days of old, it had wrought wonders, v. 8, *These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness*. Here they were as much out in their history as in their divinity; the plagues of Egypt were inflicted before the ark was made, and before Israel came into the wilderness; but some confused traditions they had of wonders wrought by or for Israel, when this ark was carried before them, which they attributed, not to Jehovah, but to the ark. Now, say they, *Who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty gods?* Taking the ark for God, as well as they might, when the Israelites themselves idolized

it. Yet it should seem they scarcely believed themselves, when they spoke thus formidably of *these mighty gods*, but only bantered; for, instead of retreating, or proposing conditions of peace, which they would have done, had they been really convinced of the power of Israel's God, they stirred up one another to fight so much the more stoutly; this surprising difficulty did but sharpen their resolution; (v. 9.) *Be strong and quit yourselves like men*; the commanders inspiring bold and generous thoughts into the minds of their soldiers, when they bid them remember how they had lorded it over Israel, and what an intolerable grief and shame it would be, if they flinched now, and suffered Israel to lord it over them.

10. And the Philistines fought; and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

Here is a short account of the issue of this battle.

I. Israel was smitten, the army dispersed, and totally routed, not retiring into the camp as before, (v. 2.) when they hoped to rally again, but returning to their tents, every man shifting for his own safety, and making the best of his way home, despairing to make head any more; and thirty thousand were slain in the field of battle, v. 10. Israel was put to the worse, 1. Though they had the better cause, were the people of God, and the Philistines were uncircumcised; they stood up in necessary defence of their just rights and liberties against invaders, and yet they failed of success, for *the Rock had sold them*. A good cause often suffers for the sake of the bad men that undertake it. 2. Though they had the greater confidence, and put a better heart on it. They shouted while the Philistines trembled, and yet, when God pleased so to order it, the Philistines' terrors were turned into triumphs, and Israel's shouts into lamentations. 3. Though they had the ark of God with them. External privileges will secure none that abuse them, and do not live up to them. The ark in the camp will add nothing to its strength, when there is an Achan in it.

II. The ark itself was taken by the Philistines; and Hophni and Phinehas, who, it is likely, kept close to it, and when it was in danger, ventured far in the defence of it, because by it they got their living, were *both slain*, v. 11. To this sad event the Psalmist refers; (Ps. 78. 61, 64.) *He delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies' hands. Their priest fell by the sword*. 1. The slaughter of the priests, considering their bad character, was no great loss to Israel, but it was a dreadful judgment upon the house of Eli. The word which God had spoken, was fulfilled in it; (ch. 2. 34.) *This shall be a sign unto thee, an earnest of the judgments threatened, thy two sons shall die both in one day, and so shall all the increase of thy house die in the flower of their age*, v. 33. If Eli had done his duty, and put them, as polluted, from the priesthood, (Neh. 7. 64.) they might have lived, though in disgrace; but now God takes the work into his own hands, and chases them out of the world by the sword of the uncircumcised: *The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth*. It is true, the sword devours one as well as another, but these were waited for of the sword, marked for vengeance. They were out of their place; what had they to do in the camp? When

men leave the way of their duty, they shut themselves out of God's protection. But this was not all; they had betrayed the ark, by bringing it into danger, without a warrant from God, and this filled the measure of their iniquities. But, 2. The taking of the ark was a very great judgment upon Israel, a certain token of God's hot displeasure against them. Now they are made to see their folly in trusting to their external privileges, when they had by their wickedness forfeited them, and fancying that the ark would save them, when God was departed from them. Now they are made to reflect, with the utmost regret, upon their own rashness and presumption, in bringing the ark into the camp, and so exposing it; and wish a thousand times they had left it where God had fixed it. Now they are convinced that God will not be prescribed to by vain and foolish men, and that though he has bound us to his ark, he has not bound himself to it, but will rather deliver it into the hands of his sworn enemies, than suffer it to be profaned by his false friends, and countenance their superstition. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God, under the cloak of a visible profession, for there will be those cast into utter darkness, that have *eaten and drunken in Christ's presence*.

12. And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side, watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out. 14. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. 16. And the man said unto Eli, *I am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son? 17. And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines; and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people; and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God is taken. 18. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward, by the side of the gate; and his neck brake, and he died; for he was an old man, and heavy: and he had judged Israel forty years.

Tidings are here brought to Shiloh of the fatal issue of their battle with the Philistines. Ill news flies fast. This soon spread through all Israel, every man that fled to his tent, brought it with too plain a proof of it, to his neighbours: but no place was so nearly concerned as Shiloh, thither therefore an express posted away immediately; as it was a man of Benjamin, the Jews fancy it was Saul; *he rent his clothes, and put earth upon his head*; by these signs to proclaim to all that saw him as he ran, the sorrowful news, and to show how much

himself was affected with it, *v. 12*. He went straight to Shiloh with it; and here we are told,

I. How the city received it. *Eli sat in the gate, v. 13, 18*. but the messenger was loath to tell him first, and therefore passed him by, and told it in the city, with all the aggravating circumstances; and now *both the ears of every one that heard it, tingled*, as was foretold; *ch. 3. 11*. their hearts trembled, and every face gathered blackness. *All the city cried out, v. 13*. and well they might; for besides that this was a calamity to all Israel, it was a particular loss to Shiloh, and the ruin of that place. For though the ark was soon rescued out of the hands of the Philistines, yet it never returned to Shiloh again; their candlestick was removed out of its place, because they had *left their first love*, and their city dwindled, and sunk, and came to nothing. Now God *forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh*, they having driven him from them; and the tribe of Ephraim, which had for three hundred and forty years been blessed with the presence of the ark in it, lost the honour, (Ps. 78. 60, 67.) and, some time after, it was transferred to the tribe of Judah, the *mount Zion which he loved*, as it follows there, *v. 68*. because the men of Shiloh knew not the day of their visitation. This abandoning of Shiloh, Jerusalem is long after reminded of, and bid to take warning by, Jer. 7. 12, *Go see what I did to Shiloh*. From this day, this fatal day, let the desolations of Shiloh be dated; they had therefore reason enough to cry out when they heard that the ark was taken.

II. What a fatal blow it was to old Eli. Let us see,

1. With what fear he expected the tidings. Though old, and blind, and heavy, yet he could not keep his chamber, when he was sensible the glory of Israel lay at stake, but placed himself by the way-side, to receive the first intelligence; for *his heart trembled for the ark of God, v. 13*. His careful thoughts represented to him, what a dishonour it would be to God, and what an irreparable loss to Israel, if the ark fell into the Philistines' hands: with what profane triumphs it would be told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon. He also apprehends what imminent danger there was of it; Israel had forfeited the ark, (his own sons especially,) and the Philistines would aim at it; and now the threatening comes to his mind, that he should *see an enemy in God's habitation; ch. 2. 32*. and perhaps his own heart reproached him for not using his authority, to prevent the carrying of the ark into the camp; all these things made him tremble. Note, All good men lay the interest of God's church nearer their hearts, than any secular interest or concern of their own, and cannot but be in pain and fear for them, if, at any time, they are in peril. How can we be easy, if the ark be not safe?

2. With what grief he received the tidings. Though he could not see, he could hear the *tumult and crying of the city*, and perceived it to be the voice of lamentation and mourning and woe; like a careful magistrate, he asks, *What means the noise of this tumult? v. 14*. He is told, there is an express come from the army, who relates the story to him very distinctly, and with great confidence, having himself been an eye-witness of it, *v. 16, 17*. The account of the defeat of the army, and the slaughter of a great number of the soldiers, was very grievous to him as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, to whom he had been so indulgent, and who, he had reason to fear, died impenitent, touched him in a tender part as a father, yet it was not for these that his heart trembled, there is a greater concern upon his spirit, which swallows up the lesser. He does not interrupt the

narrative with any passionate exclamations for his sons, like David for Absalom, but waits for the end of the story, not doubting but that the messenger, being an Israelite, would, without being asked, say something of the ark; and if he could but have said, "Yet the ark of God is safe, and we are bringing that home," his joy for that would have overcome his grief for all the other disasters, and have made him easy; but when the messenger concludes his story with, *The ark of God is taken*, he is struck to the heart, his spirits fail, and, it should seem, he swooned away, fell off his seat, and partly with the fainting, and partly with the fall, he died immediately, and never spoke a word more. His heart was broken first, and then his neck. So fell the High Priest and judge of Israel, so fell his heavy head, when he had lived within two of a hundred years; so fell the crown from his head when he had judged Israel about forty years; thus did his sun set under a cloud, thus were the folly and wickedness of those sons of his, whom he had indulged, his ruin at last. Thus does God sometimes set marks of his displeasure upon good men in this life, who have misconducted themselves, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. A man may die miserably, and yet not die eternally; may come to an untimely end, and yet the end be peace. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Eli died the death of an unredeemed ass, whose neck was to be broken, Exod. 13. 13. Here we must observe, to Eli's praise, that it was the loss of the ark, that was his death, and not the slaughter of his sons. He does, in effect, say, "Let me fall with the ark;" for what pious Israelite can live with any comfort when God's ordinances are removed? Farewell all in this world, even life itself, if the ark be gone.

19 And his daughter-in-law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings, that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 20. And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast borne a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 21. And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband:) 22. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken.

We have here another melancholy story that carries on the desolations of Eli's house, and the sorrowful feeling which the tidings of the ark's captivity excited. It is concerning the wife of Phinehas, one of those ungrateful sons of Eli, that had brought all this mischief on Israel. It cost her her life, though young, as well as her father-in-law, that was old; for many a *green* head, as well as many a *hoary* head, has been brought by sorrow to the grave; it worketh death.

By what is here related of her, it appears,

I. That she was a woman of a very tender spirit. Providence so ordered it, that, just at this time, she was near her time; and our Saviour hath said, *Woe to them that are with child, or give suck* in such days as these, Matth. 24. 19. So little joy will there then be in the birth, even of a man child, that it will be said, *Blessed are the wombs that bare not,*

Luke 23. 29. The amazing news coming at this unhappy juncture, it put her into labour, as great frights or other strong passions sometimes do. When she heard of the death of her father-in-law whom she revered, and her husband whom, bad as he was, she loved, but especially of the loss of the ark, *she travailed, for her pains came thick upon her*; v. 19. and the tidings so seized her spirits, at a time when they needed all possible supports, that though she had strength to bear the child, she, soon after, fainted and died away, being very willing to let life go, when she had lost the greatest comforts of her life. Those who are drawing near to that needful hour, have need to treasure up for themselves comforts from the covenant of grace, to balance, not only the usual sorrows, but any thing extraordinary that may add to the grief which they do not foresee. Faith, at such a time, will keep from fainting, Ps. 27. 13.

II. That she was a woman of a very gracious spirit, though matched to a wicked husband. Her concern for the death of her husband, and father-in-law, was an evidence of her natural affection; but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark, was an evidence of her pious and devout affection to God and sacred things. The former helped to hasten her travail, but it appears by her dying words, that the latter lay nearer her heart; (v. 22.) *She said, The glory is departed from Israel*; not lamenting so much the sinking of that particular family to which she was related, as the general calamity of Israel in the captivity of the ark. This, this was it, that was her grief, that was her death.

1. This made her regardless of her child. The women that attended her, who, it is likely, were some of the first rank in the city, encouraged her, and, thinking that her concern was mostly about the issue of her pains, when the child was born, *said unto her, Fear not*, now the worst is past, *for thou hast borne a son*, (and perhaps it was her first-born,) *but she answered not, neither did she regard it*. The sorrows of her travail, if she had had no other, would have been forgotten, *for joy that a man child was born into the world*, John 16. 21. But what is that joy, (1.) To one that feels herself dying? No joy but that which is spiritual and divine, will stand us in any stead then; death is too serious a thing to admit the relish of an earthly joy, it is all flat and sapless then. (2.) What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark? Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark is gone, and is a prisoner in the land of the Philistines. What pleasure can we take in our creature-comforts and enjoyments, if we want God's word and ordinances, especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance? *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs, to such heavy hearts*.

2. This made her give her child a name which should perpetuate the remembrance of the calamity, and her sense of it. She has nothing to say to the child, only it being her province, now that her husband was dead, to name the child, she orders them to call it *I-chabod*, that is, *Where is the glory?* Or, *Alas for the glory!* or, *There is no glory*; (v. 21.) which she thus explains with her dying lips, (v. 22.) *"The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken"*. Call the child inglorious, for so he is; the beauty of Israel is gone, and there appears no hope of ever retrieving it; never let the name of an Israelite, much less a priest, carry glory in it any more, now that the ark is taken." Note, (1.) The purity and plenty of God's ordinances, and the tokens of his presence in them, are the glory of any people, much more so than their wealth and trade and interest among the nations. (2.) Nothing is more cutting, more killing, to a faithful Israelite,

than the want and loss of these. If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us, if he depart!

### CHAP. V.

It is now time to inquire what is become of the ark of God; we cannot but think that we shall hear more of that sacred treasure. I should have thought that the next news would have been, that all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, had gathered together as one man, with a resolution to bring it back, or die in the attempt: but we find not any motion made of that kind, so little was there of zeal or courage left among them. Nay, we do not find that they desired a treaty with the Philistines about the ransom of it, or offered any thing in lieu of it; "It is gone, and let it go." Many have softness enough to lament the loss of the ark, that have not hardness enough to take one step toward the recovery of it, any more than Israel here. If the ark will help itself, it may, for they will not help it. Unworthy they were of the name of Israelites, that could thus tamely part with the glory of Israel. God would therefore take the work into his own hands and plead his own cause, since men would not appear for him. We are told in this chapter, I. How the Philistines triumphed over the ark, (v. 1, 2,) and, II. How the ark triumphed over the Philistines. 1. Over Dagon their god, v. 3. 5. 2. Over the Philistines themselves, who were sorely plagued with emerods, and made weary of the ark; the men of Ashdod first, (v. 6, 7.) then the men of Gath, (v. 8, 9.) and, lastly, those of Ekron, which forced them at length upon a resolution to send the ark back to the land of Israel; for when God judges, he will overcome.

1. **AND** the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod. 2. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. 4. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. 5. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

Here is,

I. The Philistines' triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud, to be now masters of, because, before the battle, they were possessed with a great fear of it, *ch.* 4. 7. When they had it in their hands, God restrained them, that they did not offer any violence to it; did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but showed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and to read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone that were in it, we are not told; perhaps they looked no further than the golden outside, and the cherubims that covered it, like children that are more affected with the fine binding of their Bibles than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was; there they placed

the ark of God, *by Dagon, v. 2.* Either, 1. As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious respect to, in conjunction with Dagon; for the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them, and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel, when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all, if he be not worshipped alone. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* Or, rather, 2. They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour of Dagon their god, to whom, no doubt, they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done when they had taken Samson; (Judg. 16. 23, 24.) boasting, that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion, so now over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! What a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill-deity? So it is, because God will show of how little account the ark of the covenant is, if the covenant itself be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to, or we can trust to. So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affront him, and get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, he will next deal with those that abused it, and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the *wrath of man shall praise him*; and he is bringing about his own glory, even then when he seems to neglect it, Ps. 76. 10. Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

II. The ark's triumph over Dagon. Once and again, Dagon was made to fall before it. If they designed to do honour to the ark, God hereby showed that he valued not their honour, nor would he accept it, for he will be worshipped, not *with* any god, but *above* all gods. *He owes a shame* (as Bishop Hall expresses it) *to those who will be making matches betwixt himself and Deliah.* But they really designed to affront it; and though, for some hours, Dagon stood by the ark, and it is likely, stood above it, (the ark at its footstool,) yet, the next morning, when the worshippers of Dagon came to pay their devotions to his shrine, they found their triumphing short, Job 20. 5.

1. Dagon, that is, the image, for that was all the god, was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark, v. 3. God had seemed to forget his ark; but see how the psalmist speaks of his appearing, at last, to vindicate his own honour. When he had delivered his strength into captivity, and all seemed going to ruin, *then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine*, Ps. 78. 65. And therefore he prevented the utter desolations of the Jewish church, because he feared the *wrath of the enemy*, Deut. 32. 26, 27. Great care was taken in setting up the images of their gods, to fix them; (the prophet takes notice of it, Isa. 41. 7. *He fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved*; and again, *ch.* 46. 7.) and yet Dagon's fastenings stood him in no stead; the ark of God triumphs over him upon his own dunghill, in his own temple; down he comes before the ark, directly towards it, (though the ark was set on one side of him,) as it were, pointing to the conqueror, to whom he is constrained to yield and do obeisance. Note, The kingdom of Satan will certainly fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be run down, and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident that the day of their triumph will



come. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Dagon, by falling prostrate before the ark of God, which was a posture of adoration, did, as it were, direct his worshippers to pay their homage to the God of Israel, as *greater than all gods*. See Exod. 18. 11.

2. The priests that found their idol on the floor, make all the haste they can, before it be known, to set him in his place again. A sorry silly thing to make a god of, which, when he was down, wanted help to get up again; and sottish wretches those were, that could pray for help from that idol that needed, and, in effect, implored, their help. How could they attribute their victory to the power of Dagon, when Dagon himself cannot keep his own ground before the ark? But they are resolved Dagon shall be their god still, and therefore set him up in his place. Bishop Hall observes hence, It is just with God, that those who want grace, shall want wit too; and it is in the power of superstition to turn men into the stocks and stones they worship. *They that make them, are like unto them*. What is it that the great upholders of the anti-christian kingdom are doing at this day, but heaving Dagon up, and labouring to set him in his place again, and healing the deadly wound that has been given to the beast; but if the reformation be the cause of God, before which it has begun to fall, it shall not prevail, but shall surely fall before it.

3. The next night Dagon fell the second time, *v.*

4. They rose early, either, as usual, to make their addresses to their god, or earlier than usual, being impatient to know whether Dagon had kept his standing this night; and, to their great confusion, they find his case now worse than before; whether the matter of which the image was made, was apt to break or no, so it was, that the head and hands were *cut off from the threshold*. So that nothing remained but the stump, or, as the margin reads it, *the fishy part* of Dagon; for (as many learned men conjecture) the upper part of this image was in a human shape, the lower, in the shape of a fish; as mermaids are painted. Such strong delusions were idolaters given up to, so vain were they in their imaginations, and so wretchedly darkened were their foolish hearts, as to worship the images, not only of creatures, but of nonentities, the mere figments of fancy. Well, the mis-shapen monster is by this fall made to appear, (1.) Very ridiculous, and worthy to be despised. An admirable figure Dagon made now, when the fall had anatonized him, and showed how the human part and the fishy part were artificially put together, which, perhaps, the ignorant devotees had been made to believe was done by miracle. (2.) Very impotent, and unworthy to be prayed to, or trusted to; for his losing of his head and hands, proved him utterly destitute both of wisdom and power, and for ever disabled either to advise or act for them. This they got by setting Dagon in his place again; they had better have let him alone when he was down. But they can speed no better, that contend with God, and will set up that which he is throwing down, Mal. 1. 4. God, by this, magnified his ark and made it honourable, then when they vilified and made it contemptible. He also showed what will be the end of all that which is set up in opposition to him; *Gird yourselves, but ye shall be broken to pieces*, Isa. 8. 9.

4. The threshold of Dagon's temple was ever after looked upon as sacred, and not to be trodden on, *v.* 5. Some think that reference is had to this superstitious usage of Dagon's worshippers, (Zeph. 1. 9.) where God threatens to punish those, who, in imitation of them, leaped over the threshold. One would have thought that this incontestable proof of the ark's victory over Dagon, should have convinc-

ed the Philistines of their folly in worshipping such a senseless thing, and that from henceforward they should have paid their homage to the Conqueror; but, instead of being reformed, they were hardened in their idolatry, and, as evil men and seducers are wont to do, became worse and worse, 2 Tim. 3. 13. Instead of despising Dagon, for the threshold's sake that beheaded him, they are almost ready to worship the threshold, because it was the block on which he was beheaded; and will never set their feet on that on which Dagon lost his head; shaming those who *tread under foot the blood of the covenant*, and trample on things truly sacred. Yet this piece of superstition would help to perpetuate the remembrance of Dagon's disgrace; for, with the custom, the reason would be transmitted to posterity, and the children that should be born, inquiring why the threshold of Dagon's temple must not be trodden on, would be told, that Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord. Thus God would have honour, even out of their superstition. We are not told that they repaired the broken image; it is probable that they got the ark of God away first, and then they patched it up again, and set it in its place; for, it seems they *cannot deliver their souls, nor say, Is there not a lie in our right hand?* Isa. 44. 20.

6. But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod; and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, *even* Ashdod, and the coasts thereof. 7. And when the men of Ashdod saw that *it was* so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god. 8. They sent, therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about *thither*. 9. And it was *so*, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. 10. Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. 11. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12. And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The downfall of Dagon (if the people had made a good use of it, and had been brought by it to repent of their idolatries, and to humble themselves before the God of Israel, and seek his face) might have prevented the vengeance which God here



proceeds to take upon them for the indignities done to his ark, and their obstinate adherence to their idol, in defiance of the plainest conviction: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see*, Isa. 26. 11. And if they will not see the glory, they shall feel the weight, of God's hand, for so the Philistines did; *The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them* (v. 6.) and he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence.

1. *He destroyed them*, that is, cut many of them off by sudden death, those, we may suppose, that had most triumphed in the captivity of the ark. This is distinguished from the disease with which others were smitten. At Gath, it is called a *great destruction*, (v. 9.) a *deadly destruction*, v. 11. And it is expressly said, (v. 12.) that those who were smitten with the emerods, were the men that did not by the other destruction, which, probably, was the pestilence. They boasted of the great slaughter which their sword had made among the Israelites, ch. 4. 10. But God lets them know that though he does not see fit to draw Israel's sword against them, (they were unworthy to be employed,) yet God had a sword of his own, with which he could make a no less dreadful execution among them, which if he whet, and *his hand take hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies*, Deut. 32. 41, 42. Note, Those that contend with God, his ark, and his Israel, will infallibly be ruined by it at last. If conviction conquer not, destruction shall.

2. Those that were destroyed, *he smote with emerods*, (v. 6.) *in their secret parts*, (v. 9.) so grievous, that (v. 12.) *the cry went up to heaven*; that is, it might be heard a great way off; and perhaps, in the extremity of their pain and misery, they cried, not to Dagon, but to the God of heaven. The psalmist, speaking of this sore judgment upon the Philistines, describes it thus, that God *smote his enemies in the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual reproach*, Ps. 78. 66. God threatens the emerods among the judgments that would be the fruit of the curse, Deut. 28. 27. It was both a painful and shameful disease; a vile disease for vile deserts; by it God would humble their pride, and put contempt upon them, as they had done upon his ark. The disease was epidemical, and, perhaps, among them, a new disease. *Ashdod was smitten, and the coasts thereof*; the country round. For contempt of God's ordinances, *many are weak and sick, and many sleep*, 1 Cor. 11. 30.

3. The men of Ashdod were soon aware that it was *the hand of God, the God of Israel*, v. 7. Thus they were constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon, and submit to him; but rather, now that he touched their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face; and, instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarenes, who, when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to *depart out of the coasts*. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them, than enter into covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend. Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, *The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us*.

4. It is resolved to change the place of its imprisonment. A great council was called, and the question proposed to all the lords was, "What shall we do with the ark?" And, at first, it was agreed, that it should be carried to Gath, v. 8. Some superstitious conceit they had, that the fault was in the place, and that the ark would be better pleased

with another lodging, further off from Dagon's temple; and therefore, instead of returning it, as they should have done, to its own place, they contrive to send it to another place. *Gath* is pitched upon, a place famed for a race of giants, but their strength and stature are no fence against the pestilence and the emerods; the men of that city were smitten, *both small and great*, (v. 9.) both dwarfs and giants; all alike to God's judgments; none so great as to overtop them, none so small as to be overlooked by them.

5. They were all, at last, weary of the ark, and very willing to be rid of it. It was sent from Gath to Ekron, and, coming by order of council, the Ekronites could not refuse it, but were much exasperated against their great men for sending them such a fatal present; (v. 10.) *They have sent it to us, to slay us and our people*. The ark had the tables of the law in it; and nothing more welcome to faithful Israelites than the word of God; to them it is a *savour of life unto life*; but to uncircumcised Philistines, that persist in enmity to God, nothing more dreadful or unwelcome; to them it is a *savour of death unto death*. A general assembly is instantly called, to advise about *sending the ark again to its own place*, v. 11. While they are consulting about it, the hand of God is doing execution; and their contrivances to evade the judgment, does but spread it; many drop down dead among them, many more are raging ill of the emerods, v. 12. What shall they do? Their triumphs in the captivity of the ark are soon turned into lamentations, and they are as eager to quit it as ever they had been to seize it. Note, God can easily make Jerusalem a burthensome stone to all that heave at it, Zech. 12. 3. Those that fight against God, will soon have enough of it, and, first or last, will be made to know that none ever hardened their hearts against him, and prospered. The wealth that is got by fraud and injustice, especially by sacrilege, that is, robbing God, though swallowed greedily, and rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be vomited up again; for till it be, the sinner shall not *feel quietness in his belly*, Job 20. 15 . . 20.

## CHAP. VI

In this chapter we have the return of the ark to the land of Israel, whither we are now gladly to attend it, and observe, I. How the Philistines dismissed it, by the advice of their priests, (v. 1 . . 11.) with rich presents, to the God of Israel, to make an atonement for their sin (v. 3 . . 5.) and yet with a project to bring it back, unless Providence directed the king, contrary to their inclinations, to go to the land of Israel, v. 8, 9. II. How the Israelites entertained it. 1. With great joy, and sacrifices of praise, v. 12 . . 18. 2. With an over-bold curiosity to look into it, for which many of them were struck dead, the terror of which moved them to send it forward to another city, v. 19 . . 21.

1. **A**ND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. 3. And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass-offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you. 4. Then said they, What shall be the trespass-offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden eme-

rods, and five golden mice, *according to the number of the lords of the Philistines*: for one plague *was* on you all, and on your lords. 5. Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel; peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. 6. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts! When he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 7. Now therefore make a new cart, and take two milch kine on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them: 8. And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart: and put the jewels of gold, which ye return him *for* a trespass-offering, in a coffer by the side thereof; and send it away, that it may go. 9. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, *then* he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that *it is* not his hand that smote us; it *was* a chance that happened to us.

The first words of the chapter tell us how long the captivity of the ark continued—it was *in the country of the Philistines seven months*. In the *field of the Philistines*; so it is in the original; from which some gather that, having tried it in all their cities, and found it a plague to the inhabitants of each, at length, they sent it into the open fields, upon which, mice sprang up out of the ground in great multitudes, and destroyed the corn which was now nearly ripe, and marred the land. With that judgment they were plagued, (v. 5.) and yet it is not mentioned in the foregoing chapter; so God let them know, that, wherever they carried the ark, so long as they carried it captive, they should find it a curse to them. *Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed in the field*, Deut. 28. 16. But most take it to signify, as we render it, *The country of the Philistines*. Now, 1. Seven months *Israel* was punished with the *absence* of the ark, that special token of God's presence. How bare did the tabernacle look without it! How was the holy city now a desolation, and the holy land a wilderness! A melancholy time, no doubt, it was, to the good people among them, particularly Samuel; but they had this to comfort themselves with, as we have in the like distress, when we are deprived of the comfort of public ordinances, that, wherever the ark is, *the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven*, and by faith and prayer we may have access with boldness to him there. We may have God nigh unto us, when the ark is at a distance. 2. Seven months the *Philistines* were punished with the *presence* of the ark; so long it was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Note, Sinners lengthen out their own miseries, by obstinately refusing to part with their sins. Egypt's plagues had been fewer than ten, if Pharaoh's heart had not been hardened not to let the people go.

But at length it is determined the ark must be

sent back, there is no remedy, they are undone if they detain it.

I. The priests and the diviners are consulted about it, v. 2. They were supposed to be best acquainted both with the rules of wisdom, and with the rites of worship and atonement. And the Israelites being their neighbours, and famed above all people for the institutions of their religion, they had, no doubt, the curiosity to acquaint themselves with their laws and usages; and therefore it was proper to ask them, *What shall we do to the ark of Jehovah?* All nations have had regard to their priests, as the men whose *lips keep knowledge*. Had the Philistines diviners? We have divines, of whom we should inquire, *wherewith we shall come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the most high God*.

II. They give their advice very fully, and seem to be very unanimous in it. It was a wonder they did not, as friends to their country, give it, *ex officio*—officially, before they were asked.

1. They urge it upon them, that it was absolutely necessary to send the ark back, from the example of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, v. 6. Some, it may be, were loath to yield, and were willing to try it out with the ark a while longer, and to them they apply themselves: *Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did?* It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This good use we should make of the remaining records of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned, not to harden our hearts as they did. It is much cheaper learning by other people's experience than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go, therefore let the Philistines yield in time to let the ark go.

2. They advise, that, when they sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, v. 3. Whatever the gods of other nations were, they knew that the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly he resented the affront of holding his ark captive, they with whom he had such a quarrel, must *in any wise return him a trespass-offering*; and they could not expect to be healed upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction; so far natural light instructed men; but when they began to contrive what that satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those, who, by wilful sin, have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, (as the Philistines did the ark,) Rom. 1. 18. may conclude that there is no making of their peace with him whom they have thus injured, but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin.

9. They direct, that this trespass-offering should be an acknowledgment of the punishment of their iniquity; by which they might take shame to themselves as conquered and yielding, and guilty before God, and might *give glory to the God of Israel*, as their mighty Conqueror; and most just Avenger, 1

5. They must make images of the *emerods*, that is, of the swellings and sores with which they had been afflicted; so making the reproach of that shameful disease perpetual by their own act and deed; (Ps. 78. 66.) also images of the *mice that had marred the land*, owning thereby the almighty power of the God of Israel, who could chastise and humble them, even in the day of their triumph, by such small and despicable animals. These images must be made of gold, the most precious metal, to intimate that they would gladly purchase their peace with the God of Israel at any rate, and would not think it bought too dear with gold, *with much fine gold*. The *golden emerods* must be, in number, five, according to the *number of the lords*, who, it

is likely, were all afflicted with them, and were content thus to own it: it was advised, that the *golden mice* should be five too; but because the whole country was infested with them, it should seem, upon second thoughts, they sent more of them, *according to the number both of the fenced cities and of country villages*, v. 18. Their priests remind them, that *one plague was on them all*; they could not blame one another, for they were all guilty, which they were plainly told, by being all plagued. Their proposal to offer a *trespass-offering* for their offence, was conformable enough to divine revelation at that time; but to send such things as these for trespass-offerings, was very foreign, and showed them grossly ignorant of the methods of reconciliation appointed by the law of Moses; for there it appears all along, that *it is blood*, and not gold, that makes atonement for the soul.

4. They encourage them to hope that thereby they would take an effectual course to get rid of the plague, *Ye shall be healed*, v. 3. For, it seems, the disease obstinately resisted all the methods of cure their physicians had prescribed; "Let them therefore send back the ark, and then," say they, "*it shall be known to you, why his hand is not removed from you*"; that is, by this it will appear, whether it is for your detaining of the ark, that you are thus plagued; for, if it be, upon your delivering of it up, the plague will cease." God has sometimes put his people upon making such a trial, whether their reformation would not be their relief; *Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts*, Mal. 3. 10. Hag. 2. 19. Yet they speak doubtfully, (v. 5.) *Peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you*; as if now they began to think, that the judgment might come from God's hand, and yet not be removed immediately upon the restitution of the ark; however, that was the likeliest way to obtain mercy. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

5. Yet they put them in a way to make a further trial, whether it was the hand of the God of Israel that had smitten them with these plagues or no. They must, in honour of the ark, put it on a new cart or carriage, to be drawn by two milch-cows, that had calves daily sucking them, (v. 7.) unused to draw, and inclined to home, both for the sake of the crib where they were fed, and of the calves they nourished, and, besides, altogether unacquainted with the road that led toward the land of Israel; they must have no one to lead or drive them, but must take their own way, which, in all reason, one might expect, would be home again; and yet, unless the God of Israel, after all the other miracles he has wrought, will work one more, and by an invisible power lead these cows, contrary to their natural instinct and inclination, to the land of Israel, and particularly to Beth-shemesh, they will retract their former opinion, and will believe it was not the hand of God that smote them, but it was a chance that *happened to them*, v. 8, 9. Thus did God suffer himself to be tempted and prescribed to, after he had been otherwise affronted, by these uncircumcised Philistines. Would they have been content that the honour of Dagon, their god, should have been put upon such an issue as this? See how willing had men are to shift off their convictions of the hand of God upon them, and to believe, when they are in trouble, it is a *chance that happens to them*; and if so, the rod has no voice which they are concerned to hear or heed.

10. And the men did so; and took two milch kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. 11. And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold and the

images of their emerods. 12. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh. 13. And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. 14. And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the LORD. 15. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices, the same day unto the LORD. 16. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen *it*, they returned to Ekron the same day. 17. And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned *for* a trespass-offering unto the LORD; for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one: 18. And the golden mice, *according to* the number of all the cities of the Philistines *belonging* to the five lords, *both* of fenced cities and of country villages, even unto the great *stone* of Abel, whereon they set down the ark of the LORD; *which stone remaineth* unto this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

We are here told,

I. How the Philistines dismissed the ark; (v. 10, 11.) they were made as glad to part with it, as ever they had been to take it; as God had fetched Israel out of the house of bondage, so now he fetched the ark out of its captivity, in such a manner, as that *Egypt was glad when they departed*, Ps. 105. 38. 1. They received no money or price for the ransom of it, as they hoped to have done, even beyond a king's ransom. Thus it is prophesied of Cyrus, Isa. 45. 13, *He shall let go my captives, not for price, nor reward*. Nay, 2. They gave jewels of gold, as the Egyptians did to the Israelites, to be rid of it. Thus the ark that was carried into the land of the Philistines, a trophy of their victory, carried back with it trophies of its own, and lasting monuments of the disgrace of the Philistines. Note, God will be no loser in his glory, at last, by the successes of the church's enemies against the ark, but will get him honour from those that seek to do dishonour to him.

II. How the kine brought it to the land of Israel, v. 12. They *took the straight way to Beth-shemesh*, the next city of the land of Israel, and a priest's city, and *turned not aside*. This was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute creatures, and, all things considered, no less than a miracle. That cattle unaccustomed to the yoke should draw so even, so orderly, and still go forward; that without any driver, they should go from home, to

which all tame creatures have a natural inclination, and from their own calves, to which they had a natural affection; that, without any director, they should go the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city eight or ten miles off, never miss the way, never turn aside into the fields to feed themselves, nor turn back home to feed their calves; they went on lowing for their young ones, by which it appeared that they had not forgotten them, but that nature was sensible of the grievance of going from them; the power of the God of nature therefore appeared so much the greater, in overruling one of the strongest instincts of nature. These two kine, says Dr. Lightfoot, knew their Owner, their great Owner, (Isa. 1. 3.) whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not; to which I may add, they brought home the ark, to shame the stupidity of Israel that made no attempt to fetch it home. God's providence is conversant about the motions even of brute creatures, and serve its own purposes by them. The lords of the Philistines, with a suitable retinue, no doubt, went after them, wondering at the power of the God of Israel; and thus they who thought to triumph over the ark, were made to go like menial servants after it.

III. How it was welcomed to the land of Israel. *The men of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest, v. 13.* They were going on with their worldly business, and were in no care about the ark, made no inquiries what was become of it; if they had, it is likely they might have had private intelligence beforehand of its coming, and would have gone to meet it, and conduct it into their own border. But they were as careless as the people that *ceiled their own houses, and let God's house lie waste.* Note, God will in his own time, effect the deliverance of his church, not only though it be fought against by its enemies, but though it be neglected by its friends. Some observe, that the returning ark found the men of Beth-shemesh not idling or sporting in the streets of the city, but busy, reaping their corn in the fields, and well employed: thus the tidings of the birth of Christ were brought to the shepherds, when they were *keeping their flock by night.* The Devil visits idle men with his temptations; God visits industrious men with his favours.

The same invisible hand that directed the kine to the land of Israel, brought them into the field of Joshua, and in that field they stood; some think, for the owner's sake, on whom, being a very good man, they supposed God designed to put this honour. I rather think it was for the sake of the great stone in that field, which was convenient to put the ark upon, and which is spoken of, v. 14, 15, 18.

Now, 1. When the reapers *saw the ark, they rejoiced; (v. 13.)* their joy for that, was greater than the joy of harvest, and therefore they left their work to bid it welcome. When the Lord turned again the captivity of his ark, they were like *men that dream, then was their mouth filled with laughter,* Ps. 126. 1, 2. Though they had not zeal and courage enough to attempt the rescue or ransom of it, yet, when it did come, they bid it heartily welcome. Note, The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, cannot but be matter of great joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. They offered up the kine for a burnt-offering, to the honour of God, and made use of the wood of the cart for fuel; (v. 14.) probably, the Philistines intended these, when they sent them, to be a part of their trespass-offering, to make atonement, v. 3, 7. However, the men of Beth-shemesh looked upon it as proper to make this use of them, because it was by no means fit that ever they should be put to any other use; never shall that cart carry any

common thing, that has once carried that sacred symbol of the divine presence; and the kine had been under such an immediate guidance of heaven, that God had, as it were, already laid claim to them; they were servants to him, and therefore must be sacrifices to him; and, no doubt, were accepted, though females, whereas, in strictness, every burnt-offering was to be male.

3. They deposited the ark, with the chest of jewels that the Philistines presented, upon the great stone in the open field; a cold lodging for the ark of the Lord, and a very mean one; yet better so than in Dagon's temple, or in the hands of the Philistines. It is desirable to see the ark in its habitation in all the circumstances of solemnity and splendor, but better have it upon a great stone, and in the fields of the wood, than be without it. The intrinsic grandeur of instituted ordinances ought not to be diminished in our eyes by the meanness and poverty of the place where they are administered. As the burning of the cart and cows that brought home the ark, might be construed to signify their hopes that it should never be carried away again out of the land of Israel, so the setting it upon a great stone might signify their hopes that it should be established again upon a firm foundation. The church is built upon a Rock.

4. They offered the sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, some think, upon the great stone, more probably, upon an altar of earth made for the purpose, v. 15. And the case being extraordinary, the law for offering at the altar in the court of the tabernacle was dispensed with, and the more easily, because Shiloh was now dismantled; God himself had forsaken it, and the ark, which was its chief glory, they had with them here. Beth-shemesh, though it lay within the lot of the tribe of Dan, yet belonged to Judah, so that this accidental bringing of the ark hither, was an indication of its designed settlement there, in process of time; for when God *refused the tabernacle of Joseph, he chose the tribe of Judah,* Ps. 78. 67, 68. It was one of those cities which were assigned out of the lot of Judah to the *sons of Aaron,* Josh. 21. 16. Whither should the ark go, but to a priest's city? And it was well they had those of that sacred order ready, (for though they are here called *Levites,* (v. 15.) yet it should seem they were priests,) both to take down the ark, and to offer the sacrifices.

5. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, much affected, we may suppose, with what they had seen of the glory of God, and the zeal of the Israelites, and yet not reclaimed from the worship of Dagon; for how seldom *has a nation changed their gods, though they were no gods?* Jer. 2. 11. Though they cannot but think the God of Israel *glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises,* yet they are resolved they will think Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, at least as good as he, and to him they will cleave, however, because he is their's.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the continuance of the great stone in the same place; there it is *unto this day;* (v. 18.) because it remained a lasting memorial of this great event, and served to support the traditional history, by which it was transmitted to posterity. The fathers would say to the children, "This is the stone upon which the ark of God was set, when it came out of the Philistines' hands; a thing never to be forgotten."

19. And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men. And the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten *many* of the people with

a great slaughter. 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us? 21. And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, and fetch it up to you.

Here is, 1. The sin of the men of Beth-shemesh. *They looked into the ark of the Lord, v. 19.* Every Israelite had heard great talk of the ark, and had been possessed with a profound veneration for it, but they had been told, that it was lodged within a veil, and even the High Priest himself might not look upon it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense. Perhaps, this made many say, (as we are apt to covet that which is forbidden,) what a great deal they would give for a sight of it. Some of these Beth-shemites, we may suppose, for that reason rejoiced to see the ark, (v. 13.) more than for the sake of the public. Yet this did not content them, they might see it, but they would go further, they would take off the covering, which, it is likely, was nailed or screwed on, and look into it; under pretence of seeing whether the Philistines had not taken the two tables out of it, or some way damaged them; but really to gratify a sinful curiosity of their own, which intruded into those things that God had thought fit to conceal from them. Note, It is a great affront to God, for vain men to pry into, and meddle with, the secret things which belong not to them, Deut. 29. Col. 2. 18. We were all ruined by an ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin, was, that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark. The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion, bred contempt and irreverence. Perhaps, they presumed upon their being priests, but the dignity of the ministerial office will be so far from excusing, that it will aggravate, a careless and irreverent treatment of holy things. They should, by their example, have taught others to keep their distance, and look upon the ark with a holy awe. Perhaps they presumed upon the kind entertainment they had given the ark, and the sacrifices they had now offered to welcome it home with; for this, they thought the ark was indebted to them, and they might be allowed to repay themselves with the satisfaction of looking into it. But let no man think that his service done for God, will justify him in any instance of disrespect or irreverence toward the things of God. Or, it may be, they presumed upon the present mean circumstances the ark was in, newly come out of captivity, and unsettled; now that it stood upon a cold stone, they thought they might make free with it; they should never have such another opportunity of being familiar with it. It is an offence to God, if we think meanly of his ordinances, because of the meanness of the manner of their administration. Had they looked with an understanding eye upon the ark, and not judged purely by outward appearance, they would have thought that the ark never shone with greater majesty than it did now; it had triumphed over the Philistines, and come out of its house of bondage (like Christ out of the grave) by its own power; had they considered this, they would not have looked into it thus, as a common chest.

2. Their punishment for this sin; *He smote the men of Beth-shemesh, many of them, with a great slaughter.* How jealous is God for the honour of his ark! He will not suffer it to be profaned; *be not deceived, God is not mocked.* They that will

not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice, and sink under the tokens of his displeasure. They that pry into what is forbidden, and come too near to holy fire, will find it is at their peril. *He smote fifty thousand and seventy men.* This account of their numbers smitten, is expressed in a very unusual manner in the original, which, beside the improbability that there should be so many guilty, and so many slain, occasions many learned men to question, whether we take the matter right. In the original it is, *He smote in (or among) the people, threescore and ten men; fifty thousand men.* The Syriac and Arabic read it, *five thousand and seventy men.* The Chaldees read it, *seventy men of the elders, and fifty thousand of the common people.* *Seventy men as valuable as fifty thousand,* so some, because they were priests. Some think the seventy men were the Beth-shemites that were slain for looking into the ark, and the fifty thousand were those that were slain by the ark, in the land of the Philistines. *He smote seventy men,* that is, *fifty out of a thousand;* which was one in twenty, a half decimation; so some understand it. The Septuagint read it much as we do, *he smote seventy men, and fifty thousand men.* Josephus says only seventy were smitten.

3. The terror that was struck upon the men of Beth-shemesh, by this severe stroke. They said, as well they might, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? v. 20.* Some think, it bespeaks their murmuring against God, as if he had dealt hardly and unjustly with them. Instead of quarrelling with themselves and their own sins, they quarrelled with God and his judgments; as *David was displeased,* in a case not much unlike, 2 Sam. 6. 8, 9. I rather think it bespeaks their awful and reverent adoration of God, as the Lord God, as a holy Lord God, and as a God before whom none is able to stand. Thus they infer from the tremendous judgment, "Who is able to stand before the God of the ark?" To stand before God to worship him, blessed be his name, is not impossible; we are through Christ invited, encouraged, and enabled to do it, but to stand before God, to contend with him, we are not able. Who is able to stand before the throne of his immediate glory, and look full upon it? 1 Tim. 6. 16. Who is able to stand before the tribunal of his inflexible justice, and make his part good there? Ps. 130. 3.—143. 2. Who is able to stand before the arm of his provoked power, and either resist or bear the strokes of it? Ps. 76. 7.

4. Their desire, hereupon, to be rid of the ark; they asked, *To whom shall he go up from us? v. 20.* They should rather have asked, "How may we make our peace with him, and recover his favour?" Mic. 6. 6, 7. But they begin to be as weary of the ark as the Philistines had been, whereas, if they had treated it with due reverence, who knows, but it might have taken up its residence among them, and they had all been blessed for the ark's sake? But thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners' consciences, they, instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put that from them, Jer. 6. 10. They sent messengers to the elders of Kirjath-jearim, a strong city further up in the country, and begged of them to come and fetch the ark up thither, v. 21. They durst not touch it, to bring it thither themselves, but stood aloof from it as a dangerous thing. Thus do foolish men run from one extreme to the other, from presumptuous boldness to slavish shiness. Kirjath-jearim, that is, *the city of woods,* belonging to Judah; (Josh. 15. 9. 60.) it lay in the way from Beth-shemesh to Shiloh; so that when they sent to them to fetch it, we may suppose they intended that from thence the elders

of Shiloh should fetch it, but God intended otherwise. Thus was it sent from town to town, and no care taken of it by the public; a sign that there was no king in Israel.

## CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The eclipsing of the glory of the ark, by its privacy in Kirjath-jearim for many years, v. 1, 2. II. The appearing of the glory of Samuel, in his public services for the good of Israel, to whom he was raised up to be a judge, and he was the last that bore that character. This chapter gives us all the account we have of him, when he was in the prime of his time; for what we had before, was in his childhood, (ch. 2. and 3.) what we have of him after, was in his old age, ch. 8. 1. We have him here active, 1. In the reformation of Israel from their idolatry, v. 3, 4. 2. In the reviving of religion among them, v. 5, 6. 3. In praying for them against the invading Philistines, (v. 7-9.) over whom, God, in answer to his prayer, gave them a glorious victory, v. 10, 11. 4. In erecting a thankful memorial of that victory, v. 12. 5. In the improvement of that victory, v. 13, 14. 6. In the administration of justice, v. 15-17. And these were the things for which God was preparing and designing him, in the early vouchsafement of his grace to him.

I. **AND** the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab, in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 2. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Here we must attend the ark to Kirjath-jearim, and then leave it there, to hear not a word more of it, till David fetched it thence, above forty years after, (1 Chron. 13. 6.) except once.

1. We are very willing to attend it thither, for the men of Beth-shemesh have by their own folly made that a burthen, which might have been a blessing; and gladly would we see it among those to whom it will be a *savour of life unto life*, for in every place where it has been of late, it has been a *savour of death unto death*.

Now, 1. The men of Kirjath-jearim cheerfully bring it among them; (v. 1.) *They came, at the first word, and fetched up the ark of the Lord*. Their neighbours, the Beth-shemites, were no better pleased to be rid of it, than they were to receive it, knowing very well that what slaughter the ark had made at Beth-shemesh, was not an act of arbitrary power, but necessary justice, and they that suffered by it, must blame themselves, not the ark; we may depend upon the word which God hath said, (Jer. 25. 6.) *Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt*. Note, The judgments of God on those who profane his ordinances, should not make us afraid of the ordinances, but of profaning them, and making an ill use of them.

2. They carefully provide for its decent entertainment among them; as a welcome guest, with true affection, and as an honourable guest, with respect and reverence. (1.) They provide a proper place to receive it. They had no public building to adorn with it, but they lodged it in the house of Abinadab, which stood upon the highest ground, and, probably, was the best house in their city; or, perhaps, the master of it was the most eminent man they had for piety, and best affected to the ark. The men of Beth-shemeth left it exposed upon a stone in the open field, and though it was a city of priests, none of them received it into his house; but the men of Kirjath-jearim, though common Israelites, gave it

house-room, and, no doubt, the best furnished room in the house to which it was brought. Note, [1.] God will find out a resting place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, yet the hearts of others shall be inclined to receive it. [2.] It is no new thing for God's ark to be thrust into a private house. Christ and his apostles preached from house to house, when they could not have public places at command. [3.] Sometimes priests are ashamed and outdone in religion by common Israelites. (2.) They provide a proper person to attend it; *They sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it*; not the father, either because he was aged and infirm, or because he had the affairs of his house and family to attend, from which they would not take him off; but the son, who, it is probable, was a very pious devout young man, and zealously affected toward the best things; his business was to keep the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched or looked into by too curious Israelites. He was to keep the room clean and decent, in which the ark was, that, though it was in an obscure place, it might not look like a neglected thing, which no man looked after. It does not appear that this Eleazar was of the tribe of Levi, much less of the house of Aaron, nor was it needful that he should, for there was no altar either for sacrifice or incense, only we may suppose that some devout Israelites would come and pray before the ark, and those that did so, he was there ready to attend and assist. For this purpose, they sanctified him, that is, by his own consent, they obliged him to make this his business, and to give a constant attendance to it; they set him apart for it in the name of all their citizens. This was irregular, but it was dispensed with, by reason of the present distress. When the ark is but newly come out of captivity, we cannot expect it to be of a sudden in its usual solemnity, but must take things as they are, and make the best of them.

II. Yet we are very loath to leave it here, wishing it well at Shiloh again, but that is made desolate, (Jer. 7. 14.) however, wishing it at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle and the altars are; but, it seems, it must lie by the way, for want of some public-spirited men, to bring it to its proper place.

1. The time of its continuance here was long, very long; above forty years it lay in these fields of the wood, a remote obscure private place, unfrequented and almost unregarded; (v. 2.) *The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long*, even till David fetched it thence. It was very strange, that, all the time that Samuel governed, the ark was never brought to its place in the holy of holies, an evidence of the decay of holy zeal among them. God suffered it to be so, to punish them for their neglect of the ark when it was in its place; and to show that the great stress which the institution laid upon the ark, was but typical of Christ, and those *good things to come, which cannot be moved*, Heb. 9. 23.—12. 27. It was a just reproach to the priests, that not one of their order was sanctified to keep the ark.

2. Twenty years of this time were passed, before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint read it, somewhat more clearly than we do; *And it was twenty years, and (that is, when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord*. So long the ark remained in obscurity, and the Israelites were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made an inquiry after it, what was become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God's special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement, as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily



can formal professors rest satisfied in a road of external performances, without any tokens of God's presence or acceptance. But at length they be-thought themselves, and began to lament after the Lord, stirred up to it, it is probable, by the preaching of Samuel, with which an extraordinary working of the Spirit of God set in. A general disposition to repentance and reformation now appears throughout all Israel, and they began to *look unto him whom they had slighted, and to mourn*, Zech. 12. 10. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this was a matter and time as remarkable as almost any we read of in scripture; and that that great conversion, Acts 2. and 3. is the only parallel to it. Note, (1.) Those that know how to value God's ordinances, cannot but reckon it a very lamentable thing to want them. (2.) True repentance and conversion begin in lamenting after the Lord; we must be sensible that by sin we have provoked him to withdraw, and are undone if we continue in a state of distance from him: and be restless till we have recovered his favour, and obtained his gracious returns. It was better with the Israelites, when they wanted the ark, and were lamenting after it, than when they had the ark, and were prying into it, or priding themselves in it. Better see people longing in the scarcity of the means of grace, than loathing in the abundance of them.

3. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, *then* put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. 4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. 5. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. 6. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured *it* out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

We may well wonder where Samuel was, and what he was doing, all this while, for we have not had him so much as named till now, since *ch.* 4. 1. Not as if he were unconcerned, but his labours among his people are not mentioned, till there appear the fruit of them. When he perceived that they began to *lament after the Lord*, he struck while the iron was hot, and two things he endeavoured to do for them, as a faithful servant of God, and a faithful friend to the Israel of God.

I. He endeavoured to separate between them and their idols, for *there* reformation must begin. He *spake to all the house of Israel*, (*v.* 3.) going, as it should seem, from place to place, an itinerant preacher; (for we find not that they were gathered together till *v.* 5.) and wherever he came, this was his exhortation, "*If you do indeed return to the Lord*, as you seem inclined to do, by your lamentations for your departure from him, and his from you, then know," 1. "That you must renounce and abandon your idols, *put away the strange gods*, for your God will admit no rival; put them away from you, each one for himself, nay, and put them *from among you*, do what you can, in your places, to rid them out of the country. Put away Baalim, the strange gods, and Ashtaroth the strange goddesses,"

for they had of them too. Or, Ashtaroth is particularly named, because it was the best beloved idol, and that which they were most wedded to. Note, True repentance strikes at the darling sin, and will, with a peculiar zeal and resolution, put away that; the sin which most *easily besets us*. 2. "That you must make a solemn business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration and a steadfast resolution, for both are included in *preparing the heart*, directing, disposing, establishing, the heart unto the Lord." 3. "That you must be entire for God, for him and no other, *serve him only*, else you do not serve him at all, so as to please him." 4. "That this is the only way, and a sure way, to prosperity and deliverance. Take this course, and *he will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines*; for it was because you forsook him and served other gods, that he delivered you into their hands." This was the purport of Samuel's preaching, and it had a wonderfully good effect; (*v.* 4.) *They put away Balaam and Ashtaroth*; not only quitted the worship of them, but destroyed their images, demolished their altars, and quite abandoned them; *What have we to do any more with idols?* Hos. 13. 8. Isa. 30. 22.

II. He endeavoured to engage them for ever to God and his service. Now that he had them in a good mind, he did all he could to keep them in it.

1. He summons all Israel, at least by their elders, as their representatives, to meet him at Mizpeh, (*v.* 5.) and there he promised to pray for them. And it was worth while for them to come from the remotest part of the country, to join with Samuel in seeking God's favour. Note, Ministers should pray for those to whom they preach, that God by his grace would make the preaching effectual. And when we come together in religious assemblies, we must remember, that it is as much our business there to join in public prayers, as it is to hear a sermon. He would pray for them, that, by the grace of God, they might be parted from their idols, and that then, by the providence of God, they might be delivered from the Philistines. Ministers would profit their people more, if they did but pray more for them.

2. They obey his summons, and not only come to the meeting, but conform to the intentions of it, and appear there very well disposed, *v.* 6. (1.) *They drew water, and poured it out before the Lord*; signifying, [1.] Their humiliation and contrition for sin; owning themselves as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; (2 Sam. 14. 14.) so mean, so miserable, before God, Ps. 22. 14. The Chaldee reads it, *They poured out their hearts in repentance before the Lord*. They wept rivers of tears, and sorrowed after a godly sort; for it was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. [2.] Their earnest prayers and supplications to God, for mercy. The soul is, in prayer, poured out before God, Ps. 62. 8. [3.] Their universal reformation; they thus expressed their willingness to part with all their sins, and to retain no more of the relish or savour of them than the vessel does of the water that is poured out of it. They were free and full in their confession, and fixed in their resolution to cast away from them *all their transgressions*. Israel is now *baptized from their idols*: so Dr. Lightfoot. [4.] Some think it signifies their joy in the hope of God's mercy, which Samuel had assured them of. This ceremony was used with that signification at the feast of tabernacles, John 7. 37, 38. and see Isa. 12. 3. Taking it in this sense, it must be read, *They drew water after they had fasted*. In the close of their humiliation they thus expressed their hope of pardon and reconciliation. (2.) *They fasted*, ab-stained from food, afflicted their souls; so express



ing repentance, and exciting devotion. (3.) They made a public confession, *We have sinned against the Lord*; so giving glory to God, and taking shame to themselves. And if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our God *faithful and just to forgive us our sins*.

3. Samuel judged them at that time in Mizpeh; that is, he assured them, in God's name, of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance, and that God was reconciled to them. It was a judgment of absolution. Or, he received informations against those that did not leave their idols, and proceeded against them according to law. Those that would not judge themselves, he judged. Or, now he settled courts of justice among them, and appointed the terms and circuits which he observed afterward, v. 16. Now he set those wheels a-going; and whereas, before, he acted only as a prophet, now, he began to act as a magistrate; to prevent their relapsing to those sins which now they seemed to have renounced.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard *it*, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered *it* for a burnt-offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. 10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. 11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until *they came* under Beth-ear. 12. Then Samuel took a stone, and set *it* between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Here,

I. The Philistines invaded Israel, (v. 7.) taking umbrage from that general meeting for repentance and prayer, as if it had been a rendezvous for war, and if so, they thought it prudence to keep the war out of their own country. They had no just cause for this suspicion; but those that seek to do mischief to others, will be forward to imagine that others design mischief to them. Now see here, 1. How evil sometimes seems to come out of good. The religious meeting of the Israelites at Mizpeh brought trouble upon them from the Philistines, which, perhaps, tempted them to wish they had staid at home, and to blame Samuel for calling them together. But we may be in God's way, and yet meet with distress; nay, when sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments on work to the utmost, to oppose and discourage them. But, 2. How good is, at length, brought out of that evil. Israel could never be threatened more seasonably than at this time, when

they were repenting and praying, nor could they have been better prepared to receive the enemy; nor could the Philistines have acted more impolitically for themselves, than to make war upon Israel at this time, when they were making their peace with God: but God permitted them to do it, that he might have an opportunity immediately of crowning his people's reformation with tokens of his favour, and of confirming the words of his messenger, who had assured them that, if they repented, God would *deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines*. Thus he makes man's wrath to praise him, and serves the purposes of his grace to his people, even by the malicious designs of their enemies against them, Mic. 4. 11, 12.

II. Israel cleaves close to Samuel, as their best friend, under God, in this distress, though he was no military man, nor ever celebrated as a mighty man of valour; yet, being afraid of the Philistines, for whom they thought themselves an unequal match, they engaged Samuel's prayers for them; (v. 8.) *Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us*. They were here unarmed, unprepared for war, come together to fast and pray, not to fight; prayers and tears therefore being all the weapons many of them are now furnished with, to these they have recourse. And knowing Samuel to have a great interest in heaven, they earnestly beg of him to improve it for them. They had reason to expect it, because he had promised to *pray for them*, (v. 5.) had promised them deliverance from the Philistines; (v. 3.) and they had been observant of him, in all that which he had spoken to them from the Lord. Thus they who sincerely submit to Christ, as their Lawgiver and Judge, need not doubt of their interest in his intercession. They were very solicitous that Samuel should not cease to pray for them: what military preparations were to be made, they would undertake them, but let him continue instant in prayer; perhaps remembering, that when Moses did but let down his hand ever so little, Amalek prevailed. O what a comfort it is to all believers, that our great Intercessor above never ceases, is never silent, for he *always appears in the presence of God for us!*

III. Samuel intercedes with God for them, and does it *by sacrifice*, v. 9. He took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering, a whole burnt-offering, to the Lord, and while the sacrifice was in burning, with the smoke of it his prayers ascended up to heaven for Israel. Observe, 1. He made intercession with a sacrifice. Christ intercedes in the virtue of his satisfaction, and in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great oblation, depending upon that for assistance and acceptance. Samuel's sacrifice without his prayer had been an empty shadow, his prayer without the sacrifice had not been so prevalent, but both together teach us, what great things we may expect from God, in answer to those prayers which are made with faith in Christ's sacrifice. 2. It was a burnt-offering, which was offered purely for the glory of God, so intimating, that the great plea he relied on in this prayer, was taken from the honour of God. "Lord, help thy people now, for thy name's sake." When we endeavour to give glory to God, we may hope he will, in answer to our prayers, work for his own glory. 3. It was but one sucking lamb that he offered; for it is the integrity and intention of the heart that God looks at, more than the bulk or number of the offerings. The one lamb (typifying the Lamb of God) was more acceptable than thousands of rams or bullocks would have been without faith and prayer. Samuel was no priest, but he was a Levite and a prophet: the case was extraordinary, and what he did was by special direction, and therefore was accepted of God. And justly was this reproach put

upon the priests, because they had corrupted themselves.

IV. God gave a gracious answer to Samuel's prayer; (*v. 9.*) *The Lord heard him.* He was himself a *Samuel*, asked of God, and many a Samuel, many a mercy in answer to prayer, God gave him. Sons of prayer should be famous for praying, as *Samuel was among them that call upon his name*, Ps. 99. 6. The answer was a real answer. The Philistines were discomfited, (*v. 10, 11.*) totally routed, and that in such a manner as highly magnified the prayer of Samuel, the power of God, and the valour of Israel. 1. The prayer of Samuel was honoured, for at the very time when he was offering up his sacrifice, and his prayer with it, the battle began, and turned immediately against the Philistines. Thus *while he was yet speaking God heard*, and answered *in thunder*, Isa. 65. 24. God showed that it was Samuel's prayer and sacrifice that he had respect to, and hereby let Israel know that as in a former engagement with the Philistines he had justly chastised their presumptuous confidence in the presence of the ark, on the shoulders of two profane priests, so now he graciously accepted their humble dependence upon the prayer of faith, from the mouth and heart of a pious prophet. 2. The power of God was greatly honoured; for he took the work into his own hand, and discomfited them, not with great hail-stones, which would kill them, (as Josh. 10. 11.) but with a great thunder which frightened them, and put them into such terror and consternation that they fainted away, and became a very easy prey to the sword of Israel, before whom, being thus confounded, they were smitten. Josephus adds, that the earth quaked under them when first they made the onset, and in many places, opened and swallowed them up; and that, beside the terror of the thunder, their faces and hands were burnt with lightning, which obliged them to shift for themselves by flight. And being thus driven to their heels by the immediate hand of God, (whom they feared not so much as they had feared his ark, *ch. 4. 7.*) then, 3. Honour was put upon the hosts of Israel; they were made use of for the completing of the victory, and had the pleasure of triumphing over their oppressors: *they pursued the Philistines, and smote them.* How soon did they find the benefit of their repentance, and reformation, and return to God! Now that they have thus engaged him for them, none of their enemies can stand before them.

V. Samuel erected a thankful memorial of this victory, to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Israel; (*v. 12.*) he set up an *Eben-ezer*, *the stone of help*. If ever the people's hard hearts should lose the impressions of this providence, this stone would either revive the remembrance of it, and make them thankful, or remain a standing witness against them for their unthankfulness. 1. The place where this memorial was set up, was the same, where twenty years before, the Israelites were smitten before the Philistines, for that was beside *Eben-ezer*, *ch. 4. 1.* The sin which procured that defeat formerly, being pardoned upon their repentance, the pardon was sealed by this glorious victory in the very same place where they then suffered loss; see Hos. 1. 10. 2. Samuel himself took care to set up this monument; he had been instrumental by prayer to obtain the mercy, and therefore he thought himself in a special manner obliged to make this grateful acknowledgment of it. 3. The reason he gives for the name is, *Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*: in which he speaks thankfully of what was past, giving the glory of the victory to God only, who had added this to all his former favours; and yet he speaks somewhat doubtfully for the future: "*Hitherto things have done well, but what God may yet*

do with us, we know not, *that* we refer to him; but let us praise him for what he *has* done." Note, The beginnings of mercy and deliverance are to be acknowledged by us with thankfulness so far as they go, though they be not completely finished; nay though the issue seem uncertain. *Having obtained help from God, I continue hitherto*, says blessed Paul. Act 26. 22.

13. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. 15. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Beth-el, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. 17. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house: and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

We have here a short account of the further good services that Samuel did to Israel. Having parted them from their idols, and brought them home to their God, he had put them into a capacity of receiving further benefits by his ministry. Having prevailed in that, he becomes, in other instances, a great blessing to them; yet writing it himself, he is brief in the relation. We are not told here, but it appears, 2 Chron. 35. 18, that in the days of Samuel the prophet, the people of Israel kept the ordinance of the passover with more than ordinary devotion, notwithstanding the distance of the ark and the desolations of Shiloh. Many good offices, no doubt, he did for Israel; but here we are only told how instrumental he was,

1. In securing the public peace; (*v. 13.*) *In his days the Philistines came no more into the coast of Israel*, made no inroads or incursions upon them, perceiving that God now fought for Israel, and that his hand was against the Philistines; this kept them in awe, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Samson, but by the power of prayer to God, and carrying on a work of reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.

2. In recovering the public rights, *v. 14.* By his influence, Israel had the courage to demand the cities which the Philistines had unjustly taken from them, and had long detained; and the Philistines not daring to contend with one that had so great an interest in heaven, tamely yielded to the demand, and restored (some think) even Ekron and Gath, two of their capital cities, though afterward they retook them; others think, some small towns that lay between Ekron and Gath, which were forced out of the Philistines' hands. This they got by their reformation and religion; they got ground of their enemies, and got forward in their affairs. It is added, *There was peace between Israel and the Amorites*, that is, the Canaanites, the remains of the natives. Not that Israel made any league with them, but that they were quiet; and not so mischievous to Israel as they had sometimes been.

Thus when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him, and give him no disturbance, Prov. 16. 7.

3. In administering public justice; (v. 15, 16.) *He judged Israel*: as a prophet, he taught them their duty, and reproved them for their sins, for that is called *judging*, Ezek. 20. 4.—22. 2. Moses judged Israel, when he made them know the statutes of God, and his laws; (Exod. 18. 16.) and thus Samuel judged them to the last, even after Saul was made king: so he promised them then, when Saul was inaugurated, ch. 12. 23, *I will not cease to teach you the good and right way*. As a magistrate, he received appeals from the inferior courts, and gave judgment upon them; tried causes, and determined them, tried prisoners, and acquitted or condemned them, according to the law. This he did all his days, till he grew old and past service, and resigned to Saul; and afterward he exercised authority, when application was made to him; nay he judged even Agag, and Saul himself. But when he was in his prime, he rode the circuit, for the convenience of the country, at least of that part of it which lay most under his influence. He kept courts at Beth-el, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, all in the tribe of Benjamin; but his constant residence was at Ramah, his father's city, and there he judged Israel, whither they resorted to him from all parts with their complaints, v. 17.

4. In keeping up the public exercises of religion; for there, where he lived, he built an altar to the Lord, not in contempt of the altar that was at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle was; but divine justice having laid Shiloh waste, and no other place being yet chosen for them to bring their offerings to, (Dent. 12. 11.) he looked upon the law which confined them to one place, to be for the present suspended, and therefore, being a prophet, and under divine direction, he did as the patriarchs did, he built an altar where he lived, both for the use of his own family, and for the good of the country that resorted to it. Great men should use their wealth, power, and interest, for the keeping up of religion in the places where they live.

## CHAP. VIII.

Things went so very well with Israel, in the chapter before, under Samuel's administration, that, methinks, it is pity to find him so quickly, as we do in this chapter, old, and going off, and things working towards a revolution. But so it is; Israel's good days seldom continue long. We have here, I. Samuel decaying, v. 1. II. His sons degenerating, v. 2, 3. III. Israel discontented with the present government, and anxious to see a change. For, 1. They petition Samuel to set a king over them, v. 4, 5. 2. Samuel brings the matter to God, v. 6. 3. God directs him what answer to give them, by way of reproof, (v. 7, 8.) and by way of remonstrance, setting forth the consequences of a change of the government, and how uneasy they would soon be under it, v. 9.—18. 4. They insist upon their petition, v. 19, 20. 5. Samuel promises them, from God, that they shall shortly be gratified, v. 21, 22. Thus hard is it for people to know when they are well off.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2. Now the name of his first-born was Joel, and the name of his second Abiah: *they were judges in Beer-sheba*. 3. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Two sad things we find here, but not strange things

1. A good and useful man growing old and unfit for service, v. 1. *Samuel was old*, and could not judge Israel as he had done. He is not reckoned to be past sixty years of age now, perhaps not so much; but he was a man betimes, was full of thoughts and cares when he was a child, which, perhaps, hastened the infirmities of age upon him: the fruits that are first ripe, keep the worst. He had spent his strength and spirits in the fatigue of public business, and now, if he think to shake himself as at other times, he finds he is mistaken, old age has cut his hair. Those that are in the prime of their time, ought to be busy in doing the work of life; for as they go into years, they will find themselves less disposed to it, and less able for it.

2. The children of a good man going to naught, and not treading in his steps. Samuel had given his sons so good an education, and they had given him such good hopes of their doing well, and gained such a reputation in Israel, that he made them judges, assistants to him awhile, and afterward deputies under him at Beer-sheba, which lay remote from Ramah, v. 2. Probably, the southern counties petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes: we have reason to think that Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons, (he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, any more than Gideon had,) but because, for aught that yet appeared, they were men very fit for the trust; and none so proper to ease the aged judge, and take some of the burthen off him, as (*cæteris paribus—other things being equal*) his own sons, who, no doubt, were respected for their good father's sake, and, having such an advantage at setting out, might soon have been great, if they had been but good. But, alas! *his sons walked not in his ways*; (v. 3.) and when their character was the reverse of his, their relation to so good a man, which otherwise had been their honour, was really their disgrace. *Degeneranti genus opprobrium—A good extraction is a reproach to him that degenerates from it*. Note, Those that have the most grace themselves, cannot give grace to their children. It has often been the grief of good men, to see their posterity, instead of treading in their steps, trampling upon them, and, as Job speaks, *marring their path*. Nay, many that have begun well, promised fair, and set out in the right paths, so that their parents and friends have had great hopes of them, yet afterward have turned aside to by-paths, and been the grief of those of whom they should have been the joy. When Samuel's sons were made judges, and settled at a distance from him, then they discovered themselves. Thus, (1.) Many that have been well educated, and have conducted themselves well while they were under their parents' eye, when they have gone abroad into the world, and set up for themselves, have proved bad. Let none therefore be secure, either of themselves or their's, but depend on divine grace. (2.) Many that have done well in a state of meanness and subjection, have been spoiled by preferment and power. Honours change men's minds, and, too often, for the worse. It does not appear that Samuel's sons were so profane and vicious as Eli's sons; but, whatever they were in other respects, they were corrupt judges, *they turned aside after lucre, after the mammon of unrighteousness*, so the Chaldee reads it. Note, *The love of money is the root of all evil*. It is pernicious in any, but especially in judges. Samuel had taken no bribes, (ch. 12. 3.) but his sons did, though, no doubt, he warned them against it when he made them judges; and then they perverted judgment, in determining controversies, had an eye to the bribe, not to the law, and inquired who bid

highest, not who had right on his side. It is sad with a people, when the public justice that should do them right, being perverted, does them the greatest wrong.

4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. 5. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 6. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 7. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 8. According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods; so do they also unto thee. 9. Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. 11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you; He will take your sons, and appoint *them* for himself, for his chariots, and *to be* his horsemen; and *some* shall run before his chariots. 12. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and *will set them* to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13. And he will take your daughters *to be* confectionaries, and *to be* cooks, and *to be* bakers. 14. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, *even the best of them*, and give *them* to his servants. 15. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put *them* to his work. 17. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 19. Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20. That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 21. And Samuel

heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. 22. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

We have here the starting of a matter perfectly new and surprising, which was, the setting up of kingly government in Israel. Perhaps the thing had been often talked of among them by these that were given to change, and affected that which looked great; but we do not find that it was ever till now publicly proposed and debated. Abimelech was little better than a titular king, though he is said to reign over Israel; (Judges 9. 22.) and perhaps his fall had for a great while rendered the title of king odious in Israel, as that of Tarquinius did among the Romans; but if it had, by this time the odium was worn off, and some bold steps are here taken toward so great a revolution as that amounted to.

Here is,

I. The address of the elders of Samuel in this matter, *v. 4, 5. They gathered themselves together*, by common consent, and not in a riotous tumultuous manner, but with respect due to his character: they came to him to his house at Ramah with their address, which contained,

1. A remonstrance of their grievances; in short, *Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.* Many a fairer occasion that people had had to ask a king, when they were oppressed by their neighbours, or embroiled at home, for want of a *king in Israel*; a small thing will serve factious spirits for a colour to desire a change. (1.) It was true that Samuel was old; but if that made him less able to ride the circuit, and sit long on the bench, yet it made him the more wise and experienced, and, upon that account, the fitter to rule. If he was old, was he not grown old in their service? And it was very unkind, ungrateful, nay, unjust, to cast him off when he was old, who had spent his days in doing them good. God had saved his youth from being despicable, (*ch. 3. 20.*) yet they make his old age so, which should have been counted worthy of double honour. If old people be upbraided with their infirmities, and laid aside for them, let them not think it strange; Samuel himself was so. (2.) It was true that his sons did not walk in his ways; the more was his grief, but they could not say it was his fault; he had not, like Eli, indulged them in their badness, but was ready to receive complaints against them. And if that had been the thing desired, we may well suppose, upon the making out of the charge of bribery against them, he would have superseded their commissions and punished them. But this would not content the elders of Israel, they had another project in their head.

2. A petition for the redress of these grievances, by setting a king over them: *Make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* Thus far it was well, that they did not rise up in rebellion against Samuel and set up a king for themselves, *vi et armis—by force*; but they applied themselves to Samuel, God's prophet, and humbly begged of him to do it. But it appears by what follows, that it was a bad motion, and ill made, and was displeasing to God. God designed them a king, a man after his own heart, when Samuel was dead; but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now that Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God *so nigh unto*

them as they had, Deut. 4. 7. But this would not serve, they must have a king to judge them with external pomp and power, like *all the nations*. A poor prophet in a mantle, though conversant in the visions of the Almighty, looked mean in their eyes, who judged by outward appearance; but a king in a purple robe, with his guards and officers of state, would look great; and such a one they must have. They knew it was in vain to court Samuel to take upon him the title and dignity of a king, but he must appoint them one. They do not say, "Give us a king that is wise and good, and will judge better than thy sons do," but, "Give us a king," any body that will but make a figure. Thus foolishly did they forsake their own mercies, and, under pretence of advancing the dignity of their nation to that of their neighbours, did really thrust themselves down from their own excellency, and profane their crown by *casting it to the ground*.

II. Samuel's resentment of this address, v. 6. Let us see how he took it: 1. It cut him to the heart. Probably, it was a surprise to him, and he had not any intimation before of their design, which made it the more grievous. The thing displeased Samuel; not when they upbraided him with his own infirmities, and his children's irregularities; he could patiently bear what reflected on himself and his own family, but it *displeased him when they said, Give us a king to judge us*, because that reflected upon God and his honour. 2. It drove him to his knees; he gave them no answer, for the present, but he took some time to consider of what they proposed, and prayed unto the Lord for direction what to do, spreading the case before him, and leaving it with him, and so making himself easy. Samuel was a man much in prayer, and we are encouraged *in every thing to make our requests known to God*, Phil. 4. 6. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to show God our trouble, and he gives us leave to be humbly free with him.

III. The instruction God gave him concerning this matter. They that in straits seek to God, shall find him nigh unto them, and ready to direct them. He tells him,

1. That which would be an allay to his displeasure. Samuel was much disturbed at the motion, it troubled him greatly to see his prophetic office thus slighted, and all the good turns he had done to Israel, thus ungratefully returned; but God tells him, he must not think it either hard or strange. (1.) He must not think it hard, that they had put this slight upon him, for they had herein put a slight upon God himself; "*They have not rejected thee only, but they have rejected me; I share with thee in the affront*," v. 7. Note, If God interest himself in the indignities that are done us, and the contempts that are put upon us, we may well afford to bear them patiently; nor need we think the worse of ourselves, if *for his sake we bear reproach*, (Ps. 69. 7.) but rather rejoice, and count it an honour, Col. 1. 24. Samuel must not complain that they were weary of his government, though just and gentle, for really they were weary of God's government, that was it they disliked; *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them*. God reigns over the heathen, (Ps. 47. 8.) over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner than ever any government was, a Theocracy, a divine government, their judges had their call and commission immediately from God, the affairs of their nation were under his peculiar conduct. As the constitution, so the administration, of their government, was by, *Thus saith the Lord*; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above any thing, so long as they kept in with God; they were indeed so

much the more exposed to calamities, if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations could, which, perhaps, was the true reason why they desired to stand upon the same terms with God that other nations did. (2.) He must not think it strange, nor marvel at the matter, for they do as they always have done, (v. 8.) *According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, so do they unto thee*. They had at first been so very respectful and obsequious to Samuel, that he began to hope they were cured of their old stubborn disposition; but now he found himself deceived in them, and must not be surprised at it. They had always been rude to their governors, witness Moses and Aaron; nay, *They have forsaken me, and served other gods*; the greatness of their crime, in affecting new gods, may make this crime, of affecting new governors, seem little. Samuel might expect they would deal treacherously, for they were *called transgressors from the womb*, Isa. 48. 8. This had been *their manner from their youth up*, Jer. 22. 21.

2. He tells him that which would be an answer to their demand. Samuel would not have known what to say, if God had not instructed him. Should he oppose the motion, it would bespeak a greater fondness of power and dominion than did become a prophet, and an indulgence of his sons. Should he yield to the motion, it would look like the betraying of his trust, and he would become accessory to all the bad consequences of a change. Aaron sinned in gratifying the people, when they said, *Make us gods*; he dares not therefore comply with them, when they say, *Make us a king*, but he gives them, with assurance, the answer God sent them.

(1.) He must tell them, that *they shall have a king*. *Hearken to the voice of the people*, v. 7. and again, v. 9. Not that God was pleased with their request, but as sometimes he crosses us, in love, so at other times he gratifies us, in wrath; he did so here. When they said, *Give us a king, and princes, he gave them a king in his anger*. See Hos. 13. 10, 11, as he gave quails, Ps. 106. 15.—78. 29. God bade Samuel humour them in this matter, [1.] That they might be beaten with their own rod, and might feel, to their cost, the difference between his government, and the government of a king; see 2 Chron. 12. 8. It soon appeared, how much worse their condition was, in all respects, under Saul, than it had been under Samuel. [2.] To prevent something worse. If they were not gratified, they would either rise in rebellion against Samuel, or universally revolt from their religion, and admit the gods of the nations, that they might have kings like them. Rather than so, let them have a king. [3.] God knows how to bring glory to himself, out of it, and serve his own wise purposes, even by their foolish counsels.

(2.) But he must tell them withal, that when they have a king, they will soon have enough of him, and will, when it is too late, repent of their choice. This he must *protest solemnly to them*; (v. 9.) that, if they would have a king to rule them, as the eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceedingly heavy. They looked only at the pomp and magnificence of a king, and thought that would make their nation great and considerable among its neighbours, and would strike a terror upon their enemies; but he must bid them consider, how they would like to bear the charges of that pomp, and how they would endure that arbitrary power, which the neighbouring kings assumed. Note, These that set their hearts inordinately upon any thing in this world, for the moderating of their desires, ought to consider the inconveniences, as well as conveniences, that will attend it,

and to set the one over against the other in their thoughts. Those that submit themselves to the government of the world and the flesh, are told plainly, what hard masters they are, and what a tyranny the dominion of sin is; and yet they will exchange God's government for it.

IV. Samuel's faithful delivery of God's mind to them; (v. 10.) He *told them all the words of the Lord*, how ill he resented it; that he construed it into a rejecting of him, and compared it with their serving other gods. That he would grant their request, if they insisted on it; but withal had ordered him to represent to them the certain consequences of their choice, that they would be such as, if they had any reason left them, and would allow themselves to consult their own interest, would make them withdraw their petition, and beg to continue as they were. Accordingly, he lays before them, very particularly, what would be, not the right of a king in general, but the *manner of the king that should reign over them*, according to the pattern of the nations, v. 11. Samuel does not speak (as Bishop Patrick expounds it) of a just and honest right of a king to do these things, for his right is quite otherwise described in that part of Moses's law which concerns the king's duty, but such a right as the kings of the nations had then acquired. *This shall be the manner of the king*, that is, 1. "Thus he must support his dignity, at the expense of that which is dearest to you." 2. "Thus he will abuse his power, as those that have power are apt to do; and having the militia in his hand, you will be under the necessity of submitting to him."

If they will have such a king as the nations have, let them consider,

(1.) That a king must have a great retinue, abundance of servants to wait on him, groomes to look after his chariots and horses, gentlemen to ride about with him, and footmen to run before his chariots. This is the chief grandeur of princes, and the imaginary glory of great men, to have a multitude of attendants. And whence must he have those? "Why, he will take your sons, who are free born, have a liberal education, and whom you now have at your own disposal, and will *appoint them for himself*, v. 11. They must wait upon him, and be at his beck; they that used to work for their parents and themselves, must work for him, *ear his ground, and reap his harvest*, (v. 12.) and count it their preferment too," v. 16. This would be a great change.

(2.) "He must keep a great table; he will not be content to dine with his neighbours upon a sacrifice, as Samuel used to do, (ch. 9. 13.) but he must have variety of dainty dishes, forced-meats, and sweet-meats, and delicate sauces; and who must prepare him these? Why, he will take your daughters, the most ingenious and handy of them, whom you hoped to prefer to houses and tables of their own, and, whether you be willing or no, they must be his confectionaries, and cooks, and bakers, and the like."

(3.) "He must needs have a standing army, for guards and garrisons; and your sons, instead of being elders of your cities, and living in quiet and honour at home, must be captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and must be disposed of at the pleasure of the sovereign."

(4.) "You may expect that he will have great favourites, whom, having dignified and ennobled, he must enrich, and give them estates suitable to their honour; and which way can he do that, but out of your inheritances? v. 14, *He will take your fields and vineyards*, which descended to you from your ancestors, and which you hoped to have left to your posterity after you, *even the best of them*; and will not only take them to himself, (you could bear

that the better,) but he will *give them to his servants*, who will be your masters, and bear rule over that for which you have laboured. How will you like that?"

(5.) "He must have great revenues to maintain his grandeur and power with; and whence must he have them but from you? He will take the tenth of the fruits of your ground, (v. 15.) and your cattle, v. 17. You think the tenths, the double tenths, which the law of God has appointed for the support of the church, grievous enough, and grudge the payment of them; but, if you have a king, there must issue another tenth out of your estates, which will be levied with more rigour, for the support of the royal dignity. Consider the expense with the magnificence, and whether it will quit cost."

These would be their grievances; and, [1.] They would have none but God to complain to. Once they complained to the prince himself, and were answered, according to the manner of the king, *Your yoke is heavy, and I will add to it*, 1 Kings 12. 11. [2.] When they complained to God, he *would not hear them*; (v. 18.) nor could they expect that he should, both because they had been deaf to his calls and admonitions, and this trouble, in particular, they had brought upon themselves, by rejecting him, and would not believe, when he told them what would come of it. Note, When we bring ourselves into distress by our own irregular desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer, and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be not better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

V. The people's obstinacy in their demand, v. 19, 20. One would think such a representation of the consequences, as this was, coming from God himself, who can neither deceive by his word, nor be deceived in his knowledge, should have prevailed with them to waive their request: but their hearts were upon it, right or wrong, good or evil; "*We will have a king over us*, whatever God or Samuel say to the contrary; we will have a king, whatever it costs us, and whatever inconvenience we bring upon ourselves or our posterity by it." See their folly. 1. They were quite deaf to reason, and blind to their own interest. They could not answer Samuel's arguments against it, nor deny the force of them, and yet they grow more violent in their request, and more insolent. Before, it was, "*Pray, make us a king*;" now it is, "*Nay, but we will have a king*; yea, that we will, because we will; nor will we bear to have any thing said against it." See the absurdity of inordinate desires, and how they rob men of their reason. They could not stay God's time. God had intimated to them in the law, that, in due time, Israel should have a king, (Deut. 17. 14, 15.) and, perhaps, they had some intimation that the time was at hand; but they are all in haste. "We, in our day, will have this king over us." Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer, they had had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul had been prevented. Sudden resolves and hasty desires make work for a long and leisurely repentance. 3. That which they aimed at in desiring a king, was, not only as before, that they might be like the nations, and levelled with them, above whom God had so far advanced them; but that they might have one to judge them, and to go out before them when they took the field, and to fight their battles. Foolish people, and unwise! Could they ever desire a battle better fought for them than the last was, by Samuel's prayer, and God's thunder? ch. 7. 10. Was victory hereby too sure to them? And were they fond of trying the chance of war at the same uncertainty that others did? So sick, it seems, were they of their privileges,



and what was the issue? Their first king was slain in battle, which none of their judges ever were; so was Josiah, one of the last and best.

VI. The dismissing of them, with an intimation that very shortly they should have what they asked.

1. *Samuel rehearsed all their words in the ears of the Lord, v. 21.* Not but that God perfectly knew it, without Samuel's report; but thus he dealt faithfully between God and Israel, as a prophet, returning the answer to him that sent him; and thus he waited on God for further direction. God is fully acquainted with the state of the case we are in care and doubt about, but he will know it from us. His rehearsing it *in the ears of the Lord*, intimates that it was done in private; for the people were not disposed to join with him in prayer to God for direction in this matter; also it bespeaks a holy familiarity, to which God graciously admits his people; they speak in the ears of the Lord, as one friend whispers with another; their communion with God is *meat they have to eat, which the world knows not of*, John 4. 32. 2. God gave direction that they should have a king since they were so inordinately set upon it; (*v. 22.*) "*Make them a king*, and let them make the best of him, and thank themselves, if that very pomp and power which they are so eager to see their sovereign in, be their plague and burthen. *So he gave them up to their own hearts' lust.* Samuel told them this, but sent them home for the present, *every man to his city*; for the designation of the person must be left to God, they had now no more to do. When God saw fit to notify the choice to Samuel, they should hear further from him; in the mean time let them keep the peace, and expect the issue.

## CHAP. IX.

Samuel had promised Israel, from God, that they should have a king; it is strange that the next news is not of candidates setting up for the government, making an interest in the people, or recommending themselves to Samuel, and, by him, to God, to be put in nomination. Why does not the prince of the tribe of Judah, whoever he is, look about him now, remembering Jacob's entail of the sceptre on that tribe? Is there never a bold aspiring man in Israel, to say, "I will be king, if God will choose me?" No, none appears; whether it is owing to a culpable mean spiritedness, or a laudable humility, I know not; but sure it is what can scarcely be paralleled in the history of any kingdom; a crown, such a crown, set up, and nobody bids for it. Most governments began in the ambition of the prince to rule, but Israel's in the ambition of the people to be ruled. Had any of those elders which petitioned for a king, afterward petitioned to be a king, I should have suspected that person's ambition to have been at the bottom of the motion; but now, (let them have the praise of what was good in them,) it was not so, God having in the law undertaken to choose their king, (*Deut. 17. 15.*) they all sit still, till they hear from heaven, and that they do in this chapter, which begins the story of Saul, their first king, and, by strange steps of Providence, brings him to Samuel to be anointed privately, and so to be prepared for an election by lot, and a public commendation to the people: which follows in the next chapter. Here is, I. A short account of Saul's parentage and person, v. 1, 2. II. A large and particular account of the bringing of him to Samuel, to whom he had been before altogether a stranger. 1. God, by revelation, had bid Samuel expect him, v. 15, 16. 2. God, by providence, led him to Samuel. (1.) Being sent to seek his father's asses, he was at a loss, v. 3. . 5. (2.) By the advice of his servant, he determined to consult Samuel, v. 6. . 10. (3.) By the direction of the young maidens, he found him out, v. 11. . 14. (4.) Samuel, being informed of God concerning him, (*v. 17.*) treated him with respect in the gate, (*v. 18. . 21.*) in the dining room, (*v. 22. . 24.*) and, at length in private, where he prepared him to hear the surprising news, that he must be king, v. 25. . 27. And these beginnings had been very hopeful and promising, if it had not been that the sin of the people was the spring of this great affair.

1. **N**OW there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people.

We are here told,

1. What a good family Saul was of, v. 1. He was of the tribe of Benjamin; so was the New Testament Saul, who also was called *Paul*, and he mentions it as his honour, for Benjamin was a favourite, Rom. 11. 1. Phil. 3. 5. That tribe had been reduced to a very small number by the fatal war with Gibeah, and much ado there was to provide wives for those six hundred men that were the poor remains of it out of that diminished tribe, which is here called, with good reason, *the smallest of the tribes of Israel, v. 21.* Saul sprang as a root out of a dry ground. That tribe, though fewest in number, was first in dignity, *God giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked*, 1 Cor. 12. 24. His father was Kish, *a mighty man of power*, or, as the margin reads it, *in substance*; in spirit stout, in body strong, in estate wealthy. The whole lot of the tribe of Benjamin coming to be distributed among six hundred men, we may suppose their inheritances were much larger than their's who were of other tribes; an advantage which somewhat helped to balance the disadvantage of the smallness of their number.

2. What a good figure Saul made, v. 2. No mention is here made of his wisdom or virtue, his learning or piety, or any of the accomplishments of his mind, but that he was a tall, proper, handsome man, that had a good face, a good shape, and a good presence, graceful and well proportioned; *among all the children of Israel, there was not a goodlier person than he*; and, as if nature had marked him for pre-eminence and superiority, he was taller, by the head and shoulders, than any of the people, the fitter to be a match for the giants of Gath, the champions of the Philistines. When God chose a king after his own heart, he pitched upon one that was not at all remarkable for the height of his stature, or any thing in his countenance, but the innocence and sweetness that appeared there, *ch. 16. 7, 12.* But when he chose a king after the people's heart, who aimed at nothing so much as stateliness and grandeur, he pitched upon this huge tall man, who, if he had no other good qualities, yet would look great. It does not appear that he excelled in strength, so much as he did in stature; Samson did, and him they slighted, bound, and betrayed into the hands of the Philistines; justly therefore are they now put off with one, who, though of uncommon height, is weak as other men. They would have a king like the nations, and the nations commonly chose portly men for their kings.

3. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost: and Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. 4. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and *there they were* not;

and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found *them* not. 5. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that *was* with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave *caring* for the asses, and take thought for us. 6. And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now, let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go. 7. Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, *if* we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and *there is* not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we? 8. And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver; *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 9. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is* now called a Prophet, was beforetime called a Seer.) 10. Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.

Here is,

I. A great man rising from small beginnings. It does not appear that Saul had any preferment at all, or was in any post of honour or trust, till he was chosen king of Israel. Most that are advanced, rise gradually; but Saul, from the level with his neighbours, stepped at once into the throne, according to that of Hannah. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, ch. 2. 8. Saul, it should seem, though he was himself married, and had children grown up, yet lived in his father's house, and was subject to him. Promotion comes not by chance or human probabilities, but God is the Judge.

II. A great event rising from small occurrences. How low does the history begin! Begin to trace Saul to the crown, we find him first employed as meanly as any we meet with called out to preferment.

1. Saul's father sends him with one of his servants, to seek some asses that he had lost. It may be, they had no way then to give public notice of such a number of asses strayed or stolen out of the grounds of Kish the Benjamite. A very good law they had to oblige men to bring back an ox or an ass that went astray, but it is to be feared that was, as other good laws, neglected and forgotten. It is easy to observe here, that they who have, must expect to lose; that it is wisdom to look after what is lost; that no man should think it below him to know the state of his flocks; that children should be forward to serve their parents' interests; Saul readily went to *seek his father's asses*, v. 3, 4. His taking care of the asses is to be ascribed, not so much to the humility of his spirit, as to the plainness and simplicity of those times. But his obedience to his father in it, was very commendable. *Seekest thou a man diligent in his business*, and dutiful to his superiors, willing to stoop, and willing to take pains? He does, as Saul, stand fair for preferment. The

servant of Kish would be faithful only as a servant, but Saul as a son, in his own business, and therefore he sent him with him. Saul and his servant travelled far on foot, it is likely, in quest of the asses, but in vain, they found them not. He missed of what he sought, but had no reason to complain of the disappointment, for he met with the kingdom, which he never dreamed of.

2. When he could not find them, he determined to return to his father, (v. 5.) in consideration of his father's tender concern for him; being apprehensive, that if they stayed out any longer, his aged father would begin to fear, as Jacob concerning Joseph, that an evil beast had devoured them, or some mischief had befallen them; "He will *leave caring for the asses*, as much as he was in care about them, and *will take thought for us*." Children should take care that they do nothing to grieve or frighten their parents, but be tender of their tenderness.

3. His servant moved, (for it should seem he had more religion in him than his master,) that since they were now at Ramah, they should call on Samuel, and take his advice in this important affair. Observe here,

(1.) They were close by the city where Samuel lived, and that put it into their heads to consult him; (v. 6.) *There is in this city a man of God*. Note, Wherever we are, we should improve our opportunities of acquainting ourselves with those that are wise and good. But there are many that will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom.

(2.) The servant spoke very respectfully concerning Samuel, though he had no personal knowledge of him, but by common fame only; *He is a man of God, and an honourable man*. Note, Men of God are honourable men, and should be so in our eyes. Acquaintance with the things of God, and serviceableness to the kingdom of God, put true honour upon men, and make them great. This was the honour of Samuel, as a man of God, that *all he saith, comes surely to pass*. This was observed concerning him, when he was a young prophet (ch. 3. 19.) *God did let none of his words fall to the ground*; and still it held true.

(3.) They agreed to advise with him concerning the way that they should go, *Peradventure he can show us*. All the use they would make of the man of God, was, to be advised by him, whether they should return home, or, if there was yet any hopes of finding the asses, which way they must go next; a poor business to employ a prophet about! Had they said, "Let us give up the asses for lost, and now that we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God, let us consult him how we may order our conversations aright, and inquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity, and then we shall not lose our journey"—the proposal had been such as became Israelites; but, to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve so mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirit they were of. Note, Most people would rather be told their fortune, than told their duty; how to be rich, than how to be saved. If it were the business of the men of God to direct for the recovery of lost asses, they would be consulted much more than they are now that it is their business to direct for the recovery of lost souls; so preposterous is the care of most men!

(4.) Saul was thoughtful, what present they should bring to the man of God, what fee they should give him for his advice; (v. 7.) *What shall we bring the man?* They could not present him, as Jeroboam's wife did Abijah, with loaves and cakes,

(1 Kings 14. 3.) for their bread was spent, but the servant bethought himself, that he had in his pocket the fourth part of a shekel, about sevenpence half-penny in value, and *that* he would give to the man of God, to direct them, *v.* 8. "That will do," says Saul, *let us go, v.* 10. Some think that when Saul talked of giving Samuel a fee, he measured him by himself, or by his sons, as if he must be hired to do an honest Israelite a kindness, and were like the false prophets, that *divined for money*, Mic. 3. 11. He came to him as a fortune-teller, rather than as a prophet, and therefore thought the fourth part of a shekel was enough to give him. But it rather seems to be agreeable to the general usage of these times, as it is to natural equity, that those who sowed spiritual things, should reap not only eternal things, from Him that employs them, but temporal things, from those for whom they are employed. Samuel needed not their money, nor would he have denied them his advice, if they had not brought it; (it is probable, when he had it, he gave it to the poor;) but they brought it to him as a token of their respect, and the value they put upon his office; nor did he refuse it, for they were able to give it, and, though it was but little, it was the widow's mite. But Saul, as he never thought of going to the man of God till the servant proposed it, so it should seem, he mentioned the want of a present, as an objection against their going; he would not own that he had money in his pocket, but when the servant generously offered to be at the charge, then, "Well said," says Saul, "come, let us go." Most people love a cheap religion, and like it best, when they can devolve the expense of it on others.

(5.) The historian here takes notice of the name then given to the prophets, they called them *Seers*, or *seeing men*; (*v.* 9.) not but that the name *prophet* was then used, and applied to such persons, but that of *seers* was more in use. Note, Those that are prophets, must first be seers; they who undertake to speak to others of the things of God, must have an insight into those things themselves.

11. *And* as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, *Is the seer here?* 12. And they answered them, and said, *He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place:* 13. As soon as ye be come into the city ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; *and* afterwards they eat that he bidden. Now therefore get you up; for about this time ye shall find him. 14. And they went up into the city; *and* when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them, for to go up to the high place. 15. Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, 16. To-morrow, about this time, I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin; and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Phi-

listines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. 17. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people.

Here,

1. Saul, by an ordinary inquiry, is directed to Samuel, *v.* 11, 14. Gibeah of Saul was not twenty miles from Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and was near to Mizpeh where he often judged Israel; and yet, it seems, Saul had lived so very privately, and had taken so little notice of public affairs, that he had never seen Samuel; for when he met him, (*v.* 18.) he did not know him, so that there was no cause to suspect any secret compact or collusion between them in this matter. *I knew him not*, says John Baptist concerning Christ, John 1. 31. Yet I do not think it any commendation to Saul, that he was a stranger to Samuel. However, the maid-servants of Ramah, whom they met with at the places of drawing water, could give him and his servant intelligence concerning Samuel; and very particular they were in their directions, *v.* 12, 13. We should always be ready to give what assistance we can to those that are inquiring after God's prophets, and further them in their inquiries.

Even the maid-servants could tell them, 1. That there was a sacrifice that day in the high place, it being either an ordinary festival, or an extraordinary day of prayer and thanksgiving, with which sacrifices were joined. The tabernacle being deprived of the ark, the altar there had not now the reputation it formerly had, nor were they tied to it, as they would be when God had again chosen a place to put his name in; and therefore now other places were allowed. Samuel had built an altar at Ramah, (*ch.* 7. 17.) and here we have him making use of that altar. 2. That Samuel came that day to the city, either from his circuit, or from his country-seat. He was such a public person, that his motions were generally known. 3. That this was just the time of their meeting to feast before the Lord upon the sacrifice; "About this time you will find him in the street going up to the high place." They knew the hour of the solemn feast. 4. That the people would not eat till Samuel came, not only because he was the worthiest person, and they ought, in good manners, to stay for him, and he was, as some think, the maker of the feast, the sacrifice being offered at his charge, and upon his account; but because, as a man of God, whoever made the feast, *he* must bless the sacrifice, that is, those parts of the sacrifice which they feasted upon; which may be considered, (1.) As a common meal; and so this is an instance of that great duty of craving a blessing upon our meat before we partake of it. We cannot expect benefit from our food without that blessing, and we have no reason to expect that blessing if we do not pray for it. Thus we must give glory to God as our Benefactor, and own our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him. Or, (2.) As a religious assembly. When the sacrifice was offered, which was the ceremony, Samuel blessed it; that is, he prayed over it, and offered up spiritual sacrifices with it, which were the substance; and afterward, when the holy duties were performed, they did eat. Let the soul first be served. The feast upon the sacrifice being a sacred rite, it was requisite that it should in a particular manner be blessed, as is the christian eucharist. They feasted, in token of their reconciliation to God by virtue of the sacrifice, and their participation of the benefits of it; and Samuel blessed it, that is, he prayed to God to grace the solemnity

with his special presence, that it might answer those great ends.

Bishop Hall observes, what a particular account these maid servants could give of the usages of those sacred feasts, and infers from it, That "where there is practice and example of piety in the better sort there will be a reflection of it upon the meanest. It is no small advantage to live in religious places; for we shall be much to blame if all goodness fall beside us."

Saul and his servant followed the directions given them, and very opportunely met Samuel going to the high-place, the synagogue of the city, v. 14. This seemed purely accidental, but the Divine Providence ordered it for the forwarding of this great event. The wise God serves very great and certain purposes, by very small and casual occurrences. A sparrow falls not to the ground without our Father's will.

II. Samuel, by an extraordinary revelation, is informed concerning Saul. He was a seer, and therefore must see this in a way peculiar to himself.

1. God has told him, the day before, that he would, at this time, send him the man that should serve the people of Israel for such a king as they wished to have, *like all the nations*, v. 15, 16. He told him in his ear; that is, privately, by a secret whisper to his mind; or, perhaps, by a still small voice, some soft and gentle sounds conveyed to his ear, probably, when he was praying in secret for direction in these and other affairs of the nation. He had spoken in the ears of the Lord, (ch. 2. 21.) and now, *God spake in his ear*, in token of friendship and familiarity; for he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets, as secrets in their ear, Amos 3. 7. God told him before, that he might not be a surprise to him; and, perhaps, it was in expectation of it, that he appointed the feast and the sacrifice, for the imploring of God's blessing upon this great and important affair, though he might keep the particular occasion in his own breast, God having only told him in his ear. The Hebrew phrase is, *He uncovereth the ear of Samuel*; to which some allude, for the explanation of the way of God's revealing himself to us; he not only speaks, but uncovers our ear. We have naturally a covering on our ears, so that we perceive not what God says; (Job. 33. 14.) but when God will manifest himself to a soul, he uncovers the ear, says *Ephphatha, Be opened*; he takes the veil from off the heart, 2 Cor. 3. 16.

Though God had, in displeasure, granted their request for a king, yet here he speaks tenderly of Israel; for even in wrath he remembers mercy. (1.) He calls them again and again *his people*; though a peevish and provoking people, yet mine still. (2.) He sends them a man to be captain over them, that they might not be a body without a head, and to save them out of the hands of the Philistines, which, perhaps, was more than many of them aimed at in desiring a king. (3.) He does it with a gracious respect to them and to their cry. *I have looked upon my people, and their cry is come unto me*. He gratified them with what they cried for, as the tender mother humours the froward child, lest it should break its heart. And (as Bishop Patrick observes) though he would not hear their cry to relieve them against the oppression of their kings, (ch. 2. 12.) yet he was so gracious as to make those kings instruments of their deliverance from the oppression of their neighbours; which was more than they had reason to expect.

2. When Saul came up toward him in the street, God again whispered Samuel in the ear; (v. 17.) *Behold the man whom I spake to thee of!* Saul being a man of unusual stature, it is natural to

think that Samuel fixed his eyes upon him at a distance, and perhaps, looked the more wistfully toward him, because the hour was now come, when God would send him the man that should be king of Israel, and he fancied this might be he; but, that he might be fully satisfied, God told him expressly, *That is the man that shall restrain, (for magistrates are heirs of restraint,) in my people Israel.*

18. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. 19. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, *I am the seer*: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to-day; and to-morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. 20. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel: is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? 21. And Saul answered and said, *Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel?* and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? 22. And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. 23. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. 24. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left! set it before thee, and eat; for unto this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day. 25. And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. 26. And they arose early: and it came to pass, about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.

Providence having at length brought Samuel and Saul together, we have here an account of what passed between them in the gate, at the feast, and in private.

I. In the gate of the city; passing through that, Saul found him, (v. 18.) and, little thinking that he was Samuel himself, asked him the way to Samuel's house; *Tell me where the seer's house is*; for there he expected to find him. See how mean a

figure Samuel made, though so great a man: he took not any state, had no attendants, no ensigns of honour carried before him, nor any distinguishing habit, no not when he went to church, but appeared, in all respects, so much a common person, that Saul, though he was told he should meet him, never suspected that it was he; but, as if he looked more like a porter than a prophet, asked him the way to the seer's house. Thus is great worth oftentimes hid under a very despicable appearance. Samuel knew that it was not the house, but the man, that he wanted, and therefore answered him, "*I am the seer*, the person you inquire for." v. 19. Samuel knew him before he knew Samuel; thus, though all that are called to the kingdom of glory, are brought to know God, yet first they were known of him, Gal. 4. 9.

Now, I. Samuel obliges him to stay with him till the next day; the greatest part of this day had been spent in sacrificing, and the rest of it was to be spent in holy feasting, and therefore, "*To-morrow I will let thee go*, and no sooner; now *go up before me to the high place*; let us pray together, and then we will talk together." Saul had nothing in his mind but to find his asses; but Samuel would take him off from that care, and dispose him to the exercises of piety; and therefore bids him *go to the high place*, and go before him, because, it may be, some business obliged Samuel to call by the way. 2. He satisfies him about his asses; (v. 20.) "*Set not thy mind on them*, be not in further care about them, *they are found*. By this, Saul might perceive that he was a prophet, that he could give him an answer to the inquiry which he had not yet made, and tell him what he thought; and from thence might infer, If a man of God could do this, much more doth God himself *understand our thoughts afar off*. 3. He surprises him with an intimation of preferment before him, "*On whom is all the desire of Israel?* Is it not a king that they are set upon? and there is never a man in Israel that will suit them so as thou wilt." It does not appear that the country had as yet any eye upon him for the government, because they had left it wholly to God to choose for them; but such a one as he they wished for; and his advancement would be the advancement of his family and relations, as Abner, and others.

To this strange intimation Saul returns a very modest answer, v. 21. Samuel, he thought, did but banter him, because he was a tall man, but a very unlikely man to be a king; for though the historian says (v. 1.) his father was a *mighty man of power*, yet he himself speaks diminishingly of his tribe and family. "*Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons, when grown up to be a man, was called a little one*, (Gen. 44. 20.) that tribe diminished by the war of Gibeon, and *I am a Benjamite; my family the least*; probably, a younger house; not in any place of honour or trust, no not in their own tribe." Gideon had expressed himself thus, Judg. 6. 15. An humble disposition is a good presage of preferment.

II. At the public feast; thither Samuel took him and his servant. Though the advancing of Saul would be the deposing of Samuel, yet that good prophet was so far from envying him, or bearing him any ill-will for it, that he was the first and forwardest man to do him honour, in compliance with the will of God. If this be the man whom God has chosen, though he be none of Samuel's particular friends or confidants, yet he is heartily welcome to his table, nay to his bosom. We may suppose it was no unseasonable kindness to Saul, to give him a meal's meat, for it seems, by what he said, (v. 7.) that all their meat and money were spent. But this was not all, Samuel treats him not as a common

person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him.

1. He set him *in the best place*, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, *Give this man place*, Luke 14. 9. Though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who in their own city would claim precedency, yet the master of the feast made Saul and his servant too (who, if he were a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state) *sit in the chiefest place*, v. 22. Note, Civil respects must be paid to those, who, in civil things, have the precedency given them by the Divine Providence.

2. He presented him with the *best dish*; which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming, (v. 16.) he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests, and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king-elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate; no, it was a plain shoulder of mutton; (v. 23. 24.) the right shoulder of the peace-offering was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers: (Lev. 7. 32.) the next in honour to that, was the left shoulder, which, probably, was always allotted to those that sat at the upper end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's mess at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now, was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significancy in this dish: the shoulder denotes strength, and the breast, which, some think, went with it, denotes affection; he that was king, had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him.

III. What passed between them in private; both that evening and early the next morning, Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house, v. 25. 26. We may suppose Samuel now told him the whole story of the people's desire of a king, the grounds of their desire, and God's grant of it; to all which, Saul, living very private, was perhaps a stranger; he satisfied him that he was the person God had pitched upon for the government; and whereas Saul would object, that Samuel was in possession, and he would not for all the world take it out of his hands, Samuel, we may suppose, gave him all the assurance he could desire, of his willingness to resign. Early in the morning, he sent him toward home, brought him a part of the way, bade him send his servant before, that they might be private, (v. 27.) and there, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, he anointed him, and therein showed him the word of the Lord; that is, gave him full satisfaction that he was the person chosen to be king, for he would not jest with that sacred rite. It is by the *unction of the Holy Ghost*, that Christ, the great Prophet, *shows us the word of the Lord*; (1 John 2. 27.) *the same anointing teacheth you of all things*.

## CHAP. X.

We left Samuel and Saul walking together, probably some private way over the fields down from Ramah, perhaps in the paths of the vineyards, and Saul expecting to hear from Samuel the word of God. Now here we have, I. The anointing of Saul, then and there, v. 1. The signs Samuel gave him, (v. 2. 6.) and instructions, v. 7. 8. II. The accomplishment of those signs to the satisfaction of Saul, v. 9. 13. III. His return to his father's house, v. 14. 16. IV. His public election by lot, and solemn inauguration, v. 17. 23. V. His return again to his own city, v. 26. 27. It is a great work that is here a doing, the setting up not only of a monarch, but of a monarchy itself, in Israel; and therefore in all the advances towards it, much of God is seen.

1. **T**HEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, *Is it* not because the LORD hath anointed thee *to be* captain over his inheritance? 2. When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? 3. Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Beth-el, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: 4. And they will salute thee, and give thee two *loaves* of bread, which thou shalt receive of their hands. 5. After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: 6. And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 7. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, *that* thou do as occasion serve thee; for God *is* with thee. 8. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do.

Samuel is here executing the office of a prophet, giving Saul full assurance from God that he should be king, as he was afterward, according to these prophecies which went before of him.

1. He anointed him and kissed him, *v. 1.* This was not done in a solemn assembly, but being done by divine appointment, that made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God's institutions are great and honourable, though the circumstances of their administration be ever so mean and despicable. 1. Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him that it was God's act to make him a king, *Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee?* And in token of that, the High Priest was anointed to his office, which signified the conferring of those gifts upon him, that were requisite for the discharge of his office; and the same was intimated in the anointing of kings; for, whom God calls, he qualifies, and that is a good proof of a commission. These sacred unctions, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or anointed One, the King of the church, and High Priest of our profession, who was anointed with the

oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. It was common oil, no doubt, which Samuel used, and we read not of his blessing it, or praying over it. But it was only a vial of oil that he anointed him with; the vessel brittle, because his kingdom would soon be cracked and broken; and the quantity small, because he had but little of the Spirit conferred upon him, to what David had, who was therefore anointed with a horn of oil, and so were Solomon and Jehu with a box of oil. 2. By kissing him, he assured him of his own approbation of the choice; not only his consent to it, but his complacency in it, though it abridged his power and eclipsed his glory, and the glory of his family. "*God has anointed thee,*" says Samuel, "*to be king,* and I am satisfied and very well pleased, in pledge of which, take this kiss." It was likewise a kiss of homage and allegiance; hereby he not only owns him to be king, but his king; and in this sense we are commanded to *kiss the Son*, Ps. 2. 12. God has anointed him, and therefore we must thus acknowledge him, and do homage to him. In Samuel's explication of the ceremony, he reminds him, (1.) Of the nature of the government to which he is called; he was anointed to be captain, a commander indeed, which bespeaks honour and power, but a commander in war, which bespeaks care, and toil, and danger. (2.) The original of it; *The Lord hath anointed thee.* By him he ruled, and therefore must rule for him, in dependence on him, and with an eye to his glory. (3.) Of the end of it; it is over his inheritance, to take care of that, protect it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, as a steward whom a great man sets over his estate, to manage it for his service, and give an account of it to him.

II. For his further satisfaction, he gives him some signs, which should come to pass immediately, this very day; and they were such as would not only confirm the word of Samuel in general, and prove him a true prophet, but would confirm this word to Saul in particular, that he should be king.

1. He should presently meet with some that would bring him intelligence from home, of the care his father's house was in concerning him; (*v. 2.*) these he would meet hard by Rachel's sepulchre. The first place he directed him to, was a sepulchre, the sepulchre of one of his ancestors, for Rachel died in travail with Benjamin; there he must read a lecture of his own mortality, and now that he had a crown in his eye, must think of his grave, in which all his honour would be laid in the dust. Here two men would meet him, perhaps sent on purpose to look after him, and would tell him the asses were found, and his father was in pain concerning him, saying, *What shall I do for my son?* He would reckon it happened well that he met with these messengers; and it is good to eye Providence in favourable conjunctures, (though the matter be minute,) and to be encouraged to trust in greater matters.

2. He should next meet with others going to Beth-el, where, it should seem, there was a high place for religious worship, and these men were bringing their sacrifices thither, *v. 3, 4.* It was a token for good to one that was designed for the government of Israel, where'er he came, to meet with people going to worship God. It is supposed that those kids and loaves, and the bottle of wine, which the three men had with them, were designed for sacrifice, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend the sacrifice; yet Samuel tells Saul they would give him two of their loaves, and he must take them. This would look to us now like the relieving of a beggar. Saul must hereafter remember the time when he received



alms, and must therefore be humble and charitable to the poor. But, perhaps, it would *then* be construed, a fit present for a prince; and as such, Saul must receive it, the first present that was brought him, by such as knew not what they did, nor why they did it, but God put it into their hearts, which made it the more fit to be a sign to him. These two loaves which were the first tribute paid to this new-anointed king, might serve for an admonition to him, not to spend the wealth of his crown in luxury, but still to be content with plain food. Bread is the staff of life.

3. The most remarkable sign of all would be his joining with a company of prophets that he should meet with, under the influence of a spirit of prophecy which should at that time come upon him. What God works in us by his Spirit serves much more for the confirming of faith, than any thing wrought for us by his providence. Here he tells him, *v. 5, 6.* (1.) Where this would happen; *at the hill of God*, where there was a *garrison of the Philistines*; which is supposed to be near Gibeath, his own city, for there was the Philistines' garrison, *ch. 13. 3.* Perhaps, it was one of the articles of Samuel's agreement with them, that they should have a garrison there, or rather, after they were subdued in the beginning of his time, they got ground again, so far as to force this garrison into that place, and thence God raised up the man that should chastise them. There was a place that was called the *hill of God*, because one of the schools of the prophets was built upon it; and such respect did even Philistines themselves pay to religion, that a garrison of their soldiers suffered a school of God's prophets to live peaceably by them, and did not only not dislodge them, but not restrain or disturb the public exercises of their devotion. (2.) Upon what occasion; he should meet a *company of prophets with music before them, prophesying*, and with them he should join himself. These prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretell things to come, nor did God reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbours, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel, that they had not only prophets, but companions of prophets, who gave them good instructions, and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them. Now the word of the Lord was not so precious, as it had been when Samuel was first raised up, who had been instrumental in founding these colleges, or religious houses, whence, it is probable, the synagogues took their rise. What a pity was it that Israel should be weary of the government of such a man, who, though he had not, as a man of war, expelled the Philistines, yet (which was a greater kindness to Israel) had, as a man of God, settled the schools of the prophets! Music was then used as a proper means to dispose the mind to receive the impressions of the good Spirit, as it did Elisha's; (2 Kings 3. 15.) but we have no reason to look for the same benefit by it now, unless we saw it as effectual as it was then in Saul's case, to drive away the evil spirit. These prophets had been at the high-place, probably, offering sacrifice, and now they came back singing psalms. We should come from holy ordinances with our hearts greatly enlarged in holy joy and praise. See Ps. 138. 5. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned thereby *into another man* from what he had been while he lived in a private capacity. The Spirit of God, by his ordinances, changes men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul, by praising God in the commu-

nion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no, may be questioned.

III. He directs him to proceed in the administration of his government, as Providence should lead him, and as Samuel should advise him. 1. He must follow Providence in ordinary cases; (*v. 7.*) "*Do as occasion shall serve thee.* Take such measures as thine own prudence shall direct thee." But, 2. In an extraordinary strait that would hereafter befall him at G'lgai, and would be the most critical juncture, of all other, when he would have special need of divine aids, he must wait for Samuel to come to him, and must tarry *seven days* in expectation of him, *v. 8.* How his failing in this matter proved his fall, we find afterwards, *ch. 13. 11.* It was a plain intimation to him, that he was upon his good behaviour; and, though a king, must act under the direction of Samuel, and do as he should order him. The greatest of men must own themselves in subjection to God and his word.

9. And it was *so*, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11. And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, *What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?* 12. And one of the same place answered, and said, *But who is their father?* Therefore it became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* 13. And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high place. 14. And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, *Whither went ye?* And he said, *To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.* 15. And Saul's uncle said, *Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.* 16. And Saul said unto his uncle, *He told us plainly that the asses were found.* But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul has now taken his leave of Samuel, much amazed, we may well suppose, at what had been done to him, almost ready to question whether he was awake or no, and whether it be not all a dream. Now here we are told,

I. What occurred by the way, *v. 9.* Those signs which Samuel had given him, came to pass very punctually; but that which gave him the greatest satisfaction of all, was this, he found immediately that God had given him *another heart*. A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with: seeking his asses is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, redressing the grievances of Israel, making laws, administering justice, and providing for the public safety: these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery, as he never thought he should have been con-

sconscious of. He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, that is, low and mean, and narrow, and concerned only about his corn and cattle; but the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. Whom God calls to service he will make fit for it. If he advance to another station, he will give another heart, to those who sincerely desire to serve him with their power.

II. What occurred when he came near home. They came to *the hill*, (v. 10.) that is, to *Gibeah*, or *Geba*, which signifies a *hill*; and so the Chaldee here takes it as a proper name; he met with the prophets as Samuel had told him, and the Spirit of God came upon him; strongly and suddenly, so the word signifies; but not so as to rest and abide upon him. It came on, so as to go off quickly: however, for the present, it had a strange effect upon him; for he immediately joined with the prophets in their devotion, and that with as much decorum, and as great a transport of affection, as any of them. *He prophesied among them.*

Now, 1. His prophesying was publicly taken notice of, v. 11, 12. He was now among his acquaintance, who, when they saw him among the prophets, called one to another to come and see a strange sight. This would prepare them to accept of him as a king, though one of themselves, when they had seen how God had advanced him to the honour of a prophet. The seventy elders prophesied before they were made judges, Numb. 11. 25. Now, (1.) They all wondered to see Saul among the prophets, *What is this that is come to the son of Kish?* Though this school of the prophets was near his father's house, yet he had never associated with them, nor showed them any respect, perhaps had sometimes spoken slightly of them; and now to see him prophesying among them, was a surprise to them, as it was long after, when his namesake, in the New Testament, preached that gospel which he had before persecuted, Acts 9. 21. Where God gives another heart, it will soon show itself. (2.) One of them, that was wiser than the rest, asked, "*Who is their father*, or instructor? Is it not God? Are they not all taught of him? Do they not all owe their gifts to him? And is he limited? Cannot he make Saul a prophet, as well as any of them, if he pleases?" Or, "Is not Samuel their father?" Under God, he was so; and Saul had now lately been with him, which, by his servant, he might know. No marvel for him to prophesy, who lay, last night, under Samuel's roof. (3.) It became a proverb commonly used in Israel, when they would express their wonder at a bad man's either becoming good, or, at least, being found in good company, *Is Saul among the prophets?* Note, Saul among the prophets, is a wonder to a proverb. Let not the worst be despaired of, yet let not an external show of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; for Saul among the prophets, was Saul still.

But, 2. His being anointed was kept private. When he had done prophesying, (1.) It should seem he uttered all his words before the Lord, and recommended the affair to his favour, for he went straight to *the high place*, (v. 13.) to give God thanks for his mercies to him, and to pray for a continuance of those mercies. But, (2.) He industriously concealed it from his relations. His uncle, who met with him either at the high place, or as soon as he came home, examined him, v. 14. Saul owned, for his servant knew it, that they had been with Samuel, and that he told them the asses were found, but said not a word of *the kingdom*, v. 14, 15. This was an instance, [1.] Of his humility; many a one would have been so elevated with this surprising elevation, as to proclaim it upon the house-top. But Saul, though he might please him-

self with it, in his own breast, did not pride himself in it among his neighbours. The heirs of the kingdom of glory are well enough pleased that *the world knows them not*, 1 John 3. 1. [2.] Of his prudence. Had he been forward to proclaim it, he would have been envied, and he knew not what difficulty that might have created him. Samuel had communicated it to him as a secret, and he knows not how to keep counsel. Thus it appears, that he had another heart, a heart fit for government. [3.] Of his dependence upon God. He does not go about to make an interest for himself, but leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and, for his own part, sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

17. And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; 18. And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: 19. And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. 20. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. 21. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul, the son of Kish, was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. 22. Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. 23. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward. 24. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is none like him among all the people?* And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king! 25. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote *it* in a book, and laid *it* up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26. And Saul also went home to Gibeah: and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. 27. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace.

Saul's nomination to the throne is here made public, in a general assembly of the elders of Israel, the representatives of their respective tribes at Mizpeh. It is probable that this convention of the

states was called as soon as conveniently it might, after Saul was anointed, for if there must be a change in their government, the sooner the better: it might be of bad consequence to be long in the doing. The people being met in a solemn assembly, in which God was, in a peculiar manner, present, (and therefore it is said, they were *called together unto the Lord*, v. 17.) Samuel acts for God among them.

I. He reproves them for casting off the government of a prophet, and desiring that of a captain. He shows them (v. 18.) how happy they had been under the divine government; when God ruled them he *delivered them out of the hand of them that oppressed them*, and what would they desire more? Could the mightiest man of valour do that for them, which the Almighty God had done? He likewise shows them (v. 19.) what an affront they had put upon God, (who had himself saved them *out of all their tribulations*, by his own power, and by such as he had immediately called and qualified,) in desiring a king to save them. He tells them, in plain terms, "*Ye have this day rejected your God*, ye have, in effect, done it, so he construes it, and he might justly, for your so doing, reject you." They that can live better by sense than by faith, that stay themselves upon an arm of flesh rather than upon the Almighty arm, forsake a Fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. And some make their obstinacy in this matter, to be a presage of their rejecting Christ, in casting off whom, they cast off God, that he should not reign over them.

II. He puts them upon choosing their king by lot: he knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him, but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them who would not acquiesce in the choice, if it depended upon his single testimony; and therefore that every tribe, and every family of the chosen tribe, might please themselves with having a chance for it, he calls them to the lot, v. 19. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes, (v. 20.) and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish, v. 21. By this method it would appear to the people, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king, for the *disposal of the lot is of the Lord*. It would also prevent all disputes and exceptions, for the *lot causeth contention to cease, and parteth between the mighty*. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee that they were setting up a family that would soon be put down again, for dying Jacob had, by the spirit of prophecy, entailed the dominion upon Judah; that is the tribe that must *rule as a lion*. Benjamin shall only *ravin as a wolf*, Gen. 49. 10, 27. Those therefore that knew the scriptures, could not be very fond of doing that which they foresaw must, ere long, be undone again.

III. It is with much ado, and not without further inquiries of the Lord, that Saul is at length produced. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected he should answer to his name at the first call; but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him, (v. 21.) he had *hid himself among the stuff*, v. 22. So little fond was he now of that power, which yet, when he was in possession of, he could not without the utmost indignation think of parting with. He withdrew, in hopes that, upon his not appearing, they would proceed to another choice, or thus to express his modesty; for, by what had already passed, he knew he must be the man. We may suppose he was at this time really averse to take upon him the government, 1. Because he was conscious to himself of unfitness for so great a trust. He had not been bred up to books, or arms, or courts, and feared he should be guilty of some fatal blunder. 2. Because it would expose him to

the envy of his neighbours that were ill affected toward him. 3. Because he understood by what Samuel had said, that the people sinned in asking a king, and it was in anger that God granted their request. 4. Because the affairs of Israel were at this time in a bad posture: the Philistines were strong, the Ammonites threatening, and he must be bold indeed, that will set sail in a storm.

But the congregation, believing that choice well made, which God himself made, would leave no way untried to find him out, on whom the lot fell. *They inquired of the Lord*, either by the High Priest, and his breast-plate of judgment, or by Samuel, and his spirit of prophecy; and the Lord directed them where they should find him, hid among the carriages, and thence *they fetched him*, v. 23. Note, None will be losers at last by their humility and modesty. Honour, like the shadow, follows those that flee from it, but flees from those that pursue it.

IV. Samuel presents him to the people, and they accept of him. He needed not mount the bench or scaffold, to be seen; when he stood upon even ground with the rest, he topped them all, was seen above them all, for he was taller than any of them by *head and shoulders*, v. 23. "Look you," said Samuel, "what a king God has chosen for you, just such a one as you wished for; *there is none like him among all the people*, that has so much majesty in his countenance, and such a graceful stateliness in his mien; he is in the crowd like the cedar among the shrubs. Let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave and gallant man?" The people hereupon signified their approbation of the choice, and their acceptance of him; they *shouted and said, Let the king live*; that is, let him long reign over us, in health and prosperity." Subjects were wont to testify their affection and allegiance to their prince, by their good wishes, and those turned (as our translation does this) into addresses to God, Ps. 72. 15. *Prayer shall be made for him continually*, Ps. 20. 1. Samuel had told them, they would soon be weary of their king, but in the mind they are now in, they will never be so; *Let him live*.

V. Samuel settles the original contract between them, and leaves it upon record, v. 25. He had before told them *the manner of the king*, (ch. 8. 11.) how he would abuse his power; now he tells them *the manner of the kingdom*, or rather, the law, or judgment, or constitution, of it; what power the prince might challenge, and the utmost of the property the subject might claim. He fixed the landmark between them, that neither might encroach upon the other; let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, and that will preserve a good understanding between them ever after. The learned Bishop Patrick thinks he now repeated and registered what he had told them, (ch. 8. 11.) of the arbitrary power their kings would assume, that it might hereafter be a witness against them, that they had drawn the calamity upon themselves, for they were warned what it would come to, and yet they would have a king.

VI. The convention was dissolved when the solemnity was over; *Samuel sent every man to his house*. Here were no votes past, nor, for aught that appears, so much as a motion made, for the raising of money to support the dignity of their new elected king; if therefore he afterward think fit to take what they do not think fit to give, (which it was necessary that he should have,) they must thank themselves. They went every man to his house, pleased with the name of a king over them, and *Saul went home to Gibeah*, to his father's house, not puffed up with the name of a kingdom under him. At Gibeah, he had no palace, no throne, no

court, yet thither he goes. If he must be a king, as one mindful of the rock out of which he was hewn, he will make his own city the royal city, nor will he be ashamed (as too many are, when they are preferred) of his mean relations. Such a humble spirit as this, puts a beauty and lustre upon great advancements. The condition rising, and the mind not rising with it, behold, how good and pleasant it is!

But how did the people stand affected to their new king? The generality of them, it should seem, did not show themselves much concerned, they *went every man to his own house*, their own domestic affairs lay nearer their hearts than any interests of the public; this was the general temper. But, 1. There were some so faithful as to attend him, (v. 26.) *a band of men whose hearts God had touched*. Not the body of the people, but a small company, who, either because they were fond of their own choice of a king, or because they were pleased with God's choice of this king, or because they had so much more sense than their neighbours, as to conclude, that if he were a king, he ought to be respected accordingly, went with him to Gibeah, as his life-guard. They were those *whose hearts God had touched*, in this instance, to do their duty. Note, Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, at any time, it must be ascribed to the grace of God. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because he has touched it. One touch is enough, when it is divine. 2. There were others so spiteful as to affront him; children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke, that would be pleased with nothing that either God or Samuel did; they *despised him*, (v. 27.) for the meanness of his tribe and family, the smallness of his estate, and privacy of his education; and they said, *How shall this man save us?* Yet they did not propose any man more likely; nor, whomsoever they had, must their salvation come from the man, but from God. They would not join with their neighbours in testifying an affection to him and his government, by bringing him presents, or addressing him upon his accession to the crown. Perhaps those discontented spirits were most earnest for a king, and yet now that they had one, they quarrelled with him, because he was not altogether such a one as themselves. It was reason enough for them not to like him, because others did. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. God hath set him king upon the holy hill of Zion. There is a remnant that submit to him, rejoice in him, bring him presents, and follow him wherever he goes; and they are such *whose hearts God has touched*, whom he has made willing in the day of his power. But there are others who despise him, who ask, *How shall this man save us?* They are offended in him, stumble at his external meanness, and they will be broken by it.

*Lastly*, How did Saul resent the bad conduct of those that were disaffected to his government? *He held his peace*; margin, *He was as though he had been deaf*. He was so far from resenting it, that he seemed not to take notice of it. Which was an evidence both of his humility and modesty, and the mercifulness of his disposition, and also, that he was well satisfied with his title to the crown; for those are commonly most jealous of their honour, and most revengeful of affronts, that gain their power by improper means. Christ held his peace, when he was affronted, for it was the day of his patience; but there is a day of recompense coming.

## CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, we have the first-fruits of Saul's government, in the glorious rescue of Jabesh-gilead out of the hands of the Ammonites. Let not Israel thence infer that therefore they did well to ask a king, God could and

would have saved them without one; but let them admire God's goodness, that he did not reject them, when they rejected him, and acknowledge his wisdom in the choice of the person, whom, if he did not find fit, yet he made fit, for the great trust he called him to, and enabled, in some measure, to merit the crown by his public services, before it is fixed on his head by the public approbation. Here is, I. The great extremity to which the city of Jabesh-gilead was reduced, on the other side Jordan, by the Ammonites, v. 1. 3. II. Saul's great readiness to come to their relief, whereby he signalized himself, v. 4. 10. III. The good success of his attempt, by which God signalized him, v. 11. IV. Saul's tenderness, notwithstanding this, toward those that had opposed him, v. 12, 13. V. The public confirmation and recognition of his election to the government, v. 14, 15.

1. **THEN** Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee. 2. And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this *condition* will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. 3. And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days' respite, that we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: and then, if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee. 4. Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lifted up their voices, and wept.

The Ammonites were bad neighbours to those tribes of Israel that lay next them, though descendants from just Lot, and, for that reason, dealt civilly with by Israel. See Deut. 2. 19. Jephthah, in his time, had humbled them, but now the sin of Israel had put them into a capacity to make head again, and avenge that quarrel. The city of Jabesh-gilead had been, some ages ago, destroyed by Israel's sword of justice, for not appearing against the wickedness of Gibeah; (Judg. 21. 10.) and now being replenished again, probably, by the posterity of those that then escaped the sword, it is in danger of being destroyed by the Ammonites, as if some bad fate attended the place. Nahash, king of Ammon, (1 Chron. 19. 1.) laid siege to it. Now here,

1. The besieged beat a parley; (v. 1.) *"Make a covenant with us, and we will surrender upon terms, and serve thee."* They had lost the virtues of Israelites, else they had not thus lost the valour of Israelites, nor tamely yielded to serve an Ammonite, without one bold struggle for themselves. Had they not broken their covenant with God, and forsaken his service, they needed not thus to have courted a covenant with a Gentile nation, and offered themselves to serve them.

2. The besiegers offer them base and barbarous conditions; they will spare their lives, and take them to be their servants, upon condition that they shall *put out their right eyes*, v. 2. The Gileadites were content to part with their liberty and estates, for the ransom of their blood; and had the Ammonites taken them at their word, the matter had been so settled immediately, and the Gileadites would not have sent out for relief: but their abject concessions make the Ammonites more insolent in their demands, and they cannot be content to have them their servants, but, (1.) They must torment them, and put them to pain, exquisite pain, for so the thrusting out of an eye would be. (2.) They must disable them for war, and render them

incapable, though not of labour, that would have been a loss to their lords, yet of bearing arms; for in those times they fought with shields in their left hands, which covered their left eye, so that a soldier without his right eye, was, in effect, blind. (3.) They must put a *reproach upon all Israel*, as weak and cowardly, that would suffer the inhabitants of one of their chief cities be thus miserably used, and not offer to rescue them.

3. The besieged desire, and obtain seven days' time to consider of this proposal, v. 3. If Nahash had not granted them this respite, we may suppose the horror of the proposal would have made them desperate, and they would rather have died with their swords in their hands, than have surrendered to such merciless enemies, therefore Nahash, not imagining it possible that, in so short a time, they should have relief, and being very secure of the advantages he thought he had against them, in a bravado, gave them seven days, that the reproach upon Israel, for not rescuing them, might be the greater, and his triumphs the more illustrious. But there was a providence in it, that his security might be his infatuation and ruin.

4. Notice is sent of this to Gibeah. They said they would send messengers to *all the coasts of Israel*, (v. 3.) which made Nahash the more secure, for that, he thought, would be a work of time, and none would be forward to appear, if they had not one common head; and, perhaps, Nahash had not yet heard of the new elected king; but the messengers, either of their own accord, or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon it, v. 4. They would sooner lament their brethren's misery and danger, than think of helping them, shed their tears for them, than shed their blood. They wept, as despairing to help the men of Jabesh-gilead, and fearing, lest, if that frontier city were lost, the enemy would penetrate into the very bowels of their country, which now appeared in great hazard.

5. And, behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, *What aileth the people that they weep?* And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh.

6. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. 7. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent *them* throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. 8. And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. 9. And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow, by *that time* the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and showed *it* to the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. 10. Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. 11. And it

was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

What is here related, turns very much to the honour of Saul, and shows the happy fruits of that other spirit with which he was endued. Observe here,

I. His humility. Though he was anointed king, and accepted by the people, yet he did not think it below him to know the state of his own flocks, but went himself to see them, and came in the evening, with his servants, *after the herd out of the field*, v. 5. This was an evidence that he was not puffed up with his advancement, as those are most apt to be, that are raised from a mean estate. Providence had not yet found him business as a king, he left all to Samuel; and therefore, rather than be idle, he would, for the present, apply himself to his country-business again; though the sons of Belial would, perhaps, despise him the more for it; such as were virtuous and wise, and loved business themselves, would think never the worse of him. He had no revenues settled upon him for the support of his dignity, and he was desirous not to be burthensome to the people; for which reason, like Paul, he worked with his hands; for if he neglect his domestic affairs, how must he maintain himself and his family? Solomon gives it as a reason why men should look well to their herds, because *the crown doth not endure to every generation*, Prov. 27. 23, 24. Saul's did not, he must therefore provide something surer.

II. His concern for his neighbours. When he perceived them in tears, he asked, *"What ails the people that they weep?"* Let me know, that, if it is a grievance which can be redressed, I may help them, and that, if not, I may weep with them. Good magistrates are in pain, if their subjects be in tears.

III. His zeal for the safety and honour of Israel. When he heard of the insolence of the Ammonites, and the distress of a city, a mother in Israel, *the Spirit of God came upon him*, and put great thoughts into his mind, and *his anger was kindled greatly*, v. 6. He was angry at the insolence of the Ammonites, angry at the mean and sneaking spirit of the men of Jabesh-gilead, angry that they had not sent him notice sooner of the Ammonites' descent, and the extremity they were likely to be reduced to. He was angry to see his neighbours weeping, when it had been fitter for them to have prepared for war. It was a brave and generous fire that was now kindled in the breast of Saul, and such as became his high station.

IV. The authority and power he exerted, upon this important occasion; he soon let Israel know, that, though he was retired to his privacy, he had a care for the public, and knew how to command *men* into the field, as well as how to drive *cattle* out of the field, v. 5, 7. He sent a summons to all the coasts of Israel, to show the extent of his power beyond his own tribe, even to all the tribes, and ordered all the military men forthwith to appear in arms at a general rendezvous in Bezek. Observe, 1. His modesty, in joining Samuel in commission with himself; he would not execute the office of a king, without a due regard to that of a prophet. 2. His mildness, in the penalty threatened against these that should disobey his orders. He hews a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sends the

pieces to the several cities of Israel, threatening, with respect to him who should decline the public service, not, "Thus shall it be done to *him*," but, "Thus shall it be done to his *oxen*." God had threatened it as a great judgment, (Deut. 28. 31.) *Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof.* It was necessary that the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was not near so severe as that which was affixed to the like order by the whole congregation, Judg. 21. 5. Saul wished to show that his government was more gentle than that which they had been under. The effect of this summons was, that the militia, or trained-bands, of the nation, *came out as one man*, and the reason given is, because *the fear of the Lord fell upon them*. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to observe his orders by the fear of God, and a regard to him who had made Saul their king, and them members one of another. Note, Religion and the fear of God will make men good subjects, good soldiers, and good friends to the public interests of their country. They that fear God, will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

V. His conduct and prudent proceedings in this great affair, v. 8. He numbered those that came unto him, that he might know his own strength, and how to distribute his forces in the best manner their numbers would allow. It is the honour of princes to know the numbers of their men, but it is the honour of the King of kings that *there is not any number of his armies*, Job 25. 3. In this muster, it seems, Judah, though numbered by itself, made no great figure, for as it was one tribe of twelve, so it was but an eleventh part of the whole number, thirty thousand three hundred and thirty; though the rendezvous was at Bezek, in that tribe, they wanted either the numbers, or the courage, or the zeal, that that tribe used to be famous for; so low was it, just before the sceptre was brought into it in David.

VI. His faith and confidence, and (grounded on that) his courage and resolution, in this enterprise. It should seem that those very messengers which brought the tidings from Jabesh-gilead, Saul sent into the country to raise the militia, who would be sure to be faithful and careful in their own business, and then he now sends back to their distressed countrymen, with this assurance, (in which, it is probable, Samuel encouraged him,) "*To-morrow*, by such an hour, before the enemy can pretend that the seven days are expired, *you shall have deliverance*," (v. 9.) Be you ready to do your part, and we will not fail to do our's. Do you sally out upon the besiegers, while we surround them." Saul knew he had a just cause, a clear call, and God on his side, and therefore doubted not of success. This was good news to the besieged Gileadites, whose right eyes had wept themselves dry for their calamities, and now began to fail with looking for relief, and to ache in expectation of the doom of the ensuing day, when they must look their last; the greater the exigence, the more welcome the deliverance. When they heard it, they were glad, relying on the assurances that were sent them. And they sent into the enemies' camp, (v. 10.) to tell them, that next day they would be ready to meet them, which the enemies understood as an intimation that they despaired of relief, and so were made the more secure by it; if they took not care, by sending out scouts, to rectify their own mistake, they must thank themselves if they were surprised, the besieged were under no obligation to give them notice of the help they were assured of.

VII. His industry and close application to this business. If he had been bred up to war from his

youth, and had led regiments as often as he had followed droves, he could not have gone about an affair of this nature more dexterously, or more diligently. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon men, it will make them expert, even without experience. A vast army (especially in comparison with the present usage) Saul had now at his foot, and a long march before him, near sixty miles, and over Jordan too. No cavalry in his army, but all infantry, which he divides into three battalions, v. 11. And observe, 1. With what incredible swiftness he flew to the enemy; in a day and a night, he came to the place of action, where his own fate, and that of Israel, must be determined. He had passed his word, and would not break it: nay, he was better than his word, for he promised help next day, *by that time the sun was hot*, (v. 9.) but brought it before day, *in the morning watch*, v. 11. Whom God helps he *helps right early*, Ps. 46. 5. 2. With what incredible bravery he flew upon the enemy; betimes in the morning, when they lay dreaming of the triumphs they expected that day over the miserable inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, before they were aware, he was in the midst of their host; and his men, being marched against them in three columns, surrounded them on each side, so that they could have neither heart, nor time, to make head against him.

*Lastly*, To complete his honour, God crowned all these virtues with success. Jabesh-gilead was rescued, and the Ammonites totally routed; he had now the day before him to complete his victory in; and so complete a victory it was, that they which remained, after a great slaughter, were scattered so that *two of them were not left together*, to encourage or help one another, v. 11. We may suppose that Saul was the more vigorous in this matter, 1. Because there was some alliance between the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Jabesh-gilead. That city had declined joining with the rest of the Israelites to destroy Gibeah, which was then punished as their crime, but, perhaps, was now remembered as their kindness, when Saul of Gibeah came with so much readiness and resolution to relieve Jabesh-gilead. Yet that was not all; two thirds of the Benjamites that then remained, were provided with wives from that city, (Judges 21. 14.) so that most of the mothers of Benjamin were daughters of Jabesh-gilead, for which city Saul, being a Benjamite, had therefore a particular kindness; and we find they returned his kindness, ch. 31. 11, 12. 2. Because it was the Ammonites' invasion that induced the people to desire a king, (so Samuel says, ch. 12. 12.) so that if he had not done his part in this expedition, he had disappointed their expectations, and had for ever forfeited their respect.

12. And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. 13. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel. 14. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. 15. And all the people went to Gilgal; and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

We have here the improvement of that glorious



victory which Saul had obtained, not the improvement of it abroad, (though we take it for granted that the men of Jabesh-gilead, having so narrowly saved their right eyes, would with them now discern the opportunity they had of avenging themselves upon these cruel enemies, and disabling them ever to straiten them in like manner again; now shall they be avenged on the Ammonites, for their right eyes condemned, as Samson on the Philistines, *for his two eyes put out*, Judg. 16. 28. (but the account here given, is of the improvement of it at home.)

I. The people took this occasion to show their jealousy of the honour of Saul, and their resentment of the indignities done him. Samuel, it seems, was present, if not in the action, (it was too far for him to march,) yet to meet them when they returned victorious; and to him as judge, the motion was made, (for they knew Saul would not be judge in his own cause,) that the sons of Belial that *would not have him to reign over them*, should be *brought forth and slain*, v. 12. Saul's good fortune (as foolish men commonly call it) went further with them to confirm his title, than either his choice by lot, or Samuel's anointing of him. They had not courage thus to move for the persecution of those that opposed him, when he himself looked mean, but now that his victory made him look great, now nothing will serve but they must be put to death.

II. Saul took this occasion to give further proofs of his clemency, for, without waiting for Samuel's answer, he himself quashed the motion; (v. 13.) *There shall not a man be put to death this day*, no, not those men, those bad men, that had abused him, and therein reflected on God himself: 1. Because it was a day of joy and triumph; "*To day the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel*"; and since God has been so good to us all, let us not be harsh one to another. Now that God has made the heart of Israel in general so glad, let us not make sad the hearts of any particular Israelites." 2. Because he hoped they were by this day's work brought to a temper, were now convinced that this man, under God, could save them: now honoured him whom before they had despised; and, if they be but reclaimed, he is secured from receiving any disturbance by them, and therefore his point is gained; if an enemy be made a friend, that is more to our advantage than to have him slain. And all good princes consider that their power is for edification, not for destruction.

III. Samuel took this occasion to call the people together *before the Lord in Gilgal*, v. 14, 15. 1. That they might publicly give God thanks for their late victory. There they *rejoiced greatly*, and, that God might have the praise of that which they had the comfort of, they *sacrificed to him*, as the Giver of all their successes, *sacrifices of peace-offerings*. 2. That they might confirm Saul in the government, more solemnly than it had been yet done, that he might not retire again to his obscurity. Samuel would have the kingdom renewed; he would renew his resignation, and the people should renew their approbation, and so, in concurrence with, or rather in attendance upon, the divine nomination, they made Saul king, making it their own act and deed to submit to him.

## CHAP. XII.

We left the general assembly of the states together, in the close of the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we have Samuel's speech to them, when he resigned the government into the hands of Saul. In which, I. He clears himself from all suspicion or imputation of mismanagement, while the administration was in his hands, v. 1. . 5. II. He reminds them of the great things God had done

for them, and for their fathers, v. 6. . 13. III. He sets before them good and evil, the blessings and the curse, v. 14, 15. IV. He awakens them to regard what he said to them, by calling to God for thunder, v. 16. . 19. V. He encourages them with hopes that all should be well, v. 20. . 25. This is his farewell sermon to that august assembly, and Saul's coronation sermon.

1. **A**ND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now, behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and gray-headed; and, behold, my sons are with you; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. 3. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man's hand. 5. And he said unto them, The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

Here,

I. Samuel gives them a short account of the late revolution, and of the present posture of their government, by way of preface to what he had further to say to them, v. 1, 2. 1. For his own part, he had spent his days in their service; he began betimes to be useful among them, and had continued long so. "*I have walked before you*, as a guide to direct you, as a shepherd that leads his flock, (Ps. 80. 1.) *from my childhood unto this day*;" (as soon as he was illuminated with the light of prophecy in his early days, he began to be a burning and shining light to Israel;) "and now my best days are done; *I am old and gray-headed*;" therefore they were the more unkind to cast him off; yet therefore he was the more willing to resign, finding the weight of government heavy upon his stooping shoulders. Old, and therefore the more able to advise them; and the more observant they should be of what he said, for *days shall speak*, and *the multitude of years shall teach wisdom*; and there is a particular reverence owing to the aged, especially aged magistrates, and aged ministers. "Old, and therefore not likely to live long; perhaps, may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again, and therefore take notice of what I say." 2. As for his sons: "*Behold*," (says he,) "*they are with you*; you may, if you please, call them to an account for any thing they have done amiss. They are present with you, and have not, upon this revolution, run their country; they are upon a level with you, subjects to the new king as well as you; if you can prove them guilty of any wrong, you may prosecute them now by a due course of law, punish them, and oblige them to make restitution." 3. As for their new king, Samuel had gratified them in setting him over them; (v. 1.) "*I have hearkened to your voice in all that ye said to me*, being desirous to please you, if it were possible, and make you easy, though to the discarding of myself and family; and now, will you hearken to me, and take my advice?" The

change was now perfected; "*Behold, the king walketh before you;* (v. 2.) he appears in public, ready to serve you in public business. Now that you have made yourselves like the nations in your civil government, and have cast off the divine administration in that, now take heed lest you make yourselves like the nations in religion, and cast off the worship of God."

II. He solemnly appeals to them concerning his own integrity in the administration of the government; (v. 3.) *Witness against me, whose ox have I taken?* By this he intended, 1. To convince them of the injury they had done him, in setting him aside, when they had nothing amiss to charge him with; his government had no fault, but that it was too cheap, too easy, too gentle. Also of the injury they had done themselves, in turning off one that did not so much as take an ox or an ass from them, to put themselves under the power of one that would take from them their fields and vineyards, nay, and their very sons and daughters; (ch. 8. 11.) so unlike would the manner of the king be from *his* manners. 2. To preserve his own reputation: they that heard of Samuel's being rejected as he was, would be ready to suspect, that certainly he had done some bad thing, or he had never been so ill treated; so that it was necessary for him to make this challenge, that it might appear upon record, that it was not for any iniquity in his hands that he was laid aside, but to gratify the humour of a giddy people, who owned they could not have a *better* man to rule them, only they desired a *bigger* man. There is a just debt which every man owes to his own good name, especially men in public stations, which is, to guard against unjust aspersions and suspicions, that we may finish our course with honour, as well as joy. 3. As he designed hereby to leave a good name behind him, so he designed to leave his successor a good example before him; let him write after his copy, and he will write fair. 4. Samuel designed, in the close of his discourse, to reprove the people, and therefore he begins with a vindication of himself: for he that will, with confidence, tell another of his sin, must see to it, that he himself be clear.

Now observe, (1.) What it is that Samuel here acquits himself from. [1.] He had never, under any pretence whatsoever, taken that which was not his own, ox nor ass; had never distrained their cattle for tribute, fines, or forfeitures, nor used their service without paying for it. [2.] He had never defrauded those with whom he dealt, nor oppressed those that were under his power. [3.] He had never taken bribes to pervert justice, nor was ever biassed by favour or affection, to give judgment in a cause against his conscience. (2.) How he appeals to those that had slighted him concerning it; "*Here I am; witness against me,* if you have any thing to lay to my charge; do it now *before the Lord, and the king,* the proper judges." He puts honour upon Saul, by owning himself accountable to him, if he had been guilty of any wrong.

III. Upon this appeal, he is honourably acquitted; he did not expect that they should do him honour at parting, though he well deserved it, and therefore mentioned not any of the good services he had done for them, for which they ought to have applauded him, and returned him the thanks of the house; all he desired was, that they should do him justice, and that they did, (v. 4.) readily owning, 1. That he had not made his government oppressive to them, nor used his power to their wrong. 2. That he had not made it expensive to them; "*Neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand,* for the support of thy dignity." Like Nehemiah, he did not *require the bread of the governor*; (Neh. 5. 18.) had not only been righteous, but generous; had *coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*, Acts 20. 33.

IV. This honourable testimony borne to Samuel's integrity, is left upon record to his honour; (v. 5.) *The Lord is Witness*, who searcheth the heart, *and his anointed is witness*, who trieth overt acts; and the people agree to it, *He is witness*. Note, The testimony of our neighbours, and especially the testimony of our own consciences for us, that we have in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort, under the slights and contempts that are put upon us. Demetrius is a happy man, that has a *good report of all men, and of the truth itself*, 3 John 12.

6. And Samuel said unto the people, *It is the LORD* that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. 7. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the LORD of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. 8. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them. 10. And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. 11. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. 12. And when ye saw that Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us; when the LORD your God was your king. 13. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, *and* whom ye have desired! and, behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. 14. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the LORD your God: 15. But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel, having sufficiently secured his own reputation, instead of upbraiding the people upon it with their unkindness to him, sets himself to instruct them, and keep them in the way of their duty, and then the change of the government would be the less damage to them.

I. He reminds them of the great goodness of God to them, and to their fathers; gives them an abstruse of the history of their nation, that, by the consider

ation of the great things God had done for them, they might be for ever engaged to love him and serve him. "Come," says he, *v. 7.* "stand still, in token of reverence, when God is speaking to you; stand still in token of attention and composedness of mind, and give me leave to reason with you." Religion has reason on its side, *Isa. 1. 18.* The work of ministers is to reason with people; not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade; to convince men's judgments, and so to gain their wills and affections. Let reason rule men, and they will be good. He reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord; that is, "both the benefits he has bestowed upon you, in performance of his promises, and the punishments he has inflicted on you for your sins." His favours are called *his righteous acts*, (*Judg. 5. 11.*) because in them he is just to his own honour. He not only puts them in mind of what God had done for them in their days, but of what he had done of old, in the days of their fathers, because the present age had the benefit of God's former favours. We may suppose that his discourse was much larger than as here related.

1. He reminds them of their deliverance out of Egypt; into that house of bondage Jacob and his family came down poor and little; when they were oppressed, they cried unto God, who advanced Moses and Aaron, from mean beginnings, to be their deliverers, and the founders of their state and settlement in Canaan, *v. 6, 8.*

2. He reminds them of the miseries and calamities which their fathers brought themselves into, by forgetting God, and serving other gods; (*v. 9.*) they enslaved themselves, for they were sold as criminals and captives into the hands of oppressors: they exposed themselves to the desolation of war, their neighbours fought against them.

3. He reminds them of their fathers' repentance and humiliation before God for their idolatries. *They said, We have sinned, v. 10.* Let not them imitate the sins of their fathers, for, what they had done amiss they had many a time wished undone again; in the day of their distress they had sought unto God, and had promised to serve him, let their children then reckon that good at all times, which they found good in bad times.

4. He reminds them of the glorious deliverances God had wrought for them, the victories he had blessed them with, and their happy settlements, many a time, after days of trouble and distress, *v. 11.* He specifies some of their judges. Gideon and Jephthah, great conquerors in their time; among the rest he mentions Bedan, whom we read not of any where else: he might be some eminent person, that was instrumental of salvation to them, though not recorded in the book of Judges; such a one as Shamgar, of whom it is said, that he *delivered* Israel, but not that he *judged* them, *Judg. 3. 31.* Perhaps, this Bedan guarded and delivered them on one side, at the same time when some other of the judges appeared and acted for them on the other side. Some think it was the same with Jair, so the learned Mr. Poole; others, the same with Samson, who was Ben Dan, a son of Dan, of that tribe, and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, Be-Dan, in Dan, in the camp of Dan. Samuel mentions himself, not to his own praise, but to the honour of God, who had made him an instrument of subduing the Philistines.

5. At last, he puts them in mind of God's late favour to the present generation, in gratifying them with a king, when they would prescribe to God, by such a one, to save them out of the hand of Nahash king of Ammon, *v. 12, 13.* Now it appears that that was the immediate occasion of their desiring a king; Nahash threatened them: they moved Samuel to nominate a general: he told them God was Com-

mander-in-chief in all their wars, and they needed no other; what was wanting in them, should be made up by his power; *The Lord is your King;* but they insisted on it, *Nay, but a king shall reign over us.* "And now," said he, "you have a king: a king of your own asking, let that be spoken to your shame; but a king of God's making, let that be spoken to his honour, and the glory of his grace." God did not cast them off then, when they, in effect, cast him off.

II. He shows them that they were now upon their good behaviour, they and their king; let them not think that they had now cut themselves off from all dependence upon God, and that now, having a king of their own, the making of their own fortunes (as men foolishly call it) was in their own hands; no, still their judgment must proceed from the Lord. He tells them plainly,

1. That their obedience to God would certainly be their happiness; (*v. 14.*) if they would not revolt from God to idols, nor rebel against him, by breaking his commandments, but would persevere in their allegiance to him, would fear his wrath, serve his interests, and obey his will, then they and their king should certainly be happy: but observe how the promise is expressed, *Then ye shall continue following the Lord your God;* that is, (*1.*) "Ye shall continue in the way of your duty to God, which will be your honour and comfort." Note, To those that are sincere in their religion, God will give grace to persevere in it, those that follow God faithfully, God will enable to continue following him. And observe, Following God is a work that is its own wages. It is the matter of a promise as well as of a precept. (*2.*) "Ye shall continue under the divine guidance and protection. *Ye shall be after the Lord,* so it is in the original; that is, "He will go before you to lead and prosper you, and make your way plain; *The Lord is with you, while you are with him.*"

2. That their disobedience would as certainly be their ruin; (*v. 15.*) "If ye rebel, think not that your having a king will secure you against God's judgments, and that now having in this instance made yourselves *like the nations*, you may sin at as cheap a rate as they can. No, *the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers* when they offended him, in the days of the Judges." We mistake if we think that we can evade God's justice by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

16. Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. 17. *Is it not wheat-harvest to-day?* I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. 18. So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. 19. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins *this* evil, to ask us a king. 20. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: (ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; 21. And turn ye not aside: for

*then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain:* 22. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. 23. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: 24. Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done, for you. 25. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Two things Samuel here aims at:

I. To convince the people of their sin in desiring a king. They were now rejoicing before God, in and with their king, (*ch. 11. 15.*) and offering to God the sacrifices of praise, which they hoped God would accept of; and this perhaps made them think that there was no harm in their asking a king, but really they had done well in it; therefore Samuel here charges it upon them as their sin, as wickedness, *great wickedness in the sight of the Lord*. Note, Though we meet with prosperity and success in a way of sin, yet we must not therefore think the more favourably of it. They have a king, and if they conduct themselves well, their king may be a very great blessing to them, and yet Samuel will have them perceive and see that their *wickedness is great in asking a king*. We must never think well of that which God in his law frowns upon, though in his providence he seems to smile upon it.

Observe, 1. The expressions of God's displeasure against them for asking a king. At Samuel's word, God sent prodigious thunder and rain upon them, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was never seen or known before, *v. 16-18*. Thunder and rain have natural causes, and sometimes terrible effects. But Samuel made it appear that this was designed by the almighty power of God, on purpose to convince them that they had done very *wickedly in asking a king*, not only by its coming in an unusual time, in wheat harvest, and this on a fair clear day, when there appeared not to the eye any signs of a storm, but by his giving notice of it before. Had there happened to be thunder and rain at the time when he was speaking to them, he might have improved it for their awakening and conviction, as we may in a like case; but to make it no less than a miracle, before it came, (1.) He spoke to them of it; (*v. 16, 17.*) *Stand and see this great thing*. He had bidden them *stand and hear*, (*v. 7.*) but because he did not see that his reasoning with them affected them, (so stupid were they and unthinking,) now he bids them *stand and see*. If what he said in a *still small voice* did not reach their hearts, nor his doctrine which dropped as the dew, they shall hear God speaking to them in dreadful claps of thunder, and the great rain of his strength. He appealed to this as a sign, "*I will call upon the Lord, he shall send thunder; shall send it just now, to confirm the word of his servant, and to make you see that I said true, when I told you that God was angry with you for asking a king.*" And the event proved him a true prophet, the sign and wonder came to pass. (2.) He spoke to God for it. Samuel called unto the Lord, and, in answer to his prayer, even while he was yet speaking, *the Lord sent thunder and rain*. By this Samuel made it appear, not only what a powerful influence God has upon this earth, that he could, of a sudden, when natural causes did not

work towards it, produce this dreadful rain and thunder, and bring them out of his treasures, (*Ps. 135. 7.*) but also what a powerful interest *he* had in heaven, that God would thus *hearken to the voice of a man*, (*Josh. 10. 14.*) and answer him *in the secret place of thunder*, *Ps. 81. 7*. Samuel, that son of prayer, was still famous for success in prayer.

Now by this extraordinary thunder and rain sent on this occasion, [1.] God testified his displeasure against them in the same way in which he had formerly testified it, and at the prayer of Samuel too, against the Philistines; (*ch. 7. 10.*) *The Lord discomfited them with a great thunder*. Now that Israel rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit, he turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them with the same weapons which, not long before, had been employed against their adversaries, *Isa. 63. 10*. [2.] He showed them their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God, or Samuel, promising themselves more from an arm of flesh, than from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their king *thunder with a voice like God?* *Job 40. 9*. Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers? [3.] He intimated to them, that how serene and prosperous soever their condition seemed to be now that they had a king, like the weather in wheat-harvest, yet if God pleased, he could soon change the face of the heavens, and persecute them with his tempest, as the psalmist speaks.

2. The impressions which this made upon the people. It startled them very much, as well it might. (1.) *They greatly feared the Lord and Samuel*. Though when they had a king, they were ready to think they must fear him only, God made them know that *he is greatly to be feared*, and his prophets for his sake. Now they were rejoicing in their king, God taught them to rejoice with trembling. (2.) They own their sin and folly in desiring a king; (*v. 19.*) *We have added to all our sins this evil*. Some people will not be brought to a sight of their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. Samuel did not extort this confession from them till the matter was settled and the king confirmed, lest it should look as if he designed by it rather to establish himself in the government, than to bring them to repentance. Now that they were *flattering themselves in their own eyes, their iniquity was found to be hateful*, *Ps. 36. 2*. (3.) They earnestly begged Samuel's prayers; (*v. 19.*) *Pray for thy servants, that we die not*. They were apprehensive of their danger from the wrath of God, and could not expect that he should hear their prayers for themselves, and therefore they entreat Samuel to pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom a while ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have *Christ to reign over them*, would yet be glad to have him to intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. And the time may come, when those that have despised and ridiculed praying people, will value their prayers, and desire a share in them. "*Pray*" (said they) "*to the Lord thy God; we know not how to call him cur's, but if thou have any interest in him, improve it for us.*"

II. He aims to confirm the people in their religion, and engage them for ever to cleave unto the Lord. The design of his discourse is much the same with Joshua's, *ch. 23. and 24*.

1. He would not that the terrors of the Lord should frighten them from him, for they were intended to frighten them to him; (*v. 20.*) "*Fear not, though ye have done all this wickedness; and though God is angry with you for it, yet do not therefore abandon his service, nor turn from following him.*" *Fear not*; that is, "*Despair not, fear not with amazement; the weather will clear up after the*

storm. Fear not; though God will frown upon his people, yet he will not forsake them, (*v. 22.*) *for his great name's sake*; do not you forsake him then." Every transgression in the covenant, though it displease the Lord, yet does not throw us out of covenant, and therefore God's just rebukes must not drive us from our hopes in his mercy. The fixedness of God's choice is owing to the freeness of it; we may *therefore* hope he will not forsake his people, because it has *pleased him to make them his people*. Had he chosen them for their good merits, we might fear he would cast them off for their bad merits: but, choosing them *for his name's sake*, for his name's sake he will not leave them.

2. He cautions them against idolatry; "*Turn not aside from God and the worship of him,*" *v. 20.* and again, *v. 21.* "for if ye turn aside from God, whatever ye turn aside to, you will find it is a vain thing, that can never answer your expectations, but will certainly deceive you if you trust to it; it is a broken reed, a broken cistern." Idols are so, they are vanity and a lie: whatever we make a god of, we shall find it so. Creatures in their own place are good things, but when put in God's place, they are vain things. Idols could not profit those that sought to them in their wants, nor deliver those that sought to them in their straits, for they were vain, and not what they pretended to be. *An idol is nothing in the world,* 1. Cor. 8. 4.

3. He comforts them with an assurance that he would continue his care and concern for them, *v. 23.* They desired him to pray for them; (*v. 19.*) he might have said, "Go to Saul and get him to pray for you, the king that you have put in my room;" but so far is he from upbraiding them with their disrespect to him, that he promises them much more than they asked. (1.) They asked it of him as a favour; he promised it as a duty, and startles at the thought of neglecting it. *Pray for you!* says he, *God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in not doing it.* Note, It is a sin against God, not to pray for the Israel of God, especially for those of them that are under our charge: and good men are afraid of the guilt of omissions. (2.) They asked him to pray for them at this time, and upon this occasion, but he promises to continue his prayers for them, and not to cease as long as he lived. Our rule is, to *pray without ceasing*; we sin if we restrain prayer in general, and in particular if we cease praying for the church. (3.) They asked him only to pray for them, but he promises to do more for them, not only to pray for them, but to teach them; though they were not willing to be under his government as a judge, he would not therefore deny them his instructions as a prophet. And they may be sure he would teach them no other than the *good and the right way*; and the right way is certainly the good way; the way of duty, the way of pleasure and profit.

4. He concludes with an earnest exhortation to practical religion and serious godliness, *v. 24, 25.* The great duty here pressed upon us, is, to *fear the Lord*. He had said, (*v. 20.*) "*Fear not* with a slavish fear," but here, "*Fear the Lord* with a filial fear. As the fruit and evidence of this, serve him in the duties of religious worship, and of a godly conversation; in truth and sincerity, and not in show and profession only, but with your heart, and *with all your heart*, not dissembling, not dividing." And two things he urges by way of motive; (1.) That they were bound in *gratitude* to serve God, considering *what great things he had done for them*, to engage them for ever to his service. (2.) That they were bound in *interest* to serve him, considering what great things he would do against them, if they should *still do wickedly*; "*Ye shall be destroyed* by the judgments of God, *both ye and*

*your king* that you are so proud of, and expect so much from; and that will be a blessing to you if you keep in with God." Thus, as a faithful watchman, he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul.

## CHAP. XIII.

They that desired a king like all the nations, fancied that, when they had one, they should look very great and considerable; but in this chapter we find it proved much otherwise. While Samuel was joined in commission with Saul, things went well; (*ch. 11. 7.*) but now that Saul began to reign alone, all went to decay, and Samuel's words began to be fulfilled. *Ye shall be consumed, both you and your king*; for never was the state of Israel further gone in a consumption than in this chapter. 1. Saul appears here a very silly prince; 1. Infatuated in his councils, *v. 1. .3.* 2. Invaded by his neighbours, *v. 4, 5.* 3. Deserted by his soldiers, *v. 6, 7.* 4. Disordered in his own spirit, and sacrificing in confusion, *v. 8. .10.* 5. Chidden by Samuel, *v. 11. .13.* 6. Rejected of God from being a king, *v. 14.* 11. The people appear here a very miserable people; 1. Disheartened and dispersed, *v. 6, 7.* 2. Diminished, *v. 15, 16.* 3. Plundered, *v. 17, 18.* 4. Disarmed, *v. 19. .23.* This they got by casting off God's government, and making themselves *like the nations*; all their glory departed from them.

1. **S**SAUL reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2. Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. 3. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba; and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. 4. And all Israel heard say, *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. 5. And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. 6. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. 7. And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal; and all the people followed him trembling.

We are not told wherein it was that the people of Israel offended God, so as to forfeit his presence, and turn his hand against them, as Samuel had threatened; (*ch. 12. 15.*) but doubtless they left God, else he had not left them, as here it appears he did; for,

1. Saul was very weak and impolitic, and did not order his affairs with discretion. *Saul was the son of one year*, so the first words are in the original; a phrase which we make to signify the date of his

reign, but ordinarily it signifies the date of one's birth: and therefore some understand it figuratively, he was as innocent and good as a child of a year old; so the Chaldee paraphrase, he was *without fault, like the son of a year*. But if we admit of a figurative sense, it may as well intimate that he was ignorant and imprudent, and as unfit for business as a child of a year old; and the following particulars make that more his character, than the former. But we take it rather as our translation has it, *Saul reigned one year*, and nothing happened that was considerable; it was a year of no action; but in his second year he did as follows:

1. He chose him a band of *three thousand men*, of which he himself commanded two thousand, and his son Jonathan one thousand; (*v. 2.*) the rest of the people he dismissed to their tents. If he intended these only for the guard of his person, and his honorary attendants, it was impolitic to have so many; if for a standing army, in apprehension of danger from the Philistines, it was no less impolitic to have so few; and, perhaps, the confidence he put in this select number, and his disbanding the rest of that brave army with which he lately beat the Ammonites, (*ch. 11. 8, 11.*) was looked upon as an affront to the kingdom, gave a general disgust, and was the reason he had so few at his call when he had occasion for them. The prince that relies on a particular party, weakens his own interest in the whole community.

2. He ordered his son Jonathan to surprise and destroy the garrison of the Philistines that lay near him in Geba, *v. 3.* I wish there were no ground for supposing it to have been a violation or infraction of some articles with the Philistines, and that it was done treacherously and perfidiously; the reason why I suspect it, is, because it is said, for doing it, *Israel was had in abomination*, or, as the word is, *did stink with the Philistines*, (*v. 4.*) as men void of common honesty, and whose word could not be relied on. If it was so, we will lay the blame, not on Jonathan who did it, but on Saul, his prince and father, who ordered him to do it, and, perhaps, kept him in ignorance of the truth of the matter. Nothing makes the name of Israel so odious to them that are without, so much as the fraud and dishonesty of those that are called by that worthy name. If professors of religion cheat and overreach, break their word, and betray their trust, religion suffers by it, and is *had in abomination with the Philistines*. Whom may one trust, if not an Israelite? one that, it is expected, should be *without guile*.

3. When he had thus exasperated the Philistines, then he began to raise forces, which, if he had acted wisely, he would have done before. When the Philistines had a vast army ready to pour in upon him, to avenge the wrong he had done them, then was he *blowing the trumpet through the land*, among a careless, if not a disaffected people, saying, *Let the Hebrews hear*; (*v. 3.*) and so, as many as thought fit came to Saul to Gilgal, *v. 4.* But now the generality, we may suppose, drew back, either in dislike of Saul's politics, or in dread of the Philistines' power, who, if he had summoned them sooner, would have been as ready at his beck as they were when he marched against the Ammonites. We often find that after-wit would have done much better before, and have prevented much inconvenience.

II. Never did the Philistines appear in such a formidable body as they did now, upon this provocation which Saul gave them; we may suppose they had great assistance from their allies, for, (*v. 5.*) beside six thousand horse, which, in those times, when horses were not so much used in war as they now are, was a great body, they had an incredible

number of chariots, thirty thousand in all. most of them, we may suppose, were carriages for the bag and baggage of so vast an army, not chariots of war. But their foot was *immurable as the sand of the sea-shore*; so jealous were they for the honour of their nation, and so much enraged at the baseness of the Israelites in destroying their garrison. If Saul had asked counsel of God before he had given the Philistines this provocation, he and his people might the better have borne this threatening trouble which they had now brought on themselves by their own folly.

III. Never were the people of Israel so faint-hearted, so sneaking, so very cowardly, as they were now. Some considerable numbers, it may be came to Saul to Gilgal, but, hearing of the Philistines' numbers and preparations, their spirits sunk within them; some think, because they did not find Samuel there with Saul. They that, a while ago, were weary of him, and wished for a king, now had small joy of their king, unless they could see him under Samuel's direction. Sooner or later, men will be made to see that God and his prophets are their best friends. Now that they saw the Philistines making war upon them, and Samuel not coming in to help them, they know not what to do; *men's hearts failed them for fear*. And, 1. Some absconded. Rather than run upon death among the Philistines, they buried themselves alive in caves and thickets, *v. 6.* See what work sin makes; it exposes men to perils, and then robs them of their courage, and dispirits them. A single person, by faith, can say, *I will not be afraid of ten thousand*; (*Ps. 3. 6.*) but here, thousands of degenerate Israelites trembled at the approach of a great crowd of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards. 2. Others fled, *v. 7.* They went over Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from the danger, and to a place where they had lately been victorious over the Ammonites: where they had triumphed, they had hoped to be sheltered. 3. Those that stayed with Saul, followed him trembling, expecting no other than to be cut off, and having their hands and hearts very much weakened by the desertion of so many of their troops. And, perhaps, Saul himself, though he had so much honour as to stand his ground, yet had no courage to spare, wherewith to inspire his trembling soldiers.

8. And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering. 10. And it came to pass, that, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12. Therefore, said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. 13. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done



foolishly : thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee ; for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14. But now thy kingdom shall not continue : the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be captain over his people*, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

Here is,

I. Saul's offence in offering sacrifice before Samuel came. Samuel, when he anointed him, had ordered him to tarry for him seven days in Gilgal, promising that, at the end of those days, he would be sure to come to him, and both offer sacrifices for him, and direct him what he should do. This we had, *ch.* 10. 8. Perhaps that order, though inserted there, was given him afterward ; or was given him as a general rule to be observed in every public congress at Gilgal ; or, as is most probable, though not mentioned again, was lately repeated with reference to this particular occasion ; for, it is plain that Saul himself understood it as obliging him from God now to stay till Samuel came, else he would not have made so many excuses as he did, for not staying, *v.* 11. This order Saul broke ; he stayed till the seventh day, yet had not patience to wait till the end of the seventh day ; perhaps, he began to reproach Samuel as false to his word, careless of his country, and disrespectful to his prince ; and thought it more fit that Samuel should wait for him, than he for Samuel. However, 1. He presumed to offer sacrifice without Samuel, and nothing appears to the contrary but that he did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet, as if, because he was a king, he might do any thing ; a piece of presumption, which King Uzziah paid dear for, 2 Chron. 26. 16, &c. 2. He determined to engage the Philistines without Samuel's directions, though he had promised to *show him what he should do*. So self-sufficient Saul was, that he thought it not worth while to stay for a prophet of the Lord, either to pray for him, or advise him.

This was Saul's offence, and that which aggravated it, was, (1.) That, for aught that appears, he did not send any messenger to Samuel, to know his mind, to represent the case to him, and to receive fresh directions from him, though he had enough about him that were swift enough of foot at this time. (2.) That when Samuel came, he rather seemed to boast of what he had done, than to repent of it ; for he *went forth to salute him*, as his brother sacrificer, and seemed pleased with the opportunity he had of letting Samuel know that he needed him not, but could do well enough without him. He went out to *bless him*, so the word is, as if he now thought himself a complete priest, empowered to bless as well as sacrifice, whereas he should have gone out to be blessed by him. (3.) That he charged Samuel with breach of promise, *Thou comest not within the days appointed* ; (*v.* 11.) and therefore if any thing was amiss, Samuel must bear the blame, who was God's minister ; whereas he did come according to his word, before the seven days were expired. Thus the *scoffers of the latter days* think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he does not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time. (4.) That when he was charged with disobedience, he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance for it. It is not sinning that ruins men, but sinning and not repenting ; falling and not getting up again. See what excuses he made, *v.*

11, 12. He would have this act of disobedience pass, [1.] For an instance of his prudence ; the people were most of them scattered from him, and he had no other way than this, to keep those with him that remained, and to prevent their deserting too. If Samuel neglected the public concerns, he would not. [2.] For an instance of his piety ; he would be thought very devout, and in great care not to engage the Philistines till he had by prayer and sacrifice engaged God on his side. "*The Philistines*," said he, "*will come down upon me, before I have made my supplication to the Lord*, and then I am undone. What ! go to war before I have said my prayers !" Thus he covered his disobedience to God's command, with a pretence of concern for God's favour. Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the *weightier matters of the law*. And yet, lastly, He owns it went against his conscience to do it ; *I forced myself, and offered a burnt-offering* ; perhaps boasting that he had broken through his convictions, and got the better of them ; or, at least, thinking this extenuated his fault, that he knew he should not have done as he did, but did it with reluctance. Foolish man ! to think that God would be well pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command.

II. The sentence passed upon Saul for this offence : Samuel found him standing by his burnt-offering ; but, instead of an answer of peace, was sent to him with heavy tidings, and let him know that *the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord*, much more when he brings it, as Saul did, *with a wicked mind*. 1. He shows him the aggravations of his crime ; and says to this king, *Thou art wicked* ; which it is not for any but a prophet of the Lord to say, Job 34. 18. He charges him with being an enemy to himself and his interest. *Thou hast done foolishly* ; and a rebel to God and his government, "*Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God*, that command wherewith he intended to try thy obedience." Note, Those that disobey the commandments of God, do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools. 2. He reads his doom ; (*v.* 14.) "*Thy kingdom shall not continue* long to thee or thy family ; God has his eye upon another, a man after his own heart, and not like thee, that will have thy own will and way." The sentence is, in effect, the same with *Mene tekel*. Only now there seems room left for Saul's repentance, upon which this sentence should have been reversed ; but, upon the next act of disobedience, it was made irreversible, *ch.* 15. 29. And now, better a thousand times he had continued in obscurity tending his asses, than to be enthroned and so soon dethroned.

But was not this hard, to pass so severe a sentence upon him and his house for a single error, and that seemed so small, and in excuse for which he had so much to say ? No, *The Lord is righteous in all his ways*, and does no man any wrong ; *will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges*. By this, (1.) He shows that there is no sin little, because no little God to sin against ; but that every sin is a forfeiture of the heavenly kingdom, for which we stood fair. (2.) He shows, that disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, is a great provocation ; as in the case of our first parents. (3.) He warns us to *take heed of our spirits* ; for that which to men may seem but a small offence, yet to him that knows from what principle, and with what disposition of mind it is done, may appear a heinous crime. (4.) God, in rejecting Saul for an error seemingly little, sets off, as by a foil, the lustre of his mercy, in forgiving such great sins as those of David, Manasseh, and others. (5.) We

are taught hereby, how necessary it is that we *wait on our God continually*. Saul lost his kingdom for want of two or three hours' patience.

15. And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men. 16. And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17. And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth* to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual: 18. And another company turned the way to Beth-horon; and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim, toward the wilderness. 19. Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel; (for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears;) 20. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. 21. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. 22. So it came to pass, in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul, and with Jonathan his son, was there found. 23. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Here is,

1. Samuel gone in displeasure. Saul has set up for himself, and now he is left to himself; *Samuel gat him from Gilgal*, (v. 15.) and it does not appear that he either prayed with him, or directed him. Yet, in going up to Gibeah of Benjamin, which was Saul's city, he intimated that he had not quite abandoned him, but waited there to do him a kindness another time. Or, he went to the college of the prophets, there to pray for Saul, when he did not think fit to pray *with* him.

2. Saul goes after him to Gibeah, and there musters his army, and finds his whole number to be but six hundred men, v. 15, 16. Thus were they for their sin *diminished and brought low*.

3. The Philistines ravaged the country, and put all the adjacent parts under contribution. The body of their army, or standing camp, as it is called in the margin, (v. 23.) lay in an advantageous pass at Michmash, but thence they sent out three several parties or detachments that took several ways, to plunder the country, and bring in provisions for the army, v. 17, 18. By these the land of Israel was both terrified and impoverished, and the Philistines animated and enriched. This the sin of Israel brought upon them, Isa. 42. 24.

4. The Israelites that took the field with Saul were unarmed, had only slings and clubs, but not a sword or spear among them all, except what Saul and Jonathan themselves had, v. 19-22. See

here, (1.) How politic the Philistines were, when they had power in their hands, and did what they pleased in Israel; they put down all the smith's shops, transplanted the smiths into their own country, and forbade any Israelite, under severe penalties, to exercise the trade or mystery of working in brass or iron, though they had rich mines of both, (Deut. 8. 9.) in such plenty, that it was said of Asher, *His shoes shall be iron and brass*, Deut. 33. 25. This was subtly done of the Philistines, for hereby they not only prevented the people of Israel from making themselves weapons of war by which they would be both disused to military exercises, and unfurnished when there was occasion, but obliged them to a dependence upon them, even for the instruments of husbandry; they must go to them, that is, to some or other of their garrisons, which were d'spersed in the country, to have all their iron work done, and no more might an Israelite do than use a file; (v. 20, 21.) and no doubt the Philistines' smiths brought the Israelites long bills for work done. (2.) How impolitic Saul was, that did not, in the beginning of his reign, set himself to redress this grievance. Samuel's not doing it, was very excusable, he fought with other artillery; thunder and lightning, in answer to his prayer, were to him instead of sword or spear; but for Saul, that pretended to be a king, like the kings of the nations, to leave his soldiers without swords and spears, and take no care to provide them, especially when he might have done it out of the spoils of the Ammonites whom he conquered in the beginning of his reign, was such a piece of negligence, as could by no means be excused. (3.) How slothful and mean-spirited the Israelites were, that suffered the Philistines thus to impose upon them, and had no thought or spirit to help themselves. It was reckoned very bad with them, when there was *not a shield or spear found among forty thousand in Israel*; (Judg. 5. 8.) and it was no better now, when there was never an Israelite with a sword by his side, but the king and his son; never a soldier, never a gentleman: surely they were reduced to this, or began to be so, in Samson's time, for we never find him with a sword or spear in his hand. If they had not been dispirited, they could not have been disarmed, but it was sin that made them naked to their shame.

## CHAP. XIV.

We left the host of Israel in a very ill posture, in the close of the foregoing chapter; we saw in them neither wisdom, nor strength, nor goodness, to give us ground to expect any other than that they should all be cut off by the army of the Philistines; yet here we find that infinite power which works without means, and that infinite goodness which gives without merit, glorified in a happy turn to their affairs, that still Samuel's words may be made good. *The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake*, ch. 12. 22. In this chapter, we have, I. The host of the Philistines trampled upon, and triumphed over, by the faith and courage of Jonathan, who unknown to his father, (v. 1. .3.) with his armour-bearer only, made a brave attack upon them, encouraging himself in the Lord his God, v. 4. .7. He challenged them, (v. 8. .12.) and, upon their acceptance of the challenge, charged them with such fury, or rather such faith, that he put them to flight, and set them one against another, (v. 13. .15.) which gave opportunity to Saul and his forces, with other Israelites, to pursue the blow, and gain a victory, v. 16. .23. II. The host of Israel troubled and perplexed by the rashness and folly of Saul, who adjured the people to eat no food till night; which, I. Brought Jonathan into a præmure, v. 24. .30. 2. Was a temptation to the people, when the time of their fast was expired, to eat with the blood, v. 31. .35. 3. Jonathan's error, through ignorance, had like to have been his death, but the people rescued him, v. 36. .46. III. In the close, we have a general account of Saul's exploits, (v. 47, 48.) and of his family, v. 49. .52.

1. **N**OW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that *is* on the other side. But he did not his father. 2. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under a pomegranate-tree, which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men; 3. And Ahiah, the son of Abitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4. And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5. The fore-front of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. 6. And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few. 7. And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, *I am* with thee according to thy heart. 8. Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. 9. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand; and this *shall be* a sign unto us. 11. And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves. 12. And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will show you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour-bearer, Come up after me; for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him. 14. And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were a half-acre of land, *which* a yoke of oxen might plough. 15. And there was trembling in the host, in the field,

and among all the people; the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled; and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

We must here take notice,

I. Of the goodness of God in restraining the Philistines, who had a vast army of stout men in the field, from falling upon that little handful of timorous trembling people that Saul had with him, whom they would easily have swallowed up at once. It is an invisible power that sets bounds to the malice of the church's enemies, and suffers them not to do that which we should think there is nothing to hinder them from.

II. Of the weakness of Saul, who seems here to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself.

1. He pitched his tent under a tree, and had but six hundred men with him, *v.* 2. Where were now the three thousand men he had chosen, and put such a confidence in? *ch.* 13. 2. Those whom he trusted too much to, failed him when he most needed them. He durst not stay at Gibeah, but got into some obscure place, in the uttermost part of the city, under a pomegranate tree, under *Rimmon*, so the word is, *Ha-Rimmon*, that Rimmon near Gibeah, in the caves of which these six hundred Benjaminites that escaped, hid themselves, *Judg.* 20. 47. Some think that Saul took shelter there, so mean and abject was his spirit, now that he was fallen under God's displeasure, every hour expecting the Philistines upon him, and, thereby, the accomplishment of Samuel's threatening, *ch.* 13. 14. Those can never think themselves safe, that see themselves cast out of God's protection.

2. Now he sent for a priest, and the ark; a priest from Shiloh, and the ark from Kirjath-jearim, *v.* 3, 18. Saul had once offended by offering sacrifice himself; (*ch.* 13. 9.) now he resolves never to fall into that error again, and therefore sends for a priest, and hopes to compromise the matter with God Almighty by a partial reformation, as many do, whose hearts are unhumiliated and unchanged. Samuel, the Lord's prophet, had forsaken him, but he thinks he can make up that loss, by commanding Ahiah, the Lord's priest, to attend him, and *he* will not make him stay for him nor reprove him, as Samuel had done, but will do just as he bids him, *v.* 18, 19. Many love to have just such ministers as will be what they would have them to be, and prophesy smooth things to them; and their caressing of them because they are priests, they hope, will atone for their enmity to those ministers that deal faithfully and plainly with them. He will also have the ark brought, perhaps, to upbraid Samuel, who, in the days of his government, for aught that appears, had not made any public use of it; or in hopes that that would make up the deficiency of his forces; one would have supposed, that they would never have brought the ark into the camp again, since the last time, when it not only did not save them, but did itself fall into the Philistines' hands. But it is common for those that have lost the substance of religion, to be most fond of the shadows of it, as here is a deserted prince courting a deserted priest.

III. Of the bravery and piety of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was much fitter than the father to wear the crown. "A sweet imp" (says Bishop Hall) "out of a crab stock."

1. He resolved to go *incognito*—*unknown to any one*, into the camp of the Philistines; he did not acquaint his father with his design, for he knew he would forbid him; nor the people, for he knew they would all discourage him; and because he resolved not to heed their objections, he resolved not to hear them, nor ask their advice, *v.* 1, 3. Nor had he so great an opinion of the priest, as to consult him,

but, being conscious of a divine impulse putting him upon it, he threw himself into the mouth of danger, in hopes of doing service to his country. The way of access to the enemies' camp is described (v. 4, 5.) to be peculiarly difficult, and their natural intrenchments seemed impregnable; yet that does not discourage him: the strength and sharpness of the rocks do but harden and whet his resolutions. Great and generous souls are animated by opposition, and take pleasure in breaking through it.

2. He encouraged his armour-bearer, a young man that attended him, to go alone with him in this daring enterprise; (v. 6.) "*Come, and let us put our lives in our hands, and go over to the enemies' garrison, and try what we can do to put them into confusion.*" See whence he draws his encouragements. (1.) "They are uncircumcised, and have not the seal of the covenant in their flesh, as we have. Fear not, we shall do well enough with them, for they are not under the protection of God's covenant, as we are, cannot call him their's, as we can, by the sign of circumcision." If such as are enemies to us, are also strangers to God, we need not fear them. (2.) "God is able to make us too victorious over their unnumbered regiments. *There is no restraint to the Lord*, no limitation to the Holy One of Israel, but it is all one to him, to *save by many or by few.*" This is a truth easily granted in general, that it is all alike to Omnipotence, what the instruments are by which it works; and yet it is not so easy to apply it to a particular case: when we are but few and feeble, then to believe that God can not only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak and hearten the heartless; let it be pleaded with God for the enforcing of our petitions, and with ourselves for the silencing of our fears, *It is nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power*, 2 Chron. 14. 11. (3.) "Who knows, but he that can use us for his glory, will do it? *It may be the Lord will work for us*, work with us, work a sign or miracle for us;" so the Chaldee. We may encourage ourselves with *hope*, that God will appear for us, though we have not ground on which to build an *assurance*. An active faith will venture far in God's cause upon an, *It may be*.

His armour-bearer, or esquire, as if he had learned to carry, not his arms only, but his heart, promised to stand by him, and follow him wheresoever he went, v. 7. We have reason to think that Jonathan felt a divine impulse and impression, putting him upon this bold adventure, in which he was encouraged by his servant's concurrence, else the danger was so great which he ran upon, that he had rather tempted God, than trusted him. And perhaps, he had an actual regard to that word of Joshua, (ch. 23. 10.) *One man of you shall chase a thousand*, borrowed from Moses, Deut. 32. 30.

3. How bold soever his resolution was, he resolved to follow Providence in the execution of it, which, he believed, would guide him *with its care*, (Ps. 32. 8.) and which therefore he would carefully attend, and take hints of direction from.

See, (1.) How he put himself upon Providence, and resolved to be determined by it. "Come," (says he to his confidant,) "we will discover ourselves to the enemy, as those that are not afraid to look them in the face, (v. 8.) and then, if they be so cautious as to bid us stand, we will advance no further, taking that for an intimation of Providence, that God would have us act defensively; and we will prepare, as well as we can, to give them a warm reception: (v. 9.) but if they be so presumptuous as to challenge us, and the first sentinel we meet with bids us march on, we will push forward, and make as brisk an onset, assuredly gathering from thence

that it is the will of God we should act offensively, and then, not doubting but he will *stand by us*;" (v. 10.) and upon this issue he puts it, firmly believing, as we all should, [1.] That God has the governing of the hearts and tongues of all men, even of those that know him not, nor have any regard to him, and serves his own purposes by them, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so. Jonathan knew God could discover his mind to him if he pleased, and would do it, since he depended upon him, as surely by the mouth of a Philistine, as by the mouth of a priest. [2.] That God will, some way or other, direct the steps of those that *acknowledge him in all their ways*, and seek unto him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow his conduct. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected, but well observed, turns of Providence.

(2.) Providence gave him the sign he expected, and he answered the signal. He and his armour-bearer did not surprise the Philistines when they were asleep, but discovered themselves to them by day-light, v. 11. The guards of the Philistines, [1.] Disdained them, upbraided them with the cowardice of many of their people, and looked upon them to be of the regiment of the sneakers; *Behold, the Hebrews came forth out of their holes*. If some of Christ's soldiers play the coward, others that play the man, may, perhaps, be upbraided with it. [2.] They defied them; (v. 12.) *Come, and we will show you a thing*; as if they came like children to gaze about them; but meaning, as Goliath, (ch. 17. 44.) that they would *give them as meat to the fowls of the air*. They bantered them, not doubting but to make a prey of them. This greatly emboldened Jonathan. With it he encouraged his servant; he had spoken with uncertainty, (v. 6.) *It may be the Lord will work for us*, but now with assurance, (v. 12.) *The Lord has delivered them*, not into our hand, (he sought not his own glory,) but *into the hand of Israel*; for he aimed at nothing but the advantage of the public. His faith being thus strengthened, no difficulty can stand before him; he climbs up the rock upon all four, (v. 13.) though he had nothing to cover him, nor any but his own servant to second him, nor any human probability of any thing but death before him.

4. The wonderful success of this daring enterprise. The Philistines, instead of falling upon Jonathan, to slay him, or take him prisoner, fell before him, (v. 13.) unaccountably, upon the first blow he gave. They fell; that is,

(1.) They were many of them slain by him and his armour-bearer; (v. 14.) twenty Philistines fell presently. It was not so much the name of Jonathan, that made them yield so tamely, though some think that he was become terrible to them, since he smote one of their garrisons, (ch. 13. 3.) but it was God's right hand, and his arm, that got him this victory.

(2.) The rest were put to flight, and fell foul upon one another, (v. 15.) *There was a trembling in the host*. There was no visible cause for fear, they were so numerous, bold, advantageously posted; the Israelites had fled before them, not an enemy made head against them, but one gentleman and his man, and yet they shook like an aspen-leaf: the consternation was general, they all trembled, even the *spoilers*; those that had been most bold and forward shared in the common fright, the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another, and yet none of them could tell why, or wherefore; it is called a trembling of God, so the original phrase is, signifying, not only, as we render it, a very great trembling which they could not resist, nor reason themselves clear of, but that it was

supernatural, and came immediately from the hand of God. He that made the heart, knows how to make it tremble. To complete the confusion, even the earth quaked and made them ready to fear that it would sink under them. Those that will not fear the eternal God, he can make them afraid of a shadow. See Prov. 28. 1. Isa. 33. 14.

16. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another*. 17. Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer *were* not *there*. 18. And Saul said unto Abiah, Bring hither the ark of God: (for the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.) 19. And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased; and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. 20. And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture. 21. Moreover, the Hebrews *that were* with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan. 22. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23. So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

We have here the prosecution and improvement of the wonderful advantages which Jonathan and his armour-bearer gained against the Philistines.

I. The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. They melted away like snow before the sun, and *went on beating down one another*, v. 16. for *every man's sword was against his fellow*, v. 20. When they fled for fear, instead of turning back upon those that chased them, they reckoned those only their enemies that stood in their way, and treated them accordingly. The Philistines were very secure, because all the swords and spears were in their hands, Israel had none, except what Saul and Jonathan had; but now God showed them the folly of that confidence, by making their own swords and spears the instruments of their destruction, and more fatal in their own hands, than if they had been in the hands of Israel. See the like done, Judg. 7. 22. 2 Chron. 20. 23.

II. The Israelites were hereby animated against them.

1. Notice was soon taken of it by the watchmen of Saul, those that stood sentinel at Gibeah; (v. 16.) they were aware that the host of the enemy was in great confusion, and that a great slaughter was made among them, and yet, upon search, they found none of their own forces absent, but only Jonathan and his servant, (v. 17.) which, no doubt,

greatly animated them, and assured them that it could be no other than the Lord's doing, when there was no more of man's doing than what those two could do against a great host.

2. Saul began to inquire of God, but soon desisted. His spirit was not come down so far as to allow him to consult with Samuel, though, it is probable, he was near him; for we read, (ch. 13. 15.) that he was come to Gibeah of Benjamin; but he called for the ark, (v. 18.) desiring to know whether it would be safe for him to attack the Philistines, upon the disorder they perceived them to be in. Many will consult God about their safety, that would never consult him about their duty. But perceiving by his scouts that the noise in the enemy's camp increased, he commanded the priest that officiated, to break off abruptly, "*Withdraw thine hand*," (v. 19.) consult no more, wait no longer for an answer." He was very unwise indeed, if (as some think) he forbade him to lift up his hands in prayer; for when Joshua was actually engaged with Amalek, Moses continued still to lift up his hands. It is rather a prohibition to his inquiring of the Lord, either, (1.) Because now he thought he did not need an answer, the case was plain enough. And yet the more evident it was that God did all, the more reason he had to inquire whether he would give him leave to do any thing. Or, (2.) Because now he would not stay for it; he was in such haste to fight a falling enemy, that he would not stay to make an end of his devotions, nor hear what answer God would give him. A little thing will divert a vain and carnal mind from religious exercises. He that believeth will not make such haste as this, nor reckon any business so urgent, as not to allow time to take God along with him.

3. He, and all the little force he had, made a vigorous attack upon the enemy: and all the people *were cried together*, so the word is, v. 20. for want of the silver trumpets, wherewith God appointed them to sound an alarm in the day of battle, Numb. 10. 9. They summoned them together by shouting, and their number was not so great, but that they might soon be got together. And now they seem bold and brave, when the work is done to their hands. Our Lord Jesus has conquered our spiritual enemies, routed and dispersed them, so that we are cowards indeed, if we will not stand to our arms, when it is only to pursue the victory and divide the spoil.

4. Every Hebrew, even those from whom one would least have expected it, now turned his hand against the Philistines. 1. Those that had deserted, and gone over to the enemy, and were among them, now fought against them; v. 21. some think, they were such as had been taken prisoners by them, and now they were as goads in their sides: it rather seems, that they went in to them voluntarily, but, now that they saw them falling, recovered the hearts of Israelites, and did valiantly for their country. 2. Those that had run their colours, and hid themselves in the mountains, returned to their posts, and joined in with the pursuers, v. 22. hoping, by their great zeal and officiousness now that the danger was over and the victory sure, to atone for their former cowardice. It was not much to their praise to appear now, but it would have been more to their reproach if they had not appeared. Those are remiss and faint-hearted indeed, that will not act in the cause of God, when they see it victorious as well as righteous.

Thus all hands were at work against the Philistines, and every Israelite slew as many as he could; without sword or spear; yet it is said, v. 23. it was *the Lord that saved Israel that day*. He did it by them, for without him they could do nothing. *Salvation is of the Lord*.

24. And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food. 25. And all *they of* the land came to a wood, and there was honey upon the ground. 26. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in a honey-comb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened. 28. Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint. 29. Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey; 30. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to-day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? 31. And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Ajalon: and the people were very faint. 32. And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood. 33. Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34. And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there. 35. And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

We have here an account of the distress of the children of Israel, even in the days of their triumphs. Such allays are all present joys subject to! and such obstructions does many a good cause meet with, even then when it seems most prosperous, through the mismanagement of instruments.

I. Saul forbade the people, under the penalty of a curse, to taste any food that day, *v.* 24. Here we will suppose, 1. That as king he had power to put his soldiers under this interdict, and to bind it on with a curse; and therefore they submitted to it, and God so far owned it, as to discover, by the lot, that Jonathan was the delinquent that had meddled with the accursed thing, (though ignorantly,) on

which account, God would not be at that time inquired of by them. 2. That he did it with a good intention, lest the people, who perhaps had been kept for some time at short allowance, when they found plenty of victuals in the deserted camp of the Philistines, should fall greedily upon that, and so lose time in pursuing the enemy, and some of them, it may be, glut themselves to that degree, as not to be fit for any more service that day. To prevent this, he forbade them to taste any food, and laid himself, it is likely, under the same restraint. And yet his making this severe order was, (1.) Impolitic, and very unwise; for if it gained time, it lost strength for the pursuit. (2.) It was imperious, and disobliging to the people, and worse than *muzzling the mouth of the ox, when he treads out the corn*. To forbid them to feast had been commendable, but to forbid them so much as to taste, though so hungry, was barbarous. (3.) It was impious to enforce the prohibition with a curse and an oath. Had he no penalty less than an anathema, wherewith to support his military discipline? Death for such a crime had been too much, but especially death with a curse. Though superiors may chide and correct, they may not curse their inferiors; our rule is, *Bless, and curse not*. When David speaks of an enemy he had that loved cursing, perhaps he meant Saul, Ps. 109. 17, 18.

II. The people observed his order, but it had many inconveniences attending it. 1. The soldiers were tantalized: for in their pursuits of the enemy, it happened that they went through a wood so full of wild honey, that it dropped from the trees upon the ground; the Philistines having perhaps, in their flight, broken in upon the honey-combs, for their own refreshment, and left them running. Canaan flowed with honey, and here is an instance of it. They sucked honey out of *the rock, the flinty rock*; Deut. 32. 13. yet, for fear of the curse, they did not so much as taste the honey, *v.* 25, 26. These are worthy the name of Israelites, that can deny themselves and their own appetites, even when they are most craving, and the delights of sense most tempting, for fear of guilt and a curse, and the table becoming a snare. Let us never feed ourselves, much less feast ourselves, without fear. 2. Jonathan fell under the curse through ignorance. He heard not of the charge his father had given; for, having bravely forced the lines, he was then following the chase, and therefore might justly be looked upon as exempted from the charge, and not intended in it. But it seems it was taken for granted, and he himself did not object against it afterward, that it extended to him, though absent upon so good an occasion. He, not knowing any peril in it, took up a piece of a honey-comb, upon the end of his staff, and sucked it, *v.* 27. and was sensibly refreshed by it; *his eyes were enlightened*, which began to grow dim through hunger and faintness; it made his countenance look pleasant and cheerful, for it was such as a stander-by might discern, *v.* 29. *See how mine eyes have been enlightened*. He thought no harm, nor feared any, till one of the people acquainted him with the order, and then he found himself in a snare. Many a good son has been thus entangled and distressed, more ways than one, by the rashness of an inconsiderate father. Jonathan, for his part, lost the crown he was heir to, by his father's folly, which, it may be, this was an ill omen of. 3. The soldiers were faint, and grew feeble in the pursuit of the Philistines. Jonathan foresaw this would be the effect of it, their spirits would flag, and their strength would fail, for want of sustenance. Such is the nature of our bodies, that they soon grow unfit for service, if they be not supplied with fresh recruits. Daily work cannot be done without daily bread, which therefore our



Father in heaven graciously gives us. It is *bread that strengthens man's heart*; therefore Jonathan reasoned very well, *If the people had eaten freely, there had been a much greater slaughter, (v. 30.)* but, as it was, they were *very faint, too much fatigued*, so the Chaldee, and began to think more of their meat than of their work. 4. The worst effect of all, was, that, at evening, when the restraint was taken off, and they returned to their food again, they were so greedy and eager upon it, that they ate the flesh with the blood, expressly contrary to the law of God, *v. 32.* Two hungry meals, we say, make the third a glutton; it was so here. They would not stay to have their meat either duly killed, for they slew them upon the ground, and did not hang them up, as they used to do, that the blood might all run out of them, or duly dressed, but fell greedily upon it, before it was half boiled, or half roasted, *v. 32.* Saul, being informed of it, reproved them for the sin, *v. 33, Ye have transgressed*; but did not, as he should have done, reflect upon himself as having been accessory to it, and having *made the Lord's people to transgress*. To put a stop to this irregularity, Saul ordered them to set up a great stone before him, and let all that had cattle to kill, for their present use, bring them thither, and kill them under his eye upon that stone, *v. 33.* and the people did so, *v. 34.* so easily were they restrained and reformed when their prince took care to do his part. If magistrates would but use their power as they might, people would be made better than they are, with more ease than is imagined.

*Lastly*, On this occasion Saul built an altar, *v. 35.* that he might offer sacrifice, either by way of acknowledgment of the victory they had obtained, or by way of atonement for the sin they had been guilty of. *The same was the first altar that he built*, and perhaps the rolling of the great stone to kill the beasts on, reminded him of converting it into an altar, else he had not thought of it. Saul was turning aside from God, and yet now he begins to build altars, being most zealous (as many are) for the form of godliness then when he was denying the power of it. See Hos. 8. 14, *Israel has forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples*. Some read it, *He began to build that altar*; he laid the first stone, but was so hasty to pursue his victory, that he could not stay to finish it.

36. And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37. And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38. And Saul said, Draw ye near hither all the chief of the people; and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day: 39. For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was not a man among all the people that answered him.* 40. Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto

thee. 41. Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and, lo, I must die.* 44. And Saul answered, God do so, and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45. And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: *as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day.* So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46. Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

Here is,

I. Saul's boasting against the Philistines; he proposed, as soon as his soldiers had got their suppers, to pursue them all night, and *not leave a man of them, v. 36.* Here he showed much zeal, but little discretion; for his army, thus fatigued, could as ill spare a night's sleep, as a meal's meat. But it is common for rash and foolish men, to consider no body but themselves, and, so they may but have their humour, not to care what hardships they put upon those that are under them. However, his people were so obsequious to their king, that they would by no means oppose the motion, but resolved to make the best of it, and, if he will go on, they will follow him. *Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee.* Only the priest thought it convenient to go on with the devotions that were broken off abruptly, (*v. 19.*) and to consult the oracle, *Let us draw hither unto God.* Princes and great men have need of such about them, as will thus be their remembrancers, wherever they go, to take God along with them. And when the priest proposed it, Saul could not, for shame, reject the motion, but *asked counsel of God, (v. 37.) "Shall I go down after the Philistines?" And shall I speed?*

II. His falling foul on his son Jonathan: and the rest of this paragraph is wholly concerning him; for while he is prosecuted, the Philistines made their escape. We know not what mischief may ensue upon one rash resolve.

1. God, by giving an intimation of his displeasure, put Saul upon searching for an accursed thing. When, by the priest, he consulted the oracle, God answered him not, *v. 37.* Note, When God denies our prayers, it concerns us to inquire what the sin is that has provoked him to do so. *Let us see where the sin is, (v. 38.)* for God's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but it is sin that separates between us and him. If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some iniquity regarded in our hearts, which we are concerned to find out, that we may put it away, may mortify it, and put it to death. Saul swears by his Maker, that whoever was the Achan that troubled the camp, by eating the forbidden fruit, should certainly die, though it were Jonathan himself; that is, though ever so dear to himself and the people, little thinking that Jonathan was the man; (*v. 39.*)

"*He shall surely die; the curse shall be executed upon him.*" But none of the people answered him; that is, none of those who knew Jonathan had broken the order, would inform against him.

2. Jonathan was discovered by lot to be the offender. Saul would have cast lots between himself and Jonathan on the one side, and the people on the other, perhaps, because he was as confident of Jonathan's innocence in this matter, as of his own, v. 40. The people, seeing him in a heat, durst not gainsay any thing he proposed, but acquiesced. "*Do as seemeth good unto thee.*" Before he cast lots, he prayed that *God would give a perfect lot*; (v. 41.) that is, make a full discovery of this matter, or, as it is in the margin, that he would show the innocent. This was with an air of impartial justice. Judges should desire that truth may come out, whoever may suffer by it. Lots should be cast with prayer, because they are a solemn appeal to Providence, and by them we beg of God to direct and determine us; (Acts 1. 24.) for which reason some have condemned games, that depend purely upon lot or chance, as making too bold with a sacred thing. Jonathan at length was taken; (v. 42.) Providence designing hereby to countenance and support a lawful authority, and to put an honour upon the administration of public justice in general, reserving another way to bring off one that had done nothing worthy of death.

3. Jonathan ingenuously confesses the fact, and Saul, with an angry curse, passes sentence upon him. Jonathan denies not the truth, nor goes about to conceal it, only he thinks it hard that he must *die for it*, v. 43. He might very fairly have pleaded his invincible ignorance of the law, or have insisted upon his merit, but he submitted to the necessity with a great and generous mind, "God's and my father's will be done;" thus he showed as much valour in receiving the messengers of death himself, as in sending them among the Philistines. It is as brave to yield in some cases, as it is in other cases to fight. Saul is not mollified by his filial submission, nor the hardness of his case; but as one that affected to be thought firm to his word, and much more to his oath, even then when it bound him hardest, with another imprecation he gives judgment upon Jonathan; (v. 44.) *God do so, and more also to me, if I do not execute the law upon thee, for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.*" (1.) He passed this sentence too hastily, without consulting the oracle; Jonathan had a very good plea in arrest of the judgment; what he had done was not *malum in se—bad in itself*; and as for the prohibition of it, he was ignorant of that, so that he could not be charged with rebellion or disobedience. (2.) He did it in fury. Had Jonathan been worthy to die, yet it had become a judge, much more a father, to pass sentence with tenderness and compassion, and not with such an air of triumph, like a man perfectly divested of all humanity and natural affection. Justice is debased, when it is administered with wrath and bitterness. (3.) He backed it with a curse upon himself, if he did not see the sentence executed; and this curse did return upon his own head; Jonathan escaped, but God did so to Saul, and more also; for he was rejected of God, and made an anathema. Let none upon any occasion dare to use such imprecations as these, lest God say Amen to them, and *make their own tongues to fall upon them*, Ps. 64. 8. He that rolleth this stone, it will return upon him. Yet we have reason to think that Saul's bowels yearned toward Jonathan, so that he really punished himself, and very justly, when he seemed so severe upon Jonathan. God made him feel the smart of his own rash edict, which might make him fear being again guilty of the like. By all these vexatious accidents, God

did likewise correct him for his presumption, in offering sacrifice without Samuel. An expedition so ill begun, could not end without some rebukes.

4. The people rescued Jonathan out of his father's hands, v. 45. Hitherto they had expressed themselves very observant of Saul, what seemed good to him they acquiesced in; (v. 36, 40.) but when Jonathan is in danger, Saul's word is no longer a law to them, but with the utmost zeal they oppose the execution of his sentence, "*Shall Jonathan die?*" That blessing, that darling, of his country? Shall that life be sacrificed to a punctilio of law and honour, which was so bravely exposed for the public service, and to which we owe our lives and triumphs? No, we will never stand by, and see him thus treated, whom God delights to honour." It is good to see Israelites zealous for the protection of those whom God has made instruments of public good. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should die, but they oppose their oath to his, and swear he shall not die; *As the Lord liveth, there shall not only not his head, but not a hair of his head fall to the ground*: they did not rescue him by violence, but by reason and resolution; and Josephus says, they made their prayer to God, that he might be loosed from the curse. They plead for him, that *he has wrought with God this day*; that is, "he has owned God's cause, and God has owned his endeavours, and therefore his life is too precious to be thrown away upon a nicety." We may suppose, Saul had not so perfectly forgotten the relation of a father, but that he was willing enough to have Jonathan rescued, and well pleased to have that done, which yet he would not do himself: and he that knows the heart of a father, knows not how to blame him.

*Lastly*, The design against the Philistines is quashed by this incident; (v. 46.) *Saul went up from following them*, and so an opportunity was lost of completing the victory. When Israel's shields are clashing together, the public safety and service suffer by it.

47. So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48. And he gathered a host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. 49. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchi-shua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle: 51. And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner, the father of Abner, was the son of Abiel. 52. And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp.

1. Of his court and family. The names of his sons and daughters, v. 49. and of his wife, and his

cousin-german that was general of his army, *v.* 50. There is mention of another wife of Saul's, *2 Sam.* 21. 8. Rizpah, a secondary wife, and of the children he had by her.

2. Of his camp and military actions. (1.) How he levied his army: *when he saw any strong valiant man*, that was remarkably fit for service, *he took him unto him*, *v.* 52. as Samuel had told them the manner of the king would be; (*ch.* 8. 11.) and if he must have a standing army, it was his prudence to fill it up with the ablest men he could make choice of. (2.) How he employed his army; he guarded his country against the insults of its enemies on every side, and prevented their incursions, *v.* 47, 48. It is supposed that he acted only defensively against those that used to invade the borders of Israel, and *whithersoever he turned himself*, as there was occasion, *he vexed them*, by checking and disappointing them. But the enemies he struggled most with, were the Philistines, with them he had *sore war all his days*, *v.* 52. He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbours cause to envy him, for he had little enjoyment of himself after he took the kingdom. He could not vex his enemies without some vexation to himself, such thorns are crowns quilted with.

## CHAP. XV.

In this chapter, we have the final rejection of Saul from being king, for his disobedience to God's command, in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By his wars and victories, he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but, by his mismanagement of them, he ruined himself, and laid his honour in the dust. Here is, I. The commission God gave him to destroy the Amalekites, with a command to do it utterly, *v.* 1. . 3. II. Saul's preparation for this expedition, *v.* 4. . 6. III. His success, and partial execution of this commission, *v.* 7. . 9. IV. His examination before Samuel, and sentence past upon him, notwithstanding the many frivolous pleas he made to excuse himself, *v.* 10. . 31. V. The slaying of Agag, *v.* 32, 33. VI. Samuel's final farewell to Saul, *v.* 34, 35.

1. **SAMUEL** also said unto Saul, The **LORD** sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the **LORD**. 2. Thus saith the **LORD** of hosts, I remember *that which* Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. 3. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 4. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. 6. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah *until* thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8. And he took Agag the king of

the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all *that was* good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing *that was* vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Here,

I. Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or no, *v.* 1. And the making of this so expressly the trial of his obedience, did very much aggravate his disobedience. 1. He reminds him of what God had done for him. "*The Lord sent me to anoint thee, to be a king.*" God gave thee the power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause, and avenge their quarrels. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel, and must be commanded by him." Men's preferment, instead of discharging them from their obedience to God, obliges them so much the more to it. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be sent with these orders to him. 2. He tells him, in general, that, in consideration of this, what ever God commanded him to do, he was bound to do it. *Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord.* Note, God's favours to us lay strong obligations upon us, to be obedient to him. This we must render, *Ps.* 116. 12.

II. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now show his obedience to God, more than in anything he had done yet. Samuel promises God's authority to the command, *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts: he also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard, *I remember that which Amalek did to Israel*, *v.* 2. God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt; we have the story, *Exod.* 17. 8, &c. and the crime is aggravated, *Deut.* 25. 18. he basely *smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God*; God then swore that he would have *war with Amalek from generation to generation*, and that, in process of time, he would *utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek*; that is the work that Saul is now appointed to do, *v.* 3, "*Go, and smite Amalek.*" Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full; now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation." He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, both *man and woman, infant and suckling*, and not spare them out of pity; *ox and sheep, camel and ass*, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note, 1. Injuries done to God's Israel, will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them, when they are coming out of Egypt. 2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence past, is not executed speedily. 3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompense for the controversy of Israel, will come at last. Though divine justice strikes slow, it strikes sure. 4. The longer judgment is delayed, many times the more severe it is when it comes. 5. God chooses out instruments to do his work, that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul must do it, that was a rough and severe man.

III. Saul hereupon musters his forces, and makes a descent upon the country of Amalek; it was an immense army that he brought into the field, (*v. 4.*) *two hundred thousand footmen*. When he was to engage the Philistines and the success was hazardous, he had but six hundred attending him; (*ch. 13. 15.*) but now that he was to attack the Amalekites, by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But whatever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah, that their forces were numbered by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short, (whatever was the reason,) but a twentieth part of the whole, for they were but ten thousand, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field two hundred thousand. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but was not yet come. Saul numbered them in *Telaim*, which signifies lambs. He numbered them *like lambs*, so the vulgar Latin; numbered them *by the paschal lambs*, so the Chaldee, allowing ten to a lamb, a way of numbering used by the Jews in the latter times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the *city of Amalek*, that city was their metropolis, (*v. 5.*) that he might provoke them to give him battle.

IV. He gave friendly advice to the Kenites, to separate themselves from the Amalekites, among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, *v. 6.* Herein he did prudently and piously, and, it is probable, according to the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy to them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated; many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for *they put their nest in a rock*; hardy people that could live any where, and affected fastnesses, Numb. 24. 21. Balaam had there foretold, that they should be wasted; (*v. 22.*) however, Saul must not waste them. But, 1. He acknowledges the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and this is remembered to their posterity many ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children; those that come after us, may be reaping the benefit of our good works, when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindness shown to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, *and recompensed in the resurrection of the just: I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat*. God's remembering the kindness of the Kenites' ancestors, in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done by the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns? He espouses his people's cause, so as to *bless those that bless them*; and therefore so as to *curse those that curse them*, Numb. 24. 9. Gen. 12. 3. They cannot requite the kindness, nor avenge the injuries, done them, themselves, but God will do both. 2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites; *Go, depart, get you down from among them*. When destroying judgments are abroad, God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is dangerous being found in the company of God's enemies, and it is our duty and interest to *come out from among them*, lest we share in their sins and plagues, Rev. 18. 4. The Jews have a saying,

*Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour.*

V. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condemned malefactors, than a war with contending enemies; the issue could not be dubious when the cause was just, and the call so clear; *He smote them*, (*v. 7.*) *utterly destroyed them*, *v. 8.* Now they paid dear for the sin of their ancestors; God sometimes *lays up iniquity for the children*. They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to fall under the wrath of God; yet when God would reckon with them, he fastened upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel, as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, how unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestable is thy righteousness!

VI. Yet he did his work by halves, *v. 9.* 1. *He spared Agag*, because he was a king like himself, and, perhaps, in hope to get a great ransom for him. 2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this, but that could not be helped; it was Saul's fault, that he did not destroy such as came to his hands, and were in his power. That which was now destroyed, was, in effect, sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth; and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean, good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields, and his own table, the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

10. Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. 12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. 14. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15. And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18. And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be con-

sumed. 19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams. 23. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Saul is here called to account by Samuel, concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God, and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

I. What passed between God and Samuel in secret, upon this occasion, *v.* 10, 11. 1. God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.* Repentance in God is not, as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method or dispensation. He does not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul, *he is turned back from following me*; this construction God put upon the partiality of his obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom, and the honour and power that belonged to it; but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; those gifts and callings of God are without repentance. 2. Samuel laments and deprecates it. *It grieved Samuel that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off; and he cried unto the Lord all night, spent a whole night in interceding for him that this decree might not go forth against him.* When others were in their beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government; nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but, on the contrary, prayed earnestly for his establishment; so far was he from desiring that woeful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people. God delights not in their death, nor should we.

II. What passed between Samuel and Saul in public. Samuel being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, *in bitterness of soul*, to meet him; perhaps, according to appointment, when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul was come to Gilgal, (*v.* 12.) the place where he was made king, (*ch.* 11. 15.) and where now he would have been confirmed, if he had approved himself well in this trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had, 1. Set

him up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory, at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or *hand*, as the word is) for himself: he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God, than boasting of his victory. 2. That he had marched in great state to Gilgal, for that seems to be intimated in the manner of expression, he is *gone about and passed on*, and *gone down*, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting.

(1.) Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself; (*v.* 13.) "*Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sentest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and I have performed the commandment of the Lord.*" It is very likely, if his conscience had not flown in his face at this time, and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his obedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord; whereas the only way to do that, is, by *judging ourselves*. They that boast most of their religion, may justly be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

(2.) Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. "*Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? What means then the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen,*" which, perhaps, Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appeals to them as witnesses against him; he need not go far to disprove him. The noise the cattle made, like the *rust of the silver*, (*Jam.* 5. 3.) would be a *witness against him*. Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God; but what mean then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them?

(3.) Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, *v.* 15. The fact he cannot deny, the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But, [1.] It was not his fault, *for the people spared them*; as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves, are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any rather than take it to themselves. Sin is a brat that nobody cares to have laid at their doors. It is a sorry subterfuge of an impenitent heart that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame on those that were either tempters, or partners, or only followers in it. [2.] It was with a good intention: "*It was to sacrifice to the Lord thy God*; he is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this is, for his honour." This was a false plea, for both Saul and the people designed their own profit in sparing the cattle: but if it had been true, it had been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering; God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give to those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself has pre-

scribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

(4.) Samuel overrules, or rather overlooks, his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premises his authority; what he was about to say was, what the Lord had said to him; (v. 16.) otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain that their ministers are too harsh with them, should remember that while they keep to the word of God, they are but messengers, and must say as they are bidden; and therefore be willing, as Saul himself here was, that they should *say on*; he delivers his message faithfully. [1.] He reminds him of the honour God had done him in making him king; (v. 17.) *when he was little in his own sight*, God regarded the lowliness of his state, and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth, ought often to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that has advanced them. [2.] He lays before him the plainness of the orders he was to execute, v. 18, *The Lord sent thee on a journey*; so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather to be called a *journey*, than a *war*; the work was honourable, to destroy the sworn enemies of God and Israel; and had he denied himself, and set aside the consideration of his own profit, so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he would have been no loser by it at last, nor have gone this *warfare on his own charges*; God would, no doubt, have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore, [3.] He shows him how inexcusable he was, in aiming to make a handle of this expedition, and to enrich himself by it; v. 19, *"Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil"*, and convert that to thine own use, which was to have been destroyed for God's honour?" See what evil the love of money is the root of; but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord: it is disobedience; *thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord*.

(5.) Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, v. 20, 21. He denies the charge, v. 20. *"Yea, I have obeyed, I have done all I should do;"* for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much worse was he in his own eyes than God himself; God bade him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience, that he had brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it, that he has *utterly destroyed the Amalekites themselves*, which was the main thing intended: but as to the spoil, he owns it should have been *utterly destroyed*; so that he knew his *Lord's will*, and was under no mistake about the command; but he thought that would be wilful waste; the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses's time, Numb. 31. 22, &c. and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be a prey to the Israelites, than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people in carrying it away; but it was their doing, and not his; and besides, it was for *sacrifice to the Lord* here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience to their sin, and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

(6.) Samuel gives a full answer to his apology, since he did insist upon it, v. 22, 23. He appeals to his own conscience, *Has the Lord as great de-*

*light in sacrifices as in obedience?* Though Saul was not a man of any great acquaintance with religion, yet he could not but know this; [1.] that nothing is so pleasing to God as obedience, no, not sacrifice and offering, and the fat of rams. See here what we should aim at and endeavour in all the exercises of religion, even acceptance with God, that he may delight in what we do. If God be well pleased with us and our services we are happy, we have gained our point; but otherwise, *to what purpose is it?* Isa. 1. 11. Now, here we are plainly told, that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than *all burnt-offering and sacrifices*. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances, Mic. 6. 6-8. Hos. 6. 6. Obedience is enjoined by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice only by a positive law: obedience was the law of innocence, but sacrifice supposes sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified, and self more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or lamb to be burnt upon the altar, than to bring *every high thought into obedience* to God, and the will subject to his will. Obedience is the glory of angels, Ps. 103. 20. and it will be our's. [2.] That nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called *rebellion and stubbornness*, and is said to be as bad as *witchcraft and idolatry*, v. 23. It is as bad to set up other gods, as to live in disobedience to the true God. They that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations, in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the *Teraphim*, (as the word here is for idolatry,) or the diviners. It was disobedience that made us all sinners; Rom. 5. 19. and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the *transgression of the law*, and consequently it is *enmity to God*, Rom. 8. 7. Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God, that this text speaks of.

*Lastly*, He reads his doom, in short, *"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, hast despised it, so the Challee, hast made nothing of it, so the Seventy, hast cast off the government of it; therefore he has rejected thee, despised and made nothing of thee, but cast thee off from being king, He that made thee king has determined to unmake thee again."* Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

24. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. 25. Now, therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. 26. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 27. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath



given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is better than thou.* 29. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent. 30. Then he said, I have sinned; *yet* honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. 31. So Samuel turned again after Saul: and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of a penitent; but it is too evident, that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed. Observe,

I. How poorly he expresses his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed; that touched him in a tender part, then he began to relent, and not till then; when Samuel told him he was *rejected from being king*, then he said, *I have sinned*, v. 24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous, but extorted by the rack, and forced from him.

We observe here, several bad signs of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion, and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of bribe to him, he puts it into his confession, *I have transgressed the commandments of the Lord, and thy word*; as if he had been in God's stead, v. 24. David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet in his confession, has his eye to God alone, not to Nathan; (Ps. 51. 4.) *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*: but Saul, ignorantly enough, confesses his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the *commandment of the Lord*. He also applies to Samuel for forgiveness. (v. 25.) *I pray thee, pardon my sin*; as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves, who when they are fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the church and their ministers, by the show and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put upon this of Saul here, is, to suppose that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him: however it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in the confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent; (v. 24.) "I did it, *because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.*" We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doing, and not the people's; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them, and did not stand in awe of them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous; whatever he pretended, he did not really fear the people: but it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things, which, how groundless soever, no man

can disprove; but they forget that God searcheth the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him; therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness (v. 25.) to turn again with him, and assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory: very importunate he was in this matter, when he laid hold on the skirts of his mantle to detain him; (v. 27.) not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared if Samuel forsook him, the people would do so too. Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people, only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But his expression was very gross when he said, (v. 30.) *I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people.* Is this the language of a penitent? No, but the contrary; "*I have sinned*, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can loathe me so much as I loathe myself." Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul! It is very common for those who are convinced of sin, to show themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent, can pretend to no other than that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

II. How little he got by these thin shows of repentance. What point did he gain by them?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence passed upon him, so far was he from giving him any hopes of the repeal of it, v. 26. the same with v. 23. *He that covers his sins, shall never prosper*, Prov. 28. 13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but *turned about to go away*, v. 27. As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him so far to countenance one whom God had rejected, as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory, which he was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterward he did turn again with him, (v. 31.) upon further thoughts, and, probably, by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people, or perhaps, not to do honour to Saul, (for though Saul worshipped the Lord, (v. 31.) it is not said Samuel presided in that worship,) but to do justice on Agag, v. 32.

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him, he tore his clothes to detain him, (v. 27.) so loath was he to part with the prophet: but Samuel put a construction upon this accident, which none but a prophet could do; he made it to signify the rending of the kingdom from him; (v. 28.) and that, like this, was his own doing. "He hath rent it from thee, and *given it to a neighbour better than thou*," namely, to David, who afterward, upon an occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, (ch. 24. 4.) upon which Saul said, (v. 20.) *I know that thou shalt surely be king*: perhaps remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible: v. 29, *The Strength of Israel will not lie: The Eternity, or Victory of Israel*, so some read it: *The Holy One*, so the Arabic: *The most noble One*, so the Syriac: *the triumphant King of Israel*, so Bishop Patrick: "He is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose: *He is not a man, that he should repent.*" Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens which they could not foresee, by which their measures are broken; but with God it is not so. God has sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done, upon the sinner's repenting; but here repentance

was hidden from Saul, and therefore hidden from God's eyes.

32. Then said Samuel, Bring you hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites: and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34. Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, Jer. 1. 10.

I. He destroys king Agag, doubtless, by such special direction from heaven, as none now can pretend to. He *hewed Agag in pieces*: some think he only ordered it to be done; or, perhaps he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice; v. 33. and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this,

1. How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated. He *came delicately*, in a stately manner, to show that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect; or, in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that *could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy*, Deut. 28. 56. to move compassion: and he said, "Surely, now that the heat of the battle is over, the bitterness of death is past," v. 32. Having escaped the sword of Saul, that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, an old prophet, a man of peace. Note, (1.) There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. *Surely death is bitter*, so divers versions read those words of Agag; as the Seventy read the former clause. *He came trembling*: death will dismay the stoutest heart. (2.) Many think the bitterness of death is past, when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them, which is very near. True believers may, through grace, say this, upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is, *O death, where is thy sting!*

2. How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins, *Thy sword hath made women childless*, v. 33. He trod in the steps of his ancestor's cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek, *required of this generation*, Matth. 23. 36. Agag, that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others: we commonly see that those who are indulgent of their appetites, are not less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for; even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed, or cause to be shed. It was that crime of king Manasseh, which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings 24. 4. See Rev. 13. 10.

II. He deserts king Saul; takes leave of him, v. 34. and *never came any more to see him*, v. 35. to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company, nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him: though he

might sometimes see him accidentally, as *ch. 19. 24* yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he *mourned for Saul*, thinking it a very lamentable thing, that a man who stood so fair for great things, should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the bad state of the country, to which Saul was likely to have been so great a blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance: when he wept for him, it is likely he made supplication, but the Lord had *repented that he had made Saul king*, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, We must mourn for the rejection of sinners, 1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to *weep day and night for them*, Jer. 9. 1, 2. 2. Though they do not mourn for themselves. Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure which he lay under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.

## CHAP. XVI.

At this chapter begins the story of David, one that makes as great a figure in the sacred story, as almost any of the worthies of the Old Testament; one that both with his sword and with his pen served the honour of God and the interests of Israel, as much as most ever did, and was as illustrious a type of Christ. Here, I. Samuel is appointed and commissioned to anoint a king among the sons of Jesse at Beth-lehem, v. 1. . 5. II. All his elder sons are passed by, and David the youngest is pitched upon and anointed, v. 6. . 13. III. Saul growing melancholy, David is pitched upon to relieve him by music, v. 14. . 23. Thus small are the beginnings of that great man.

1. **A**ND the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go; I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. 2. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. 3. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. 4. And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem: and the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5. And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD; sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel was retired to his own house in Ramah, with a resolution not to appear any more in public business, but to addict himself wholly to the instructing and training up the sons of the prophets, over whom he presided, as we find, *ch. 19. 20*. He promised himself more satisfaction in young prophets than in young princes; and we do not find that, to his dying day, God called him out to any public action relating to the state, but only here to anoint David.

I. God reproves him for continuing so long to mourn for the rejection of Saul. He does not blame him for mourning on that occasion, but for exceeding in his sorrow, *How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?* v. 1. We do not find that he mourned at all for the setting aside of his own family, and the depositing of his own sons; but for the rejecting of Saul and his seed he mourns without measure, for the former was done by the people's foolish discontent, this by the righteous wrath of God. Yet he must find time to recover himself, and not go mourning to his grave. 1. Because God has rejected him, and he ought to acquiesce in the divine justice, and forget his affection to Saul; if God will be glorified in his ruin, Samuel ought to be satisfied. Besides, to what purpose should he weep? The decree is gone forth, and all his prayers and tears cannot prevail for the reversing of it, 2 Sam. 12. 22, 23. 2. Because Israel shall be no loser by it, and Samuel must prefer the public welfare before his own private affection to his friend. "Mourn not for Saul, for I have provided me a king. The people provided them a king and he proved bad, now I will provide me one, a man after my own heart." See Ps. 89. 20. Acts 13. 22. "If Saul be rejected, yet Israel shall not be as *sheep having no shepherd*; I have another in store for them, let thy joy of him swallow up thy grief for the rejected prince."

II. He sends him to Beth-lehem, to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a person, probably, not unknown to Samuel. *Fill thine horn with oil.* Saul was anointed with a glass vial of oil, scanty and brittle, David with a horn of oil, which was more plentiful and durable; hence we read of a *horn of salvation in the house of his servant David*, Luke 1. 69.

III. Samuel objects the peril of going on this errand; (v. 2.) *If Saul hear it he will kill me.* By this it appears, 1. That Saul was grown very wicked and outrageous since his rejection, else Samuel would not have mentioned this. What impiety would he not be guilty of, who durst kill Samuel? 2. That Samuel's faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he had not thus feared the rage of Saul. Would not he that sent him, protect him and bear him out? But the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be wholly cast out any where on this side heaven. But this may be understood as Samuel's desire of direction from heaven how to manage this matter prudently, so as not to expose himself, or any other, more than needed.

IV. God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice. Say, *I am come to sacrifice*; and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, ch. 11. 15. As a prophet, he might sacrifice when and where God appointed him; and it was not at all inconsistent with the laws of truth, to say, he came to sacrifice, when really he did so, though he had also a further end, which he thought fit to conceal. Let him give notice of a sacrifice, and invite Jesse (who, it is probable, was the principal man of the city) and his family to come to the feast upon the sacrifice; and, says God, *I will show thee what thou shalt do.* Those that go about God's work in God's way, shall be directed step by step, wherever they are at a loss, to do it in the best manner.

V. Samuel went accordingly to Beth-lehem, not in pomp, or with any retinue, only a servant to lead the heifer, which he was to sacrifice; yet the *elders of Beth-lehem trembled at his coming*, fearing it was an indication of God's displeasure against them, and that he came to denounce judgment for the iniquities of the place; guilt causes fear. Yet indeed it becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word: or, they feared it might be an occasion of Saul's displeasure against them, for,

probably, they knew how much he was exasperated at Samuel, and feared he would pick a quarrel with them for entertaining him. They asked him, *"Comest thou peaceably?"* Art thou in peace thyself and not flying from Saul? Art thou at peace with us, and not come with any message of wrath?" We should all covet earnestly to stand upon good terms with God's prophets, and dread having the word of God, or their prayers, against us. When the Son of David was born King of the Jews, all Jerusalem was troubled, Matth. 2. 3. Samuel kept at home, and it was a strange thing to see him so far from his own house; they therefore concluded it must needs be some extraordinary occasion that brought him, and feared the worst till he satisfied them; (v. 5.) *"I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice*, not with a message of wrath against you, but with the methods of peace and reconciliation; and therefore you may bid me welcome, and need not fear my coming; therefore *sanctify yourselves*, and prepare to join with me in the sacrifice, that you may have the benefit of it." Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be a solemn preparation. When we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, it concerns us, by sequestering ourselves from the world, and renewing the dedication of ourselves to God, to sanctify ourselves. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason enough to tremble, fearing that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering along with him; *a body hast thou prepared me*; let us sanctify ourselves, that we may have an interest in his sacrifice." Samuel said, *"I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice."* Note, Those that come to sacrifice, should come peaceably; religious exercises must not be performed tumultuously.

VI. He had a particular regard to Jesse and his sons, for with them his private business lay, with which, it is likely, he acquainted Jesse at his first coming, and took up his lodging at his house. He spoke to all the elders to *sanctify themselves*, but he *sanctified Jesse, and his sons*, by praying with them and instructing them. Perhaps he had acquaintance with them before, and it appears, ch. 20. 29. (where we read of the sacrifices that family had,) that it was a devout religious family. Samuel assisted them in their family preparations for the public sacrifice, and, it is probable, chose out David, and anointed him, at the family solemnities, before the sacrifice was offered, or the holy feast solemnized. Perhaps he offered private sacrifices, like Job, *according to the number of them all*, (Job 1. 5.) and under colour of that, called for them all to appear before him. When signal blessings are coming into a family, they ought to sanctify themselves.

6. And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. 7. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the **LORD** seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. 8. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. 9. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. 10. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass

before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. 11. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12. And he sent and brought him in. Now he *was* ruddy, *and* withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. 13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

If the sons of Jesse were told that God would provide himself a king among them, as he had said, (v. 1.) we may well suppose they all made the best appearance they could, and each hoped he should be the man; but here we are told,

I. How all the elder sons were passed by, who stood fairest for the preferment. Eliab, the eldest, was privately presented first to Samuel, probably none being present but Jesse only, and Samuel thought he must needs be the man; (v. 6.) *Surely this is the Lord's anointed*. The prophets themselves, when they spake from under the divine direction, were as liable to mistake as other men; as Nathan, 2 Sam. 7. 3. But God rectified the prophet's mistake, by a secret whisper to his mind, (v. 7.) *Look not on his countenance*. It was strange that Samuel, who had been so wretchedly disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him as much as any man's could, should be so forward to judge of a man by that rule. When God would please the people with a king, he chose a proper man, but when he would have one after his own heart, he should not be chosen by the outside; men judge by the sight of the eyes, but God does not; (Isa. 11. 3.) *The Lord looks on the heart*; that is, I. He knows it. We can tell how men *look*, but he can tell what they *are*. Man looks on the *eyes*, so the original word is, and is pleased with the liveliness and sprightliness that appear in them; but God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of that. 2. He judges of men by it. The good disposition of the heart, the holiness and goodness of that, recommend us to God, and are *in his sight of great price*, (1 Pet. 3. 4.) not the majesty of the look, or the strength and stature of the body; let us reckon that to be true beauty which is within, and judge of men, as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their mien.

When Eliab was set aside, Abinadab and Shamah, and, after them, four more of the sons of Jesse, seven in all, were presented to Samuel, as likely for his purpose; but Samuel, who now attended more carefully than he did at first to the divine direction, laid them all by, *The Lord hath not chosen these*, v. 8-10. Men dispose of their honours and estates to their sons, according to their seniority of age, and priority of birth, but God does not. *The elder shall serve the younger*. Had it been left to Samuel, or Jesse, to make the choice, one of these had certainly been chosen; but God will magnify his sovereignty in passing by some that were most promising, as well as in fastening on others that were less so.

II. How David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; his name

signifies *beloved*, for he was a type of the beloved Son. Observe,

1. How he was now employed. He was in the fields, *keeping the sheep*, (v. 11.) and was left there, though there was a sacrifice and a feast at his father's house. The youngest are commonly the fondlings of the family, but, it should seem, David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse; either they did not discern, or did not duly value, the excellent spirit he was of. Many a great genius lies buried in obscurity and contempt; and God often exalts those whom men despise, and gives *abundant honour to that part which lacked*. The son of David was he whom men despised, *the stone which the builders refused*, and yet has a name above every name. David was taken from following the ewes, to feed Jacob, (Ps. 78. 71.) as Moses from keeping the flock of Jethro: an instance of his humility and industry, both which God delights to put honour upon. We should think a military life, but God saw a pastoral life, (which gives advantage for contemplation and communion with heaven,) the best preparative for kingly power, at least for these graces of the Spirit, which are necessary to the due discharge of that trust which attends it. David was keeping sheep, though it was a time of sacrifice; for there is mercy that takes place of sacrifice.

2. How earnest Samuel was to have him sent for. *"We will not sit down to meat,"* (perhaps it was not the feast upon the sacrifice, but a common meal,) *"till he come hither"*; for if all the rest be rejected, this must be he. He that was designed not to sit at table at all, is now stayed for as the principal guest. If God will exalt them of low degree, who can hinder?

3. What appearance he made when he did come. No notice is taken of his clothing; no doubt that was according to his employment, mean and coarse, as shepherds' coats commonly are, and he did not change his clothes as Joseph did; (Gen. 41. 14.) but he had a very honest look, not stately, as Saul's, but sweet and lovely, *he was ruddy, of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to*, (v. 12.) that is, he had a clear complexion, a good eye, and a lovely face; the features extraordinary, and something in his looks that was very charming. Though he was so far from using any art to help his beauty, that his employment exposed it to the sun and wind, yet nature kept its own, and, by the sweetness of his aspect, gave manifest indications of an amiable temper and disposition of mind. Perhaps his modest blush, when he was brought before Samuel, and received by him with surprising respect, made him look much the handsomer.

4. The anointing of him. The Lord told Samuel in his ear, (as he had done, ch. 9. 15.) that this was he whom he must anoint, v. 12. Samuel objects not to the meanness of his education, his youth, or the little respect he had in his own family, but, in obedience to the divine command, took his horn of oil, and *anointed him*, (v. 13.) signifying thereby, (1.) A divine designation to the government, after the death of Saul, of which hereby he gave him a full assurance. Not that he was at present invested with the royal power, but it was entailed upon him, to come to him in due time. (2.) A divine communication of gifts and graces, to fit him for the government, and to make him a type of him who was to be the Messiah, the anointed One, who received the spirit, not by measure, but *without measure*. He is said to be anointed *in the midst of his brethren*, who yet, possibly, did not understand it as a designation to the government, and therefore did not envy David, as Joseph's brethren did him; because they saw no further marks of dignity put upon him, no, not so much as a coat of divers colours. But Bishop Patrick reads it, *He anointed him from the*

*midst of his brethren*, that is, he singled him out from the rest, and privately anointed him, but with a charge to keep his own counsel, and not to let his own brethren know it, as by what we find (*ch. 17. 28.*) it should seem, Eliab did not. It is computed that David was now about twenty years old; if so, his troubles by Saul lasted ten years, for he was thirty years old when Saul died. Dr. Lightfoot reckons him to be about twenty-five, and that his troubles lasted but five years.

5. The happy effects of this anointing, the *Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward*, v. 13. The anointing him was not an empty ceremony, but a divine power went along with that instituted sign, and he found himself inwardly advanced in wisdom and courage, and concern for the public, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. This would abundantly satisfy him that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestinated to the kingdom of glory, is, our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and our experience of a work of grace in our hearts. Some think that his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in music, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit's coming upon him. However, this made him the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Samuel, 23. 1. Samuel, having done this, went to Ramah in safety, and we never read of him again but once, (*ch. 19. 18.*) till we read of his death; now he retired to die in peace, since his eyes had seen the salvation, even the sceptre brought into the tribe of Judah.

14. But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16. Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are before thee*, to seek out a man *who is a cunning player on a harp*: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me. 18. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, *that is cunning in playing*, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. 19. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, *which is with the sheep*. 20. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul. 21. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer. 22. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight. 23. And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refresh-

ed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

We have here Saul falling, and David rising.

I. Here is Saul made a terror to himself; (*v. 14.*) *The Spirit of the Lord departed from him*. He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit with which he was directed, animated, and encouraged in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul, (as it is expressed, 2 Sam. 7. 15.) for when the Spirit of the Lord departs from us, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive. The consequence of this was, that *an evil spirit from God troubled him*. They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The Devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humours of his body, and passions of his mind. He grew fretful, and peevish, and discontented; timorous and suspicious, ever and anon starting and trembling; he was sometimes, says Josephus, as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burthen to all about him.

II. Here is David made a physician to Saul, and by that means brought to court; a physician that helped him against the worst of diseases, when none else could. David was newly anointed privately to the kingdom; it would be of use to him to go to court, and see the world: it is here brought about for him, without any contrivance of his own or his friends. Note, Those whom God designs for any service, his providence shall concur with his grace to prepare and qualify them for it.

Saul is distempered; his servants have the honesty and courage to tell him what his distemper was; (*v. 15.*) *An evil spirit*, not by chance, but *from God*, and his providence, *troubleth thee*. Now,

1. The means they all advise him to for his relief, was, music; (*v. 16.*) "Let us have a *cunning player on the harp* to attend thee." How much better friends had they been to him, if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and to intercede with God for him; then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good spirit would have returned to him. But their project is to make him merry, and so cure him. Many whose consciences are convinced and startled, are for ever ruined by such methods as these, which drown all care of the soul in the delights of sense. Yet Saul's servants did not amiss to send for music, as a help to cheer up the spirits, if they had but withal sent for a prophet to give him good counsel. And (as Bishop Hall observes) it was well they did not send for a witch or diviner, by his enchantments to cast out the evil spirit, which has been the abominable wicked practice of some that have worn the christian name, who consult the Devil in their distresses, and make hell their refuge. It will be no less than a miracle of divine grace, if these who thus agree with Satan, ever break off from him again.

2. One of his servants recommended David to him, as a fit person to be employed in the use of these means, little imagining that he was the man whom Samuel meant, when he told Saul, a neighbour of his, better than he, should have the king-

dom, *ch.* 15. 28. It is a very high character which this servant of Saul here gives of David, (*v.* 18.) that he was not only fit for his purpose as a comely person, and cunning in playing, but a man of courage and conduct, a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters, fit to be further preferred, and (which crowned his character) *the Lord is with him*. By this it appears, that though David, after he was anointed, returned to his country-business, and there remained on his head no marks of the oil, so careful was he to keep that secret, yet the workings of the Spirit signified by the oil, could not be hid, but made him shine in obscurity, so that all his neighbours observed with wonder the great improvements of his mind on a sudden. David, even in his shepherd's garb, is become an oracle, a champion, and every thing that is great. His fame reached the court soon, for Saul was inquisitive after such young men, *ch.* 14. 52. When the Spirit of God comes upon a man, he will make his face to shine.

3. David is hereupon sent for to court. And it seems,

(1.) His father was very willing to part with him, sent him very readily, and a present with him to Saul; (*v.* 20.) the present was, according to the usage of those times, bread and wine, (compare *ch.* 10. 3, 4.) therefore acceptable, because expressive of the homage and allegiance of him that sent it. Probably, Jesse, who knew what his son David was designed for, was aware that Providence was herein fitting him for it, and therefore he would not force Providence by sending him to court uncalled, yet he followed Providence very cheerfully, when he saw it plainly putting him in the way of preferment. Some suggest, that when Jesse received that message, *Send me David thy son*, he began to be afraid that Saul had got some intimation of his being anointed, and sent for him to do him a mischief, and therefore Jesse sent a present to pacify him; but it is probable, that the person, whoever he was, that brought the message, gave him an account on what design he was sent for.

(2.) Saul became very kind to him, (*v.* 21.) *loved him greatly*, and designed to *make him his armour bearer*, and (contrary to the manner of the king, *ch.* 8. 11.) asked his father's leave to keep him in his service, (*v.* 22.) *Let David, I pray thee, stand before me*. And good reason he had to respect him, for he did him a great deal of service with his music, *v.* 23. His instrumental music with his harp is the only kind mentioned, but it should seem by the account Josephus gives of it, that he added vocal music to it, and sung hymns, probably divine hymns, songs of praise, to his harp. David's music was Saul's physic. [1.] Music has a natural tendency to compose and exhilarate the mind, when it is disturbed and sudden. Elisha used it for the calming of his spirits, 2 Kings 3. 15. On some it has a greater influence and effect than on others, and, probably, Saul was one of those. Not that it charmed the evil spirit, but it made his spirit sedate, and allayed those tumults of the animal spirits, by which the Devil had advantage against him. The beams of the sun (it is the learned Bochart's comparison) cannot be cut with a sword, quenched with water, or blown out with wind, but, by closing the window-shutters, they may be kept out of the chamber. Music cannot work upon the Devil, but it may shut up the passages by which he had access to the mind. [2.] David's music was extraordinary, and in mercy to him, that he might gain a reputation at court, as one that had the Lord with him. God made his performance in music more successful, in this case, than that of others would have been. Saul found, even after he had conceived an enmity to David, that no one else could do him the same service, (*ch.* 19. 9, 10.) which was a great aggravation of his

outrage against him. It is pity that music, which may be so serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be abused by any to the support of vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart away from God and serious things: if that be to any the effect of it, it drives away the good Spirit, not the evil Spirit.

## CHAP. XVII.

David is the man whom God now delights to honour, for he is a man after his own heart. We read in the foregoing chapter, how, after he was anointed, Providence made him famous in the court; we read in this chapter, how Providence made him much more famous in the camp, and, by both, not only marked him for a great man, but fitted him for the throne to which he was designated. In the court he was only Saul's physician, but in the camp, Israel's champion, there he fairly fought, and beat Goliath of Gath. In the story observe, I. What a figure Goliath made, and how daringly he challenged the armies of Israel, *v.* 1. 11. II. What a mean figure David made, when Providence brought him to the army, *v.* 12. 30. III. The unparalleled bravery wherewith David undertook to encounter this Philistine, *v.* 31. 39. IV. The pious resolution with which he attacked him, *v.* 40. 47. V. The glorious victory he obtained over him with a sling and a stone, and the advantage which the Israelites thereby gained against the Philistines, *v.* 48. 54. VI. The great notice which was hereupon taken of David at court, *v.* 55. 58.

1. **N**OW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together at Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephesdammim. 2. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. 3. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them. 4. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span. 5. And *he had* a helmet of brass upon his head, and *he was* armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of brass. 6. And *he had* greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7. And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. 8. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set *your* battle in array? *Am* not I a Philistine, and you servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. 10. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man, that we may fight together. 11. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the



Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

It was not long ago that the Philistines were soundly beaten, and put to the worse, before Israel, and would have been totally routed, if Saul's rashness had not prevented; but here we have them making head again. Observe,

I. How they *defied Israel with their armies*, v. 1. They made a descent upon the Israelites' country, and possessed themselves, as it should seem, of some part of it, for they encamped in a place *which belongeth to Judah*. Israel's ground had never been footing for Philistine armies, if Israel had been faithful to their God. The Philistines (it is probable) had heard that Samuel had fallen out with Saul, and forsaken him, and no longer assisted and advised him, and that Saul was grown melancholy, and unfit for business, and this encouraged them to make this attempt for the retrieving of the credit they had lately lost. The enemies of the church are watchful to take all advantages, and they never have greater advantages, than when her protectors have provoked God's Spirit and prophets to leave them. Saul mustered his forces, and faced them, v. 2, 3. And here we must take notice, 1. That evil spirit, for the present, had left Saul, *ch.* 16. 23. David's harp having given him some relief, perhaps, the alarms and affairs of the war prevented the return of the distemper. Business is a good antidote against melancholy. Let the mind have something without to fasten on, and employ itself about, and it will be less in danger of preying upon itself. God, in mercy to Israel, suspended the judgment for a while; for how distracted must the affairs of the public have been, if, at this juncture, the prince had been distracted? 2. That David, for the present, was returned to Beth-lehem, and had left the court, v. 15. When Saul had no further occasion to use him for the relief of his distemper, though, being anointed, he had a very good private reason, and, having a grant of the place of Saul's armour-bearer, he had a very plausible pretence to have continued his attendance, as a retainer to the court, yet he went home to Beth-lehem, and returned to keep his father's sheep; this was a rare instance, in a young man that stood so fair for preferment, of humility, and affection to his parents. He knew better than most do, how to come down again after he had begun to rise, and strangely preferred the retirements of a pastoral life before all the pleasures and gaieties of the court. None more fit for honour than he, nor that deserved it better, and yet none more dead to it.

II. How they *defied Israel with their champion* Goliath, whom they were almost as proud of, as he was of himself, hoping by him to recover their reputation and dominion. Perhaps the army of the Israelites was superior in number and strength to that of the Philistines, which made the Philistines decline a battle, and stand at bay with them, desiring rather to put the issue upon a single combat, in which, having such a champion, they hoped to gain the victory. Now concerning this champion, observe,

1. His prodigious size. He was of the sons of Anak, who at Gath kept their ground in Joshua's time, (Josh. 11. 22.) and kept up a race of giants there, of which Goliath was one, and, it is probable, one of the largest. He was in height *six cubits and a span*, v. 4. The learned bishop Cumberland has made it out, that the scripture cubit was above twenty-one inches, (above three inches more than our half-yard,) and a span was half a cubit, by which computation, Goliath wanted but eight inches of four yards in height, eleven feet and four inches.

A monstrous stature, and which made him very formidable, especially if he had strength and spirit proportionable.

2. His armour; art, as well as nature, made him terrible. He was well furnished with defensive armour, v. 5, 6. *A helmet of brass on his head, a coat of mail*, made of brass plates laid over one another, like the scales of a fish; and because his legs would lie most within the reach of an ordinary man, he wore brass boots, and a large corselet of brass about his neck. The coat is said to weigh five thousand shekels, and a shekel was half an ounce avoirdupois. A vast weight for a man to carry, all the other parts of his armour being proportionable. But some think it should be translated, not the *weight* of the coat, but the *value* of it, was five thousand shekels; so much it cost. His offensive weapons were extraordinary, of which the spear only is here described, v. 7. It was like a weaver's beam; his arm could manage that, which an ordinary man could scarcely heave. His shield only, which was the lightest of all his accoutrements, was carried before him by his esquire, probably, for state; for he that was clad in brass, little needed a shield.

3. His challenge. The Philistines having chosen him for their champion, to save themselves from the hazard of a battle, he here throws down the gauntlet, and bids defiance to the armies of Israel, v. 8-10. He came into the valley that lay between the camps, and his voice, probably, being as much stronger than other people's as his arm was, he cried so as to make them all hear him, *Give me a man, that we may fight together*. He looks upon himself with admiration, because he was so much taller and stronger than all about him; his heart (says Bishop Hall) nothing but a lump of proud flesh. He looks upon Israel with disdain, because they had none among them of such a monstrous bulk, and defies them to find a man among them, bold enough to enter the lists with him. (1.) He upbraids them with their folly in drawing an army together, "*Why are ye come to set the battle in array?*" How dare you oppose the mighty Philistines?" Or, "Why should the two armies engage, when the controversy may be sooner decided, with only the expense of one life, and the hazard of another?" (2.) He offers to put the war entirely upon the issue of the duel he proposes; "If your champion kills me, we will be your servants; if I kill him, you shall be ours." This (says Bishop Patrick) was only a bravado, for no nation would be willing thus to venture its all upon the success of one man, nor is it justifiable; notwithstanding Goliath's stipulation here, when he was killed, the Philistines did not stand to his word, nor submit themselves servants to Israel. When he boasts, *I am a Philistine, and you servants to Saul*, he would have it thought a great piece of condescension in him, who was a chief ruler, to enter the lists with an Israelite; for he looked on them as no better than slaves. The Chaldee paraphrase brings him in, boasting that he was the man that had killed Hophni and Phinehas, and taken the ark prisoner; but that the Philistines had never given him so much as the command of a regiment in recompense of his services, whereas Saul had been made king for his services: "Let him therefore take up the challenge."

4. The terror this struck upon Israel; (v. 11.) *Saul and all his army were greatly afraid*. The people would not have been dismayed, but that they observed Saul's courage failed him; and it is not to be expected, that if the leader be a coward, the followers should be bold. We found before, when the spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, (*ch.* 11. 6) none could be more daring, more forward, to answer the challenge of Nahash the Ammonite; but now

that the *Spirit of the Lord was departed from him*, even the big looks and big words of a single Philistine made him change colour. But where was Jonathan all this while? Why did not he accept the challenge, who, in the late war, had so bravely engaged a whole army of Philistines? Doubtless, he felt not himself stirred up of God to it, as he did then. As the best, so the bravest men, are no more than what God makes them. Jonathan must now sit still, because the honour of engaging Goliath is reserved for David. In great and good actions, the wind of the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. Now the pious Israelites lament their king's breach with Samuel.

12. Now David *was* the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-Judah, whose name *was* Jesse; and he had eight sons: and the man went among men *for* an old man in the days of Saul. 13. And the three eldest sons of Jesse went *and* followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle *were* Eliab the first-born; and next unto him, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. 14. And David *was* the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. 15. But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem. 16. And the Philistine drew near morning and evening, and presented himself forty days. 17. And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched *corn*, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren: 18. And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, *were* in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20. And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him: and he came to the trench as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. 21. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. 22. And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. 23. And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name,) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard *them*. 24. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid. 25. And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, *that* the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his fa-

ther's house free in Israel. 26. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? 27. And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 28. And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why comest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. 29. And David said, What have I now done? *Is there* not a cause? 30. And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

Forty days the two armies lay encamped facing one another, each advantageously posted; but neither forward to engage. Either they were parleying, and treating of an accommodation, or waiting for recruits; and perhaps there were frequent skirmishes between small detached parties. All this while, twice a day, morning and evening, did the insulting champion appear in the field, and repeat his challenge; his own heart growing more and more proud for his not being answered, and the people of Israel more and more timorous; while God designed hereby to ripen him for destruction, and to make Israel's deliverance the more illustrious. All this while, David is keeping his father's sheep, but at the end of forty days, Providence brings him to the field, to win and wear the laurel, which no other Israelite dares venture for.

We have in these verses,

I. The present state of his family. His father was old, *v. 12, he went among men for an old man*, was taken notice of for his great age, above what was usual at that time, and therefore was excused from public services, and went not in person to the wars, but sent his sons; he had the honours paid him that were due to his age, his hoary head was a crown of glory to him. David's three elder brethren, who perhaps envied his place at the court, got their father to send for him home, and let them go to the camp, where they hoped to signalize themselves, and eclipse him; (*v. 13, 14.*) while David himself was so far from being proud of the services he had done his prince, or ambitious of further preferment, that he not only returned from court to the obscurity of his father's house, but to the care, and toil, and (as it proved, *v. 34.*) the peril, of *keeping his father's sheep*. It was the praise of this humility, that it came after he had the honour of a courtier; and the reward of it, that it came before the honour of a conqueror; *before honour is humility*. Now he had that opportunity of meditation and prayer, and other acts of devotion, which fitted him for what he was destined to, more than all the military exercises of that inglorious camp could do.

II. The orders his father gave him to go visit his brethren in the camp. He did not himself ask leave to go, to satisfy his curiosity, or to gain experience and make observations; but his father sent him on a mean and homely errand, which any of

his servants might have done. He must carry some bread and cheese to his brethren, ten loaves with some parched corn for themselves, (v. 17.) and ten cheeses, which it seems, he thought too good for them, but might be acceptable as a present to their colonel, v. 18. David must still be the drudge of the family, though he was to be the greatest ornament of it. He had not so much as an ass, at command, to carry his load, but must take it on his back, and yet run to the camp. Jesse, we thought, was privy to his being anointed, and yet industriously kept him thus mean and obscure, probably, to hide him from the eye of suspicion and envy, knowing that he was anointed to a crown in reversion. He must observe how his brethren fared, whether they were not reduced to short allowance, now that the encampment continued so long, that, if need were, he might send them more provisions. And he must take their pledge, that is, if they had pawned any thing, he must redeem it; *take notice of their company*, so some observe, whom they associate with, and what sort of life they lead; perhaps David, like Joseph, had formerly brought to his father their evil report, and now he sends him to inquire concerning their manners. See the care of pious parents about their children when they are abroad from them, especially in places of temptation; they are solicitous how they conduct themselves, and particularly what company they keep. Let children think of this, and conduct themselves accordingly, remembering, that, when they are from under their parents' eye, they are still under God's eye.

III. David's dutiful obedience to his father's command. His prudence and care made him be up early, v. 20. and yet not to leave his sheep without a keeper, so faithful was he in a few things, and therefore the fitter to be made ruler over many things; and so well had he learnt to obey, before he pretended to command. God's providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and, as it should seem, were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been, all the forty days, v. 21. Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son to the army, just at that critical juncture, but the wise God orders the time and all the circumstances of actions and affairs, so as to serve his designs of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after his own heart. Now observe here,

1. How brisk and lively David was, v. 22. What articles he brought, he honestly took care of, and left them with those that had the charge of the bag and baggage; but though he had come a long journey with a great load, he *ran into the army*, to see what was doing there, and to pay his respects to his brethren. *Seest thou a man thus diligent in his business?* He is in the way of preferment, *he shall stand before kings*.

2. How bold and daring the Philistine was, v. 23. Now that the armies were drawn out into a line of battle, he appeared first to renew his challenge, vainly imagining that he was in the eager chase of his own glory and triumph, whereas really he was but courting his own destruction.

3. How timorous and faint-hearted the men of Israel were. Though they had, for forty days together, been used to his haughty looks and threatening language, and, having seen no execution done by either, might have learned to despise both; yet, upon his approach, they *fled from him and were sore afraid*, v. 24. One Philistine could never thus have chased a thousand Israelites, and put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock, being treacherously forsaken by them, had justly *sold them and shut them up*, Deut. 32. 30.

4. How high Saul bid for a champion. Though he was the tallest of all the men of Israel, and, if he had not been so, while he kept close to God, might himself have safely taken up the gauntlet which the insolent Philistine threw down, yet the Spirit of the Lord being departed from him, he durst not do it, nor press Jonathan to do it: but whoever will do it, shall have as good preferment as he can give him, v. 25. If the hope of wealth and honour will prevail with any man to expose himself so far, as it is proclaimed, that the bold adventurer, if he come off, shall marry the king's daughter, and have a good portion with her: but, as it should seem, whether he come off or no, his *father's house shall be free in Israel*, from all toll, tribute, custom, and services to the crown; or shall be ennobled, and advanced to the peerage.

5. How much concerned David was to assert the honour of God and Israel against the impudent challenges of this champion. He asked what reward was promised to him that should slay this Philistine, v. 26. Though he knew already; not because he was ambitious of the honours, but because he would have it taken notice of, and reported to Saul, how much he resented the indignity hereby done to Israel and Israel's God. He might have presumed so far upon his acquaintance and interest at court, as to have gone himself to Saul to offer his service; but his modesty would not let him do that; it was one of his own rules, before it was one of his son's proverbs, *Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men*; (Prov. 25. 6.) yet his zeal put him upon that method which, he hoped, would bring him into this great engagement. Two considerations, it seems, fired David with a holy indignation. (1.) That the challenger was one that was uncircumcised, a stranger to God, and out of covenant with him. (2.) That the challenged were the armies of the living God devoted to him, employed by him and for him, so that the affronts done to them, reflected upon the living God himself, and *that* he cannot bear. When therefore some had told him, what was the reward proposed for killing the Philistine, (v. 27.) he asked others, (v. 30.) with the same resentment, which he expected would at length come to Saul's ear.

6. How he was brow-beaten and discouraged by his elder brother Eliab, who, taking notice of his forwardness, fell into a passion upon it, and gave David very abusive language, v. 28. Consider it,

(1.) As the fruit of Eliab's jealousy. He was the eldest brother and David the youngest, and, perhaps, it had been customary with him (as it is with too many elder brothers) to trample upon him, and take every occasion to chide him. But those who thus exalt themselves over their juniors, may perhaps live to see themselves, by a righteous providence, abased, and those whom they are abusive to, exalted. Time may come when the elder may serve the younger. But Eliab was now vexed that his younger brother should speak these bold words against the Philistine which he himself durst not say. He knew what honour David had had already in the court, and if he should now get him honour in the camp, (from which he thought he had found means effectually to seclude him, v. 15.) the glory of his elder brother would be eclipsed and stained; and therefore, (such is the nature of jealousy,) he would rather that Goliath should triumph over Israel, than that David should be the man that should triumph over him. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy*, especially the envy of a brother, which Jacob, and Joseph, and David here, experienced the keenness of? See Prov. 18. 19. It is very ill-favoured language that Eliab here gives him; not only unjust

and unkind, but, at this time, basely ungrateful; for David was now sent by his father, as Joseph by his, on a kind visit to his brethren. Eliab intended, in what he said, not only to grieve and discourage David himself, and quench that noble fire which he perceived glowing in his breast, but to represent him to those about him as an idle proud lad, not fit to be taken notice of. He gives them to understand that his business was only to keep sheep, and falsely insinuates that he was a careless, unfaithful, shepherd; though he had left his charge in good hands, *v.* 20. yet he must tauntingly be asked, *With whom hast thou left those few sheep?* Though he came down now to the camp in obedience to his father and kindness to his brethren, and Eliab knew it, yet this is turned to his reproach; "Thou art come down, not to do any service, but to gratify thy own curiosity, and only to look about thee;" and from thence he will infer *the pride and naughtiness of his heart*, and pretends to know it as certainly as if he were in his bosom. David could appeal to God concerning his humility and sincerity, (*Ps.* 17. 3.—131. 1.) and at this time gave proofs of both, and yet could not escape this hard character from his own brother. See the folly, absurdity, and wickedness, of a proud and envious passion; how groundless its jealousies are, how unjust its censures, how unfair its representations, how bitter its invectives, and how indecent its language. God, by his grace, keep us from such a spirit!

(2.) As a trial of David's meekness, patience, and constancy; a short trial it was, and he approved himself well in it: for, [1.] He bore the provocation with admirable temper; *v.* 29. "*What have I now done? What fault have I committed, for which I should thus be chidden? Is there not a cause for my coming to the camp, when my father sent me? Is there not a cause, for my resenting the injury done to Israel's honour by Goliath's challenge?*" He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing, but with a soft answer turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion was, in some respects, more honourable than that of Goliath. *He that hath rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty.* It was no time for David to quarrel with his brother, when the Philistines were upon them. The more threatening the church's enemies are, the more forbearing her friends should be with one another. [2.] He broke through the discouragement with admirable resolution. He would not be driven off from his thoughts of engaging the Philistine, by the ill-will of his brother. Those that undertake great and public services, must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work, in the face not only of their enemies' threats, but of their friends' slights and suspicions.

31. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed *them* before Saul; and he sent for him. 32. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou *art but a youth*, and he a man of war from his youth. 34. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; 35. And I went

out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught *him* by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37. David said, moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. 38. And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put a helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved *them*. And David put them off him.

David is at length presented to Saul for his champion, (*v.* 31.) and he bravely undertakes to fight the Philistine; (*v.* 32.) *Let no man's heart fail because of him:* it would have reflected too much upon the valour of his prince, if he had said, *Let not thy heart fail;* therefore he speaks generally, *Let no man's heart fail.* A little shepherd, come but this morning from keeping sheep, has more courage than all the mighty men of Israel, and encourages them. Thus does God often send good words to his Israel, and do great things for them, by the weak and foolish things of the world. David only desires a commission from Saul to go and fight with the Philistine, but says nothing to him of the reward he had proposed, because that was not the thing he was ambitious of, but only the honour of serving God and his country. nor would he seem to question Saul's generosity.

Two things David had to do with Saul;

I. To get clear of the objection Saul made against his undertaking. "Alas," says Saul, "thou hast a good heart to it, but art by no means an equal match for this Philistine: to engage with him is to throw away a life which may better be reserved for more agreeable services: *thou art but a youth*, rash and inconsiderate, weak and unversed in arms; he is a man that has the head and hand of a man, *a man of war*, trained up and inured to it *from his youth*, (*v.* 33.) and how canst thou expect but that he will be too hard for thee?"

David, as he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so he answered Saul's fear with faith, and gives a reason of the hope which was in him, that he should conquer the Philistine to the satisfaction of Saul. We have reason to fear that Saul had no great acquaintance with, or regard to, the word of God, and therefore David, in reasoning with him, fetched not his arguments and encouragements from thence, how much soever he had an eye to that in his own mind: but he argues from experience; though he was but a youth, and never in the wars, yet perhaps he had done as much as the killing of Goliath came to; for he had had, by divine assistance, spirit enough to encounter, and strength enough to subdue, a lion once, and another time a bear, that robbed him of his lambs: (*v.* 34.—36.) to these he compares this uncircumcised Philistine, looks upon him to be as much a ravenous beast as either of them, and therefore doubts not but to deal as easily with him; and hereby gives Saul to under-

stand, that he was not so unexperienced in hazardous conflicts, as he took him to be.

I. He tells his story like a man of spirit; he is not ashamed to own that he kept his father's sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with; so far is he from concealing it, that from his employment as a shepherd, he fetches the experience that now animated him. But he lets those about him know that he was no ordinary shepherd. Whatever our profession or calling is, be it ever so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner. When David kept sheep, (1.) He approved himself very careful and tender of his flock, though it was not his own, but his father's. He could not see a lamb in distress but he would venture his life to rescue it. This temper made him fit to be a king, to whom the lives of his subjects should be dear, and their blood precious. (Ps. 72. 14.) and fit to be a type of Christ the good Shepherd, *who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom*, (Isa. 40. 11.) and who not only ventured, but *laid down, his life for the sheep*. Thus too was David fit to be an example to ministers, with the utmost care and diligence to watch for souls, that they be not a prey to the roaring lion. (2.) He approved himself very bold and brave in the defence of his flock. This was that which he was now concerned to give proof of, and better evidence could not be demanded than this! "Thy servant not only rescued the lambs, but, to revenge the injury, *slew both the lion and the bear*."

2. He applies his story like a man of faith. He owns (*v. 37.*) it was the Lord that delivered him *from the lion and the bear*; to him he gives the praise of that great achievement, and from thence he infers, *He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine*. "The lion and the bear were enemies only to me and my sheep, and it was in defence of my own interest that I attacked them; but this Philistine is an enemy to God and Israel, *defies the armies of the living God*, and it is for their honour that I attack him." Note, (1.) Our experiences ought to be approved by us, as our encouragements to trust in God, and venture in the way of duty. He that has delivered, does and will. (2.) By the care which common Providence takes of the inferior creatures, and the protection they are under, we may be encouraged to depend upon that special Providence which surrounds the Israel of God. He that sets bounds to the waves of the sea and the rage of wild beasts, can and will restrain the wrath of wicked men. St. Paul seems to allude to this of David; (2 Tim. 4. 17, 18.) "*I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, and therefore, I trust, the Lord shall deliver me*." And perhaps David here thought of the story of Samson, and encouraged himself with it; for his slaying of a lion was a happy presage of his many illustrious victories over the Philistines in single combat.

Thus David took off Saul's objection against his undertaking, and gained a commission to fight the Philistine, with which Saul gave him a hearty good wish; since he would not venture himself, he prayed for him that would, *Go, and the Lord be with thee*; a good word, if it was not spoken customarily, and in a formal manner, as too often it is.

II. But David has somewhat to do likewise, to get clear of the armour wherewith Saul would, by all means, have him dressed up, when he went upon this great action; (*v. 38.*) *He armed David with his armour*; not that which he wore himself, the disproportion of his stature would not admit that, but some that he kept in his armoury; little thinking that he on whom he now put his helmet and coat of mail must shortly inherit his crown and robe. David being not yet resolved which way to attack

his enemy, *girded on his sword*, not knowing, as yet, but he should have occasion to make use of it; but he found the armour would but incumber him, and would be rather his burthen than his defence, and therefore he desires leave of Saul to put them off again; *I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them*, that is, "I have never been accustomed to such accoutrements as these." We may suppose Saul's armour to be very fine and very firm; but what good would it do David, if it were not fit, or if he knew not how to manage himself in it? Those that aim at things above their education and usage, and covet the attire and armour of princes, forget that that is the best for us, which we are fit for and accustomed to; if we had our desire, we should wish to be in our own coat again, and should say, "We cannot go with these;" we had therefore better go without them.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine. 41. And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him. 42. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. 43. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field. 45. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

We are now coming near this famous combat, and have in these verses, the preparations and remonstrances made on both sides.

I. The preparations made on both sides for the encounter. The Philistine was already fixed, as he had been daily for the last forty days; well might he go with his armour, for he had sufficiently proved it. Only we are told, (*v. 41.*) that he *came on and drew near*; a signal, it is likely, being given that his challenge was accepted, and as if he distrusted his helmet and coat of mail, a man went before him, *carrying his shield*; for his own hands are full with his sword and spear, *v. 45.* But what

arms and ammunition is David furnished with? Truly none but what he brought with him as a shepherd; no breast-plate, or corselet, but his plain shepherd's coat; no spear, but his staff; no sword or bow, but his sling; no quiver, but his scrip; nor any arrows, but, instead of them, five smooth stones picked out of the brook, *v.* 40. By this it appeared that his confidence was purely in the power of God, and not in any sufficiency of his own, and that, now at length, he who put it into his heart to fight the Philistine, put it into his head with what weapons to do it.

II. The conference which precedes the encounter. In which observe,

1. How very proud Goliath was. (1.) With what scorn he looked upon his adversary, *v.* 42. He looked about, expecting to meet some tall strong man; but when he saw what a mean figure he made with whom he was to engage, he disdained him, thought it below him to enter the lists with him, fearing that the contemptibleness of the champion he contended with would lessen the glory of his victory. He took notice of his person, that he was but a youth, not come to his strength, *ruddy and of a fair countenance*, fitter to accompany the virgins of Israel in their dances, (if mixed dancing was then in use,) than to lead on the men of Israel in their battles. He took notice of his array with great indignation; (*v.* 43.) "*Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?*" Dost thou think to beat me as easily as thou dost thy shepherd's dog?" (2.) With what confidence he presumed upon his success. He cursed David by his gods, imprecating the impotent vengeance of his idols against him, thinking those fire-balls thrown about him would secure him success: and therefore, in confidence of that, he darts his menaces, as if threatening words would kill; (*v.* 44.) "*Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air;*" it will be a tender and delicate feast for them." Thus the security and presumption of fools destroy them.

2. How very pious David was. His speech savours nothing of ostentation, but God is all in all in it, *v.* 45. 47.

(1.) He derives his authority from God. "*I come to thee, by warrant and commission from heaven, in the name of the Lord, who has called me to, and animated me for, this undertaking; who, by his universal providence, is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; and therefore has power to do what he pleases; and, by the special grace of his covenant, is the God of the armies of Israel, and therefore has engaged, and will employ, his power for their protection, and against thee who hast impiously defied them.*" The name of God David relied on, as Goliath did on his sword and spear. See Ps. 20. 7.—118. 10, 11.

(2.) He depends for success upon God, *v.* 46. David speaks with as much assurance as Goliath had done, but upon better ground; it is his faith that says, "*This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand;*" and not only thy carcase, but the carcasses of the host of the Philistines, shall be given to the birds and beasts of prey."

(3.) He devotes the praise and glory of all to God. He did not, like Goliath, seek his own honour, but the honour of God; not doubting but by the success of this action, [1.] All the world should be made to know that *there is a God*, and that the *God of Israel* is the one only living and true God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie. [2.] All Israel (whom he calls not *this army*, but *this assembly*, or church, because they were now religiously attending the goings of their God and King, as they used to do in the sanctuary) all Israel shall know that the *Lord saveth not with sword and spear*, (*v.* 47.) but can, when he pleases, save

without either and against both, Ps. 46. 9. David addresses himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer a sacrifice to the justice of God, than as a soldier that was going to engage an enemy of his country.

43. And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. 49. And David put his hand into his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but *there was* no sword in the hand of David. 51. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. 52. And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron: and the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. 53. And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents. 54. And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem: but he put his armour in his tent. 55. And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, *As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.* 56. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. 57. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, *I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.*

Here is, 1. The engagement between the two champions, *v.* 48. To this engagement, (1.) The Philistine advanced with a great deal of state and gravity: if he must encounter a pigmy, yet it shall be with the magnificence of a giant and a grandee. This is intimated in the manner of expression. He *arose, and came, and drew nigh*, like a stalking mountain, overlaid with brass and iron, *to meet David.* (2.) David advanced with no less activity and cheerfulness, as one that aimed more to do execution, than to make a figure; he *hasted, and ran*, being lightly clad, *to meet the Philistine.* We may imagine with what tenderness and compassion the Israelites saw such a pleasing youth as this, throwing himself into the mouth of destruction; but he knew whom he had believed, and for whom he acted.



2. The fall of Goliath in this engagement. He was in no haste, because in no fear, but confident that he should soon at one stroke cleave his adversary's head: but while he was preparing to do it solemnly, David did his business effectually, without any parade; he slung a stone which hit in the forehead, and, in the twinkling of an eye, fetched him to the ground, v. 49. He knew there were famous slingers in Israel, (Judg. 20. 16.) yet was either so forgetful or presumptuous, as to go with the beaver of his helmet open, and thither, to the only part left exposed, not so much David's art, as God's providence, directed the stone, and brought it with such force that it sunk into his head, notwithstanding the impudence with which his forehead was brazened. See how frail and uncertain life is, even then when it thinks itself best fortified, and how quickly, how easily, and with how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out and death to enter. Goliath himself *has not power over the spirit to retain the spirit*, Eccl. 8. 8. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armour. See how God resists the proud, and pours contempt upon those that bid defiance to him and his people. None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. One of the rabbins thinks, that when Goliath said to David, *Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, he drew up his head so hastily, that his helmet fell off, and so left his broad forehead a fair mark for David. To complete the execution, he drew Goliath's own sword, a two-handed weapon for David, and with it *cut off his head*, v. 51. What need had David to take a sword of his own? His enemy's sword shall serve his purpose, when he has occasion for one. God is greatly glorified, when his proud enemies are cut off with their own sword, and he makes *their own tongues to fall upon them*, Ps. 64. 8. David's victory over Goliath was typical of the triumphs of the Son of David over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whom he *spoiled, and made a show of them openly*; (Col. 2. 15.) and we through him are *more than conquerors*.

3. The defeat of the Philistines' army hereupon. They relied wholly upon the strength of their champion, and therefore, when they saw him slain, they did not, as Goliath had offered, throw down their arms and surrender themselves servants to Israel, (v. 9.) but took flight, being wholly dispirited, and thinking it to no purpose to oppose one before whom such a mighty man was fallen: *they fled*, (v. 51.) and this put life into the Israelites; they *shouted and pursued them*, v. 52. David, it is probable, leading them on in the pursuit, even to the gates of their own cities. In their return from the chase, they seized all their baggage, plundered their tents, (v. 53.) and enriched themselves with the spoil.

4. David's disposal of his trophies, v. 54. He brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, to be a terror to the Jebusites, who held the stronghold of Zion: it is probable that he carried it in triumph to other cities; *his armour he laid up in his tent*; only the sword was preserved behind the ephod in the tabernacle as consecrated to God, and a memorial of the victory to his honour, ch. 21. 9.

5. The notice that was taken of David. Though he had been at court formerly, yet, having been for some time absent, (v. 15.) Saul had forgotten him, being melancholy and mindless, and little thinking that his musician should have spirit enough to be his champion; and therefore, as if he had never seen him before, he asked whose son he was. Abner was a stranger to him, but brought him to Saul himself, (v. 57.) and he gave a modest account of himself, v. 58. And now he was introduced to the

court with much greater advantages than before; in which he owned God's hand performing all things for him.

## CHAP. XVIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left David in triumph; now in this chapter we have, I. The improvement of his triumphs; he soon became, 1. Saul's constant attendant, v. 2. 2. Jonathan's covenant friend, v. 1, 3, 4. 3. The darling of his country, v. 5, 7, 16. II. The allays of his triumphs. This is the vanity that accompanies even a right work, that for it a man is envied, Eccl. 4. 4. So David was by Saul, 1. He hated him, and sought to kill him himself, v. 8. 11. 2. He feared him, and contrived how he might have some mischief done him, v. 12. 17. Proposed to marry his daughter to him; but, (1.) Cheated him of the eldest to provoke him, (v. 19.) and, (2.) Gave him the younger, upon conditions which would endanger his life, v. 20. 25. But David performed his conditions bravely, (v. 26, 27.) and grew to be more and more esteemed, v. 28. 30. Still David is rising, but (as all that aim at the crown of life must expect) he had a great deal of difficulty and opposition to grapple with.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5. And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war; and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

David was anointed to the crown, to take it out of Saul's hand, and over Jonathan's head; and yet here we find,

I. That Saul, who was now in possession of the crown, reposed a confidence in him, God so ordering it, that he might by his preferment at court be prepared for future service. Saul now took him home with him, and would not suffer him to return again to his retirement, v. 2. And David having signalized himself above the men of war, in taking up the challenge which they declined, *Saul set him over the men of war*; (v. 5.) not that he made him general, Abner was in that post, but perhaps captain of the life-guard; or, though he was youngest, he ordered him to have the precedence, in recompense of his great services. He employed him in the affairs of government; and *David went out whithersoever Saul sent him*, showing himself as dutiful as he was bold and courageous. Those that hope to rule, must first learn to obey. He had approved himself a dutiful son to Jesse his father, and now a dutiful servant to Saul his master; those that are good in one relation, it is to be hoped will be so in another.

II. That Jonathan, who was heir to the crown, entered into covenant with him: God so ordering it, that David's way might be the clearer, when his rival was his friend.

I. Jonathan conceived an extraordinary kindness and affection for him, v. 1. *When he had made an end of speaking to Saul*, he fell perfectly in love

with him. Whether it refers to his conference with Saul before the battle, (*ch.* 17. 34-37.) or to that after, (*v.* 58.) in which it is probable much more was said than is there set down, is uncertain. But in both David expressed himself with so much prudence, modesty, and piety, such a felicity of expression, with so much boldness and yet so much sweetness, and all this so natural and unaffected, and the more surprising because of the disadvantages of his education and appearance, *that the soul of Jonathan was immediately knit unto the soul of David.* Jonathan had formerly set upon a Philistine army with the same faith and bravery that David had now attacked a Philistine giant: so that there was between them a very near resemblance of affections, dispositions, and counsels, which made their spirits unite so easily, so quickly, so closely, that they seemed but as one soul in two bodies. None had so much reason to dislike David as Jonathan had, because he was to put him by the crown, yet none regards him more. Those that are governed in their love by principles of wisdom and grace, will not suffer their affections to be alienated by any secular regards or considerations: the greater thoughts will swallow up and overrule the lesser.

2. He testified his love to David by a generous present he made him, *v.* 4. He was concerned to see so great a soul, though lodged in so fair a body, yet disguised in the mean and despicable dress of a poor shepherd, and therefore takes care to put him speedily into the habit of a courtier, for he gave him a robe, and of a soldier, for he gave him, instead of his staff and sling, a sword and bow, and, instead of his shepherd's scrip, a girdle, either a belt or a sash; and, which made the present much more obliging, they were the same that he himself had worn, and (as a presage of what would follow) he stripped himself of them to dress David in them. Saul's would not fit him, but Jonathan's did; their bodies were of a size, a circumstance which well agreed with the suitableness of their minds. When Saul put these marks of honour on David, he put them off again, because he would first earn them, and then wear them; but now that he had given proofs of the spirit of a prince and soldier, he was not ashamed to wear the habits of a prince and soldier. David is seen in Jonathan's clothes, that all may take notice he is Jonathan's second self. Our Lord Jesus had thus showed his love to us, that he stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to enrich us; nay he did more than Jonathan, he clothed himself with our rags, whereas Jonathan did not put on David's.

3. He endeavoured the perpetuating of his friendship: so entirely satisfied were they in each other, even at the first interview, that they made a covenant with each other, *v.* 3. Their mutual affection was sincere; and he that bears an honest mind startles not at assurances. True love desires to be constant. Those who love Christ as their own souls, will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant.

III. That both court and country agree to bless him: it is but seldom that they agree in their favourites; yet David was *accepted in the sight of all the people, and also* (which was strange) *in the sight of Saul's servants, v.* 5. The former cordially loved him, the latter could not for shame but caress and compliment him. And it was certainly a great instance of the power of God's grace in David, that he was able to bear all this respect and honour flowing in upon him of a sudden, without being lifted up above measure. Those that climb so fast, have need of good heads and good hearts: it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

6. And it came to pass, as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. 7. And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 8. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom? 9. And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. 10. And it came to pass, on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house; and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand. 11. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it.* And David avoided out of his presence twice.

Now begin David's troubles, and they not only tread on the heels of his triumphs, but take rise from them; such is the vanity of that in this world which seems greatest.

I. He was too much magnified by the common people. Sometime after the victory, Saul went a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel that lay next him, to receive the congratulations of the country. And when he made his public entry into any place, the women were most forward to show him respect, as was usual then in public triumphs, *v.* 6. and they had got a song, it seems, which they sang in their dances, (made by some poet or other, that was a great admirer of David's bravery, and was more just than wise, in giving his achievements in the late action the preference before Saul's,) the burthen of which was, *Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.* Such a difference as this, Moses made between the numbers of Ephraim and Manassch, Deut. 33. 17.

II. This mightily displeased Saul, and made him envy David, *v.* 3, 9. He ought to have considered that they referred only to this late action, and intended not to diminish any of Saul's former exploits; and that in the action now celebrated, it was undeniably true, that David, in killing Goliath, did, in effect, slay all the Philistines that were slain that day, and defeated the whole army; so that they did but give David his due: it may be, he that composed the song, only used a poetical liberty, and intended not any invidious comparison between Saul and David; or, if he did, it was below the great mind of a prince to take notice of such a reflection upon his personal honour, when it appeared that the glory of the public was sincerely intended. But Saul was very wroth, and presently suspected some treasonable design at the bottom of it: *What can he have more but the kingdom?* This made him eye David, as one he was jealous of, and sought advantages against; (*v.* 9.) his countenance was not toward him as it had been. Proud men cannot endure to hear any praised but themselves, and think all the honour lost that goes by themselves. It is a

sign that the Spirit of God is departed from men, if they be peevish in their resentment of affronts, envious and suspicious of all about them, and ill-natured in their conduct; for the wisdom from above makes us quite otherwise.

III. In his fury he aimed to kill David, *v. 10, 11. Jealousy is the rage of a man*; it made Saul outrageous against David, and impatient to get him out of the way.

1. His fits of phrensy returned upon him. The very next day after he conceived malice against David, the evil spirit from God, that had formerly haunted him, seized him again. Those that indulge themselves in envy and uncharitableness, *give place to the Devil*, and prepare for the re-entry of the unclean spirit, with seven others more wicked. Where envy is, there is confusion. Saul pretended a religious ecstasy; *he prophesied in the midst of the house*; that is, he had the gestures and notions of a prophet, and humoured the thing well enough to decoy David into a snare, and that he might be fearless of any danger, and off his guard; and, perhaps, designing, if he could but kill him, to impute it to a divine impulse, and to charge it upon the spirit of prophecy with which he seemed to be animated; but really it was a hellish fury that actuated him.

2. David, though advanced to a much higher post of honour, disdained not, for his master's service, to return to his harp; he *played with his hand, as at other times*. Let not the highest think any thing below them, whereby they may do good, and be serviceable to those they are obliged to.

3. He took this opportunity to endeavour the death of David. A sword in a madman's hand is a dangerous thing, especially such a madman as Saul was, that was mad with malice. Yet he had a javelin or dart in his hand, with which he projected and endeavoured to slay David; not in a sudden passion, but deliberately: *I will smite David to the wall with it*; with such a desperate force did he throw it. Justly does David complain of his enemies, that they hated him with a *cruel hatred*, Ps. 25. 19. No life is thought too precious to be sacrificed to malice. If a grateful sense of the great service David had done to the public could not assuage Saul's fury, yet one would think he should have allowed himself to consider the kindness he was now doing to himself, relieving him, so as no one else could, against the worst of troubles. Those are possessed with a devilish spirit indeed, that render evil for good. Compare David, with his harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the sweetness and usefulness of God's persecuted people, and the brutishness and barbarity of their persecutors. *The blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul*, Prov. 29. 10.

4. David happily avoided the blow twice, namely, now, and afterwards, *ch. 19. 10*. He did not throw the javelin at Saul again; he withdrew, not fighting, but flying, for his own preservation. Though he had both strength and courage enough, and colour of right, to make resistance and revenge the injury, yet he did no more than secure himself, by getting out of the way of it. David, no doubt, had a watchful eye upon Saul's hand, and the javelin in it, and did as bravely in running from it, as he did lately in running upon Goliath. Yet his safety must be ascribed to the watchful eye of God's providence upon him, saving his servant from the hurtful sword; and by this narrow escape it seemed he was designed for something extraordinary.

12. And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was

departed from Saul. 13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand: and he went out and came in before the people. 14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him. 15. Wherefore, when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17. And Saul said to David, Behold, my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife; only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles: for Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18. And David said unto Saul, Who *am* I? and what *is* my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king? 19. But it came to pass, at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20. And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in *the one* of the twain. 22. And Saul commanded his servants, *saying*, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now, therefore, be the king's son-in-law. 23. And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you *a light thing* to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I *am* a poor man, and lightly esteemed? 24. And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired. 27. Wherefore David arose, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. 28. And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal, Saul's daugh

ter, loved him. 29. And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. 30. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

Saul had now, in effect, proclaimed war with David; he began in open hostility, when he threw the javelin at him; now we are here told, how his enmity proceeded, and how David received the attack of it.

I. See how Saul expressed his malice against David.

1. He was *afraid of him*, *v. 12.* Perhaps he pretended to be afraid that David would do him mischief, to force his way to the crown. Those that design ill against others, are commonly willing to have it thought that others design ill against them; but David's withdrawing, (*v. 11.*) was a plain evidence that he was far from such a thought. However, he really stood in awe of him, as Herod feared John, Mark 6. 20. Saul was sensible he had lost the favourable presence of God himself, and that David had it, and for this reason, he feared him. Note, Those are truly great and to be revered, that have God with them. The more *wisely* David behaved himself, the more Saul feared him, *v. 15.* and again, *v. 29.* Men think the way to be feared, is, to hector and threaten, which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good; whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror, and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is, to *behave ourselves wisely*. Wisdom makes the face to shine, and commands respect.

2. He removed him from court, and gave him a regiment in the country, *v. 13.* He made him captain over a thousand, that he might be from under his eye, because he hated the sight of him; and that he might not secure the interest of the courtiers. Yet herein he did impolitically; for he gave David an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the people, who therefore *loved him*, (*v. 16.*) because he *went out and came in before them*; that is, he presided in the business of his country, civil as well as military, and gave universal satisfaction.

3. He stirred him up to take all occasions of quarrelling with the Philistines and engaging them, (*v. 17.*) insinuating to him, that hereby he would do good service to his prince, *Be thou valiant for me*; and good service to his God, *Fight the Lord's battles*; and a kindness to himself too, for hereby he would qualify himself for the honour he designed him, which was to marry his eldest daughter to him. This he had merited by killing Goliath, for it was promised by proclamation to him that should do that exploit; (*ch. 17. 25.*) but David was so modest, as not to demand it, and now, when Saul proposed it, it was with design of mischief to him, to make him venture upon hazardous attempts, saying in his heart, *Let the hand of the Philistines be upon him*, hoping they would sometime or other be the death of him, yet how could he expect this, when he saw that God was with him?

4. He did what he could to provoke him to discontent and mutiny, by breaking his promise with him, and giving his daughter to another, when the time was come that she should have been given to him, *v. 19.* This was as great an affront as he could possibly put upon him, and touched him both

in his honour and in his love: he therefore thought David's resentments of it would break out in some indecency or other, in word or deed, which might give him an advantage against him to take him off by course of law. Thus evil men seek mischief.

5. When he was disappointed in this, he proffered him his other daughter, (who it seems had a secret kindness for David, *v. 20.*) but with this design, that she might be *a snare to him*, *v. 21. (1.)* Perhaps he hoped that she would, even after her marriage to David, take part with her father against her husband, and give him an opportunity of doing him an unkindness. However, (2.) The condition of the marriage, he hoped, would be his destruction; for (so zealous will Saul seem against the Philistines) the conditions of the marriage must be, that he killed a hundred Philistines, and, as proofs that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off; this would be a just reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision, as it was an ordinance of God; and perhaps David, in doing this, would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing that Saul desired and designed, much more than to be avenged on the Philistines: *For Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines*, *v. 25.* See here, [1.] What cheats bad men put upon themselves. Saul's conscience would not suffer him, except when the evil spirit was actually upon him, to aim at David's life himself, for even he could not but conceive horror at the thought of murdering such an innocent and excellent person; but he thought that to expose him to the Philistines had nothing bad in it; *Let not my hand be upon him, but the hand of the Philistines*; whereas the malicious design against him was as truly murder before God, as if he had slain him with his own hands. [2.] What cheats they put upon the world. Saul pretended extraordinary kindness for David, even then when he aimed at his ruin, and was actually plotting it: *Thou shalt be my Son-in-law*, says he, (*v. 21.*) notwithstanding he hated him implacably. Perhaps David refers to this, when (*Ps. 55. 21.*) he speaks of his enemy, as one whose words were *smoother than butter, but war was in his heart*. It is probable that Saul's employing his servants to persuade David to enter into a treaty of a match with his daughter Michal, (*v. 22.*) arose from an apprehension that either his having cheated him about his elder daughter, (*v. 19.*) or the hardness of the terms he intended now to propose, would make him decline it.

II. See how David conducted himself, when the tide of Saul's displeasure ran thus high against him.

1. He behaved himself *wisely in all his ways*, *v. 14.* He perceived Saul's jealousy of him, which made him very cautious and circumspect in every thing he said and did, and careful to give no offence. He did not complain of hard measure, nor make himself the head of a party, but managed all the affairs he was intrusted with, as one that made it his business to do real service to his king and country, looking upon that to be the end of his preferment. And then the Lord was with him to give him success in all his undertakings. Though he contracted Saul's ill-will by it, yet he obtained God's favour. Compare this with *Ps. 101. 2.* where it is David's promise, *I will behave myself wisely*; and that promise he here performed; and it is his prayer, *O! when wilt thou come unto me?* And that prayer God here answered, *the Lord was with him*. However blind Fortune may seem to favour fools, God will own and bless those that *behave themselves wisely*.

2. When it was proposed to him to be son-in-law to the king, he once and again received the proposal with all possible modesty and humility. When Saul proposed his eldest daughter to him, (v. 18.) he said, *Who am I, and what is my life?* When the courtiers proposed the younger, he took no notice of the affront Saul had given him in disposing of the elder from him, but continued in the same mind; (v. 23.) *Seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?* He knew Michal loved him, and yet did not offer to improve his interest in her affections, for the gaining of her without her father's consent, but waited till it was proposed to him. And then see, (1.) How highly he speaks of the honour offered him. *To be son-in-law to the king!* Though the king was but an upstart, in his original as mean as himself, in his management no better than he should be, yet, being a crowned head, he speaks of him and the royal family with all due respect. Note, Religion is so far from teaching us, that it does not allow us to be rude and unmannerly. We must render honour to whom honour is due. (2.) How humbly he speaks of himself. *Who am I?* This did not proceed from a mean, abject, sneaking spirit, for when there was occasion, he made it appear that he had as high a sense of honour as most men; nor was it from his jealousy of Saul, (though he had reason enough to fear a snake under the green grass,) but from his true and deep humility. *Who am I? A poor man and lightly esteemed!* David had as much reason as any man to value himself. He was of an ancient and honourable family of Judah, a comely person, a great statesman and soldier; his achievements were great, for he had won Goliath's head and Michal's heart: he knew himself destined by the divine counsels to the throne of Israel, and yet, *Who am I, and what is my life?* Note, It well becomes us, however God has advanced us, always to have low thoughts of ourselves. *He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.* And if David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how should we magnify the honour of being sons (not in law, but in gospel) to the King of kings! *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us!* Who are we, that we should be thus dignified?

3. When the slaying of a hundred Philistines was made the condition of David's marrying Saul's daughter, he readily closed with it; (v. 26.) *it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law* upon those terms; and before the time given him for the action was expired, he doubled the demand, and slew two hundred, v. 27. He would not seem to suspect that Saul designed his hurt by it, (though he had reason enough,) but rather, he would act as if Saul had meant to consult his honour, and therefore cheerfully undertook it, as became a brave soldier and a true lover, though we may suppose it uneasy to Michal. David hereby discovered likewise, (1.) A great confidence in the divine protection; he knew God was with him, and therefore, whatever Saul hoped, David did not fear falling by the Philistines, though he must needs expose himself much by such an undertaking as this. (2.) A great zeal for the good of his country, which he would not decline any occasion of doing service to, though with the hazard of his life. (3.) A right notion of honour, which consists not so much in being preferred, as in deserving to be so. David was then pleased with the thoughts of being the king's son-in-law, when he found the honour set at this high price; being more solicitous how to merit it, than how to obtain it; nor could he wear it with satisfaction, till he had won it.

4. Even after he was married, he continued his

good services to Israel. When the princes of the Philistines began to move towards another war, David was ready to oppose them, and *behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul*, v. 30. The law dispensed with men from going to war the first year after they were married, (Deut. 24. 5.) but David loved his country too well to make use of that dispensation. Many that have showed themselves forward to serve the public when they have been in pursuit of preferment, have declined it when they have gained their point; but David acted from more generous principles.

*Lastly*, Observe how God brought good to David out of Saul's projects against him. 1. Saul gave him his daughter to be a snare to him, but, in this respect, that marriage was a kindness to him, that his being Saul's son-in-law, made his succeeding him much the less invidious, especially when so many of his sons were slain with him, ch. 31. 2. Saul thought, by putting him upon dangerous services, to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed his interest in the people; for the more he did against the Philistines, the better they loved him, so that *his name was much set by*, (v. 30.) which would make his coming to the crown the more easy. Thus God makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and serves his designs of kindness to his own people by it.

## CHAP. XIX.

Immediately after David's marriage, which should have secured him Saul's affection, we find his troubles coming upon him faster than ever, and Saul's enmity to him the cause of all. His death was vowed, and four fair escapes of his from the hurtful sword of Saul, we have an account of in this chapter. The first by the prudent mediation of Jonathan, v. 1..7. The second by his own quickness, v. 8..10. The third by Michal's fidelity, v. 11..17. The fourth by Samuel's protection, and a change, for the present, wrought upon Saul, v. 18..24. Thus God has many ways of preserving his people. Providence is never at a loss.

1. **AND** Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. 2. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee. Now, therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: 3. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4. And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. 5. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? 6. And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. 7. And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan showed

him all those things: and Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

I. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul. He spake to his son and all his servants, *that they should kill David*, v. 1. His projects to take him off, had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an outlaw, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange that he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice, when he could give no reason for it; and that, knowing that all his servants loved him, for so he had said himself, (*ch. 18. 22.*) he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order. Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted, as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indicted, and have suborned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Naboth was, by colour of law: but there is least danger from this undesigned malice. It was strange that he who knew how well Jonathan loved him, should expect him to kill him; but he thought, because he was heir to the crown, he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And Providence ordered it thus, that he might befriend David's safety.

II. Never was friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan, *A friend in need is a friend indeed*: such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now that the stream ran so strong against him.

1. He took care for his present security, by letting him know his danger; (*v. 2.*) "*Take heed to thyself, and keep out of harm's way.*" Jonathan knew not but some of the servants might be either so obsequious to Saul, or so envious at David, as to put the orders into execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning, he ventured to commune with him concerning David; (*v. 3.*) not that night, either because he observed Saul to be drunk, and not fit to be spoken to, or because he hoped that, when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have an opportunity of speaking to him till morning. His intercession for David was, (1.) Very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he showed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, though he was in danger of incurring his father's displeasure by it. A rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads, [1.] The good services David had done to the public, and particularly to Saul; *His work has been to thee-ward very good*, v. 4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp, and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom; he appeals to himself concerning that, *Thou thyself sawest it, and didst rejoice*. In that, and other instances, it appeared that David was a favourite of Heaven and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel; so that to order him to be slain, was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God, and a great injury to the public. [2.] He pleads his innocence: though he had formerly done many good offices, yet if he had now been chargeable with any crimes, it had been another matter, but *he has not sinned against thee*; (*v. 4.*) *his blood is innocent*,

(*v. 5.*) and if he be slain, it is without cause. And Jonathan had *therefore* reason to protest against it, because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood. (2.) His intercession, being thus prudent, was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken to the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproof and good advice even from our inferiors; parents from their own children. How forcible are right words! Saul was, for the present, so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David, that, [1.] He recalled the bloody warrant for his execution; (*v. 6.*) *As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain*. Whether Saul swore here with due solemnity or no, does not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of such moment as to deserve it, and of such uncertainty as to need it; but, at other times, Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the sincerity of this oath justly questionable: for it may be feared that those who can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, have not such a due sense of the obligation of it, but that, to serve a turn, they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, intending to take the first opportunity to slay him: but as bad as Saul was, we can scarcely think so ill of him; and therefore we suppose that he spake as he thought, for the present, but the convictions soon wore off, and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them. [2.] He renewed the grant of his place at court. Jonathan brought him to Saul, and *he was in his presence as in times past*, (*v. 7.*) hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

8. And there was war again: and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. 9. And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand. 10. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

Here,

I. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness, and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be *weary in well-doing*, remembering what a bountiful Benefactor our heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful.

Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him, (1.) As bold as ever in using his sword for the service of his country, v. 8. The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself: it was with a great deal of bravery that he charged them; he came off victorious, slaying many, and putting the rest to flight. (2.) As cheerful as ever in using his harp for the service of his prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy, *David played with his hand*, v. 9. He might have pleaded that that was a piece of ser-



vice now below him; but an humble good man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might have objected the danger he was in the last time he did this office for Saul, *ch. 18. 10.* But he had learned to render good for evil, and to trust God with his safety in the way of his duty. See how David was affected when his enemy was sick; (*Ps. 35. 13, 14.*) which, perhaps, refers to Saul's sickness.

2. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker, that he *should not be slain*, now endeavours to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable, is the enmity of the seed of the serpent against that of the woman; so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, *Jer. 17. 9.* The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill-will to him, and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more. And when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that *the evil spirit came upon him*; (*v. 9.*) for when *we let the sun go down on our wrath, we give place to the devil*, (*Eph. 4. 26, 27.*) we make room for him and invite him. Discomposure of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their original to men's own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it was for his preservation, but designing it for David's destruction; for he endeavoured to nail him to the wall, running at him so violently, that he struck *the javelin into the wall*, *v. 10.* So strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought, if he had killed him now, he had been excusable both before God and man, as being *non compos mentis*—*not right in his mind*, and that it would have been imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

3. God continues his care of David, and still watches over him for good. Saul missed his blow; David was too quick for him and fled, and by a kind providence *escaped that night*. To these preservations, among others, David often refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God being his Shield and Buckler, his Rock and Fortress, and delivering his *soul from death*.

11. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou shalt be slain. 12. So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. 13. And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. 14. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, *He is sick*. 15. And Saul sent the messengers *again* to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. 16. And when the messengers were come in, behold, *there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster*. 17. And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul,

He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Here is,

I. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When he had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, he sent some of his guards after him to lay wait at the door of his house, and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, *v. 11.* Josephus says, the design was to seize him, and to hurry him before a court of justice that was ordered to condemn him, and put him to death, as a traitor; but we are here told, it was a shorter way they were to take with him, they were ordered to *slay him*. Well might David complain that his enemies were *bloody men*, as he did in the Psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion, (*Ps. 59.*) when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See *v. 2, 3, and 7.* He complains that *swords were in their lips*.

II. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger; Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave him to be a snare to him, but she proved his protector and helper; often is the devil out-shot with his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger he was in, does not appear; perhaps she had notice sent her from court, or, rather, was herself aware of the soldiers about the house, when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent, that they said, *Who does hear?* as David takes notice of this in that Psalm, *v. 7.* She, knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design, and bestirred herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was, (*v. 11.*) *To-morrow thou wilt be slain*. She told him, as Josephus paraphrases it, that if the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then put him in a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and had it been lawful, it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it, but *Michal let him down through a window*, (*v. 12.*) all the doors being guarded; and so *he fled and escaped*. And now it was, that, either in his own closet before he went, or in the hiding-place to which he fled, he penned that fifty-ninth Psalm, which shows that, in his fright and hurry, his mind was composed, and, in this great danger, his faith was strong and fixed on God; and whereas the plot was to slay him *in the morning*, he speaks there with the greatest assurance, (*v. 16.*) *I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning*.

2. She practised a deception upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning, and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him; and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed, (*v. 14.*) and if they would not believe her, they might see; for (*v. 13.*) she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapt it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, and not in a condition to be spoken to: the goat's hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, the better to impose upon them. Michal can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat; God's truth needed not her lie: but she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while, that David might have time to secure himself, not doubting but these messengers would pursue him, if they found he was gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance, when they heard he was sick; for to them that are in that

misery, pity should be shown; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him, sick or well: (v. 15.) *Bring him to me in the bed that I may slay him.* It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to view the death of one who, for aught he knew, was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead, unless he himself was the death of him; though a while ago he said, *Let not mine hand be upon him.* Thus when men lay the reins on the neck of their passions, they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again, the cheat was discovered, v. 16. But by this time it was to be hoped that David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David to escape; (v. 17.) *Why hast thou deceived me so?* What a base spirit was Saul of, to expect that, because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly! Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house, to cleave to her husband! Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion, are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation as she had been of his person, when she makes this her excuse, *He said, Let me go; why should I kill thee?* As her insinuating that she should have hindered his flight, was false, (it was she that put him upon it and furthered it,) so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him, to suggest that he threatened to kill her, if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves, and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the Son of David.

18. So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him: and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. 19. And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. 20. And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. 22. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. 23. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets!

Here is,

I. David's place of refuge. Being got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Bethlehem to his relations, or to any of the cities of Israel that had caressed and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preservation; but he ran straight to Samuel, and *told him all that Saul had done to him*, v. 18. 1. Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown; and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste, (or, in his flight, as some read it, Ps. 116. 11.) *All men are liars*, ("not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel himself that promised me the throne,") whither should he go but to Samuel, for such encouragements, in this day of distress, as would support his faith? In flying to Samuel, he made God his Refuge, trusting in the *shadow of his wings*; where else can a good man think himself safe? 2. Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the Psalm he penned the night before, he had lifted up his prayer to God; and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel, to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers, we must have our ears open to God's word, v. 3. Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets with whom he might join in praising God, and the pleasure of that would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress, he met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, and therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world, they have it, that live a life of communion with God; so that David retired in the time of trouble, Ps. 27. 4. . 6.

II. David's protection in this place. *He and Samuel went and dwelt (or lodged) in Naioth*, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, as in a privileged place, for the Philistines themselves would not disturb that meeting, ch. 10. 10. But Saul, having notice of it by some of his spies, (v. 19.) set officers to seize David, v. 20. When they did not bring him, he sent more; when they returned not, he sent the third time; (v. 21.) and hearing no tidings of these, he went himself, v. 22. So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, though baffled by one providence after another, that he could not perceive that David was under the special protection of Heaven. It was below the king, to go himself on such an errand as this; but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing, to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all public business to hunt David. How was David delivered, now that he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lion! Not as he delivered his lamb, by slaying the lion, or as Elijah was delivered, by consuming the messengers with *fire from heaven*, but by turning the lions for the present into lambs.

1. When the messengers came into the congregation where David was among the prophets, the *Spirit of God* came upon them, and they *prophesied*; that is, they joined with the rest in praising God. Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. And thus, (1.) God secured David, for either they were put into such an ecstasy by the spirit of prophecy, that they could not think of any thing else, and so forgot their errand, and never minded David; or they were by it put, for the present, into so good a frame, that they could not entertain the thought of doing so bad a thing. (2.) He put an honour upon the sons of the prophets, and the communion of saints, and showed how he can, when he pleases, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies

of the faithful, and force them to acknowledge, that *God is with them of a truth*, 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on minds that seemed unapt to receive such impressions. And where may the influence of the Spirit be expected, but in the congregations of the saints? (3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men. He that made the heart and tongue, can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied of the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied of the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy, before he came to the place. One would have thought that so bad a man as he had been in no danger of being turned into a prophet; yet, when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul is no sooner come (as Bishop Hall expresses it) within smell of the smoke of Naioth, but he prophesies, as his messengers did, v. 23. He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habiliments, because they were either too fine, or too heavy, for this service, and fell into a trance, as it should seem, or into a rapture, which continued all that day and night. The saints at Damascus were delivered from the rage of the New Testament Saul, by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying. This for a day, that for ever. Note, Many have great gifts, and yet no grace; prophesy in Christ's name, and yet are disowned by him, Matth. 7. 22. Now the proverb recurs, *Is Saul among the prophets?* See ch. 10. 12. Then it was different from what it had been, but now *contrary*. He is rejected of God, and actuated by an evil spirit, and yet *among the prophets*.

## CHAP. XX.

David, having several times narrowly escaped Saul's fury, begins to consider at last, whether it were not necessary for him to retire into the country, and take up arms in his own defence. But he will not do so daring a thing, without consulting his faithful friend Jonathan; how that was done, and what passed between them, we have an account in this chapter, where we have as surprising instances of supernatural love, as we had in the chapter before of unnatural hatred. I. David complains to Jonathan of his present distress, and engaged him to be his friend, v. 1. .8. II. Jonathan faithfully promises to get and give him intelligence how his father stood affected to him, and renews the covenant of friendship with him, v. 9. .23. III. Jonathan, upon trial, finds, to his grief, that his father was implacably enraged against David, v. 24. .34. IV. He gives David notice of this, according to the appointment between them, v. 35. .42.

1. **AND** David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? 2. And he said unto him. God forbid: thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing, either great or small, but that he will show it me; and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. 3. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. 4. Then

said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. 5. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat; but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. 6. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me, that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. 7. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. 8. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?

Here,

1. David makes a representation to Jonathan of his present troubles. While Saul lay bound by his trance at Naioth, David escaped to the court, and got to speak with Jonathan. And it was happy for him, that he had such a friend at court, when he had such an enemy on the throne. If there be those that hate and despise us, let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us; God hath set the one against the other, and so must we. Jonathan was a friend that loved at all times; loved David as well now in distress, and bid him as welcome into his arms, as he had done when he was in his triumph; (ch. 18. 1.) and he was a brother that was born for adversity, Prov. 17. 17. Now, 1. David appeals to Jonathan himself concerning his innocency, and he needed not say much to him for the proof of that, only desires him, that if he knew of any just offence he had given his father, he would tell him, that he might humble himself, and beg his pardon. *What have I done?* v. 1. 2. He endeavours to convince him, that, notwithstanding his innocency, Saul sought his life. Jonathan, from a principle of filial respect to his father, was very loath to believe that he designed, or would ever do, so wicked a thing, v. 2. He the rather hoped so, because he knew nothing of any such design; and he had usually been made privy to all his counsels. Jonathan, as became a dutiful son, endeavoured to cover his father's shame, as far as was consistent with justice and fidelity to David. Charity is not forward to think evil of any, especially of a parent, 1 Cor. 13. 5. David therefore gives him the assurance of an oath concerning his own danger; swears the peace upon Saul, that he was in fear of his life by him; *As the Lord liveth*, than which nothing more sure in itself; and *as thy soul liveth*, than which nothing more certain to thee; whatever thou thinkest, there is but a step between me and death," v. 3. And as for Saul's concealing it from Jonathan, it was easy to account for that, he knew the friendship between him and David; and therefore, though in other things he advised with him, yet not in that. None more fit than Jonathan to serve him in every design that was just and honourable, but he knew him to be a man of more virtue than to be his confidant in so base a design as the murder of David.

II. Jonathan generously offers him his service; (v. 4.) *Whatsoever thou desirest*, he needed not insert the provision of lawful and honest, (for he knew David too well to think he would ask any thing that

was otherwise,) *I will even do it for thee.* 'This is true friendship. Thus Christ testifies his love to us, *Ask, and it shall be done for you:* and we must testify our's to him, by keeping his commandments.

III. David only desires him to satisfy himself, and then to satisfy him, whether Saul did really design his death or no. Perhaps David proposed this, more for Jonathan's conviction than his own, for he himself was well satisfied.

1. The method of trial he proposes, was very natural, and would certainly discover how Saul stood affected to him. The two next days, Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were offered, and feasts made upon the sacrifices. Saul was rejected of God, and the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, and yet he kept up his observance of the holy feasts. There may be the remains of external devotion, where there is nothing but the ruins of real virtue. At these solemn feasts, Saul had either all his *children* to sit with him, and David had a seat as one of *them*; or all his *great officers*, and David had a seat as one of *them*. However it was, David resolved his seat should be empty (and that it never used to be at a sacred feast) those *two days*, (v. 5.) and he would abscond till the solemnity was over, and put it upon this issue; If Saul admitted an excuse for his absence, and dispensed with it, he would conclude he had changed his mind, and was reconciled to him; but if he resented it, and was put into a passion by it, it was easy to conclude he designed him a mischief, since it was certain he did not love him so well as to desire his presence for any other end, than he might have an opportunity to do him a mischief, v. 7.

2. The excuse he desires Jonathan to make for his absence, we have reason to think, was true; that he was invited by his elder brother to Beth-lehem, his own city, to celebrate this new moon with his relations there, because beside the monthly solemnity, in which they held communion with all Israel, they had now a yearly sacrifice, and a holy feast upon it, for *all the family*, v. 6. They kept a day of thanksgiving in their family for the comforts they enjoyed, and a prayer, for the continuance of them. By this it appears that the family David was of, was a very religious family, a house that had a church in it.

3. The arguments he uses with Jonathan, to persuade him to do this kindness for him, are very pressing, v. 8. (1.) That he had entered into a league of friendship with him, and it was Jonathan's own proposal. *Thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee.* (2.) That he would by no means urge him to espouse his cause, if he was not sure that it was a righteous cause; *"If there be iniquity in me, I am so far from desiring or expecting that the covenant between us should bind thee to be a confederate with me in that iniquity, that I freely release thee from it, and wish that thy hand may be first upon me: slay me thyself."* No honest man will urge his friend to do a dishonest thing for his sake.

9. And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? 10. Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? 11. And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. 12. And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about

to-morrow any time, or the third day, and behold, if there be good towards David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee, 13. The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. 14. And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: 15. But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. 16. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. 17. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. 18. Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. 19. And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. 20. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. 21. And behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. 22. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. 23. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.

Here,

I. Jonathan protests his fidelity to David in his distress. Notwithstanding the strong confidence David had in Jonathan, yet, because he might have some reason to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest, should make him warp, or grow cool toward him, Jonathan thought it requisite solemnly to renew the professions of his friendship to him; (v. 9.) *"Far be it from thee to think that I suspect thee of any crime, for which I should either slay thee myself, or deliver thee to my father; no, if thou hast any jealousy of that, come, let us go into the field, v. 11. and talk it over more fully."* He does not challenge him to the field to fight him for an affront, but to fix him in his friendship. He faithfully promises him that he would let him know how, upon trial, he found his father affected toward him, and would make the matter neither better nor worse than it was. *"If there be good toward thee, I will show it thee, that thou mayest be easy: (v. 12.) if evil, I will send thee away, that thou mayest be safe;"* (v. 13.) and thus would help to deliver him

from the evil, if it were real, and from the fear of evil, if it were but imaginary. For the confirmation of his promise, he appeals to God, 1. As a witness; (v. 12.) "*O Lord God of Israel*, thou knowest I mean sincerely, and think as I speak." The strength of his passion made the manner of his speaking concise and abrupt. 2. As a judge; "*The Lord do so, and much more, to Jonathan*, v. 13. if I speak deceitfully, or break my word with my friend:" he expresses himself thus solemnly, that David might be abundantly assured of his sincerity. And thus God has confirmed his promises to us, that we might have *strong consolation*, Heb. 6. 17, 18. Jonathan adds to his protestations his hearty prayers, "*The Lord be with thee*, to protect and prosper thee, *as he has been formerly with my father*, though now he be withdrawn." This intimates his belief that David would be in his father's place, and his good wishes that he might prosper in it better than his father now did.

II. He provides for the entail of the covenant of friendship with David upon his posterity; (v. 14.. 16.) he engages David to be a friend to his family when he was gone; (v. 15.) "*Thou shalt promise that thou wilt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever*." This he spoke from a natural affection he had to his children, whom he desired it might go well with when he was gone, and for his future welfare he desired to improve his present interest. It also bespeaks his firm belief of David's advancement, and that it would be in the power of his hand to do a kindness or unkindness to his seed; for, in process of time, *the Lord would cut off his enemies*, Saul himself not excepted: then "*Do not thou cut off thy kindness from my house*, nor revenge my father's wrongs upon my children." The house of David must likewise be bound to the house of Jonathan from generation to generation; he *made a covenant* (v. 16.) *with the house of David*. Note, True friends cannot but covet to transmit to their's after them their mutual affections. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not*. This kindness, 1. He calls *the kindness of the Lord*, because it is such kindness as the Lord shows to those whom he takes into covenant with himself; for he is a God to them, and to their seed; they are *beloved for their father's sake*. 2. He secures it by an imprecation, v. 16. *The Lord requires it at the hand of David's seed*, (for of David himself he had no suspicion,) if they prove so far David's enemies, as to deal wrongfully with the posterity of Jonathan, David's friend. He feared lest David, or some of his, should hereafter be tempted, for the clearing and confirming of their title to the throne, to do by his seed, as Abimelech had done by the sons of Gideon; (Jud. 9. 5.) and this he would effectually prevent: but the reason given (v. 17.) why Jonathan was so earnest to have the friendship entailed, is purely generous, and has nothing of self in it; it was because *he loved him as he loved his own soul*, and therefore desired that he and his might be loved by him. David, though now in disgrace at court, and in distress, was as amiable in the eyes of Jonathan as ever he had been; so pure were the principles on which his friendship was built. Having himself sworn to David, he caused David to swear to him, and (as we read it) *to swear again*, which David consented to; (for he that bears an honest mind, does not startle at assurances;) to swear by his love to him, which he looked upon as a sacred thing. Jonathan's heart was so much upon it, that, when they parted this time, he concludes with a solemn appeal to God, *The Lord be between thee and me for ever*; (v. 23.) that is, "God himself be judge between us and our families for ever, if on either side this league of friendship be violated." It was in remembrance of this covenant, that David

was kind to Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. 9. 7.—21. 7. It will be a kindness to ourselves and our's, to secure an interest in those whom God favours, and to make his friends ours.

III. He settles the method of intelligence, and by what signs and tokens he would give him notice how his father stood affected toward him. He would be missed the first day, or at least the second day, of the new moon, and would be inquired after, v. 18. On the third day, by which time he would be returned from Beth-lehem, he must be at such a place, (v. 19.) and Jonathan would come toward that place with his bow and arrows to shoot for diversion; (v. 20.) would send his lad to fetch his arrows, and if they were shot short of the lad, David must take it for a signal of safety, and not be afraid to show his head; (v. 21.) but if he shot beyond the lad, it was a signal of danger, and he must shift for his safety, v. 22. This expedient he fixed upon, lest he should not have the opportunity, which yet it proved he had, of talking with him, and making the report by word of mouth.

24. So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. 25. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even upon a seat by the wall*: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. 26. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought; *Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean*. 27. And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was the second day of the month*, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, *Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to-day?* 28. And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave of me to go to Beth-lehem*: 29. And he said, *Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother he hath commanded me to be there*: and now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. 30. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?* 31. For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. 32. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, *Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?* 33. And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. 34. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day

of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

Jonathan is here effectually convinced of that which he was so loath to believe, that his father had an implacable enmity to David, and would certainly be the death of him if it were in his power; and he had like to have paid very dear himself for the conviction.

I. David is missed from the feast on the first day, but nothing is said of him. *The king sat upon his seat*, to feast upon the peace-offerings, *as at other times*, v. 25. and yet had his heart as full of envy and malice against David as it would hold: he should first have been reconciled to him, and then come and offered his gift; but, instead of that, he hoped, at this feast, to drink the blood of David. What an abomination was that sacrifice, which was brought with such a wicked mind as this! Prov. 21. 27. When the king came to take his seat, Jonathan arose, in reverence to him, both as his father and as his sovereign; every one knew his place, but David's was empty. It did not use to be so. None more constant than he in attending holy duties; nor had he been absent now, but that he must have come at the peril of his life, self-preservation obliged him to withdraw. In imminent peril present opportunities may be waved, nay, we ought not to throw ourselves into the mouth of danger. Christ himself absconded often, till he knew that his hour was come. But that day Saul took no notice that he missed David, but said within himself, *Surely he is not clean*, v. 26. Some ceremonial pollution has befallen him, which forbids him to eat of the holy things, till he has *washed his clothes, and bathed his flesh in water, and been unclean until the even*. Saul knew what conscience David made of the law, and that he would rather keep away from the holy feast, than come in his uncleanness. Blessed be God, no uncleanness is now a restraint upon us, but what we may by faith and repentance be washed from in the fountain opened, Ps. 26. 6.

II. He is inquired for the second day, v. 27. Saul asked Jonathan, who he knew was his confidant, *Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat?* He was his own son by marriage, but he calls him in disdain, *the son of Jesse*. He asks for him, as if he were not pleased that he should be absent from a religious feast: and so it should be an example to masters of families to see to it, that those under their charge be not absent from the worship of God, either in public or in the family. It is a bad thing for us, except in case of necessity, to omit any opportunity of stately attending on God in solemn ordinances. Thomas lost a sight of Christ by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples. But that which displeased Saul, was, that hereby he missed the opportunity he expected, of doing David a mischief.

III. Jonathan makes his excuse, v. 28, 29. 1. That he was absent upon a good occasion; keeping the feast in another place, though not here; sent for by his elder brother, who was now more respectful to him than he had been, (ch. 17. 28.) and that he was gone to pay his respects to his relations, for the keeping up of brotherly love; and no master would deny a servant liberty to do that at proper times. He pleads, 2. That he did not go without leave, humbly asked and obtained from Jonathan, who, as his superior officer, was proper to be applied to for it. Thus he represents David, as not wanting in any instance of respect and duty to the government.

IV. Saul, hereupon, breaks out into a most extravagant passion, and rages like a lion disappointed of his prey. David was out of his reach, but he falls foul upon Jonathan for his sake; (v. 30, 31.)

gave him base language, not fit for a gentleman, a prince, to give to any man, especially to his own son, heir apparent to his crown, a son that served him, the greatest stay and ornament of his family, before a deal of company, at a feast, when all should be in good humour, at a sacred feast, by which all irregular passions should be mortified and subdued; yet he does in effect call him, 1. A bastard: *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman*; that is, according to the foolish and filthy language of men's brutish passion now-a-day, Thou son of a whore. He tells him he was born to the confusion of his mother; that is, he had given the world cause to suspect that he was not the legitimate son of Saul, because he loved him whom Saul hated, and supported him who would be the destruction of their family. 2. A traitor: *Thou son of perverse rebellion*, so the word is; that is, "Thou perverse rebel." At other times, he reckoned no counsellor or commander that he had, more trusty and well-beloved than Jonathan; yet now, in his passion, he represents him as dangerous to his crown and life. 3. A fool: *Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse for thy friend, to thine own confusion*, for while he lives, *thou shalt never be established*. Jonathan indeed did wisely and well for himself and family, to secure an interest in David, whom Heaven had destined to the throne; yet, for this he is branded as most impolitic. It is good taking God's people for our people, and going with those that have him with them; it will prove to our advantage at last, however for the present it may be thought a disparagement, and a prejudice to our secular interest. It is probable that Saul knew that David was anointed to the kingdom, by the same hand that anointed him, and then, not Jonathan, but himself, was the fool, to think to defeat the counsels of God. Yet nothing will serve him but David must die, and Jonathan must fetch him to execution. See how ill Saul's passion looks, and let it warn us against the indulgence of any thing like it in ourselves. Anger is madness, and he that hates his brother, is a murderer.

V. Jonathan is sorely grieved, and put into disorder, by his father's barbarous passion; and the more, because he had hoped better things, v. 2. He was troubled for his father, that he should be such a brute; troubled for his friend, whom he knew to be a friend of God, that he should be so basely abused: he was *grieved for David*, v. 34. and troubled for himself too, because *his father had done him shame*; and though most unjustly, yet he must submit to it. One would pity Jonathan, to see how he was put, 1. Into the peril of sin. Much ado that wise and good man had to keep his temper, upon such a provocation as this. His father's reflections upon himself he made no return to; it becomes inferiors to bear with meekness and silence the contempts put upon them in wrath and passion. *When thou art the anvil, lie thou still*. But his dooming David to die, he could not bear; to that he replied with some heat, (v. 32.) *Wherefore shall he be slain? What has he done?* Generous spirits can much more easily bear to be abused themselves, than to hear their friends abused. 2. Into the peril of death. Saul was now so outrageous, that he threw a javelin at Jonathan, v. 33. He seemed to be in great care (v. 31.) that Jonathan should be established in his kingdom, and yet now he himself aims at his life. What fools, what savage beasts, and worse, does anger make men! How necessary is it to put a hook in its jaws! Jonathan was fully satisfied that evil was determined against David, which put him out of frame exceedingly: he *rose from table*, thinking it high time, when his life was struck at, and *would eat no meat*; for they were not to eat of the holy things in their mourning. All the guests, we may suppose, were discomposed,



and the mirth of the feast spoiled. *He that is cruel, troubles his own flesh*, Prov. 11. 17.

35. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. 36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.* 37. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is not the arrow beyond thee?* 38. And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city. 41. *And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.* 42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Here is,

1. Jonathan's faithful performance of his promise to give David notice of the success of his dangerous experiment. He went at the time and to the place appointed, (v. 35.) within sight of which he knew David lay hid; sent his foot-boy to fetch his arrows, which he would shoot at random; (v. 36.) gave David the fatal signal, by shooting an arrow beyond the lad; (v. 37.) *Is not the arrow beyond thee?* That word [*beyond*] David knew the meaning of better than the lad. Jonathan dismissed the lad, who knew nothing of the matter, and finding the coast clear, and no danger of a discovery, he presumed upon one minute's personal conversation with David after he had bid him flee for his life.

2. The most sorrowful parting of these two friends, who, for aught that appears, never came together again but once, and that was by stealth in a wood, ch. 23. 16. (1.) David addressed himself to Jonathan with the reverence of a servant rather than the freedom of a friend; he *fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times*, as one deeply sensible of his obligations to him for the good services he had done him. (2.) They took leave of each other with the greatest affection imaginable, with kisses and tears; they wept on each other's neck till David exceeded, v. 41. The separation of two such faithful friends was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable; for when Jonathan was returning to his family and friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's; or, perhaps, it was because his temper was more tender, and his passions stronger. (3.) They referred themselves to the covenant of friendship that was between them, both

of them comforting themselves with that in this mournful separation. "*we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, for ourselves and our heirs, that we and they will be faithful and kind to each other from generation to generation.*" Thus while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, this is our comfort, that he has *made with us an everlasting covenant.*

## CHAP. XXI.

David has now quite taken leave, both of Saul's court, and of his camp; has bid farewell to his *alter idem*—his other self, the beloved Jonathan; and from henceforward to the end of this book, he is looked upon and treated as an outlaw, and proclaimed a traitor; we still find him shifting from place to place for his own safety, and Saul pursuing him. His troubles are very particularly related in this and the following chapters, not only to be a key to the Psalms, but that he might be, as other prophets, an example to the saints, in all ages, of *suffering affliction, and of patience*; and, especially, that he might be a type of Christ, who, being anointed to the kingdom, *humbled himself*, and was *therefore highly exalted*. But the example of the suffering Jesus was a copy without a blot, that of David was not so; witness the records of this chapter, where we find David in his flight. I. Imposing upon Ahimelech the priest, to get from him both victuals and arms, v. 1.-9. II. Imposing upon Achish, king of Gath, by feigning himself mad, v. 10.-15. Justly are troubles called *temptations*, for many are by them drawn into sin.

1. **T**HEN came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why *art* thou alone, and no man with thee? 2. And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed *my* servants to such and such a place. 3. Now therefore what is under thine hand? give *me five loaves of bread* in mine hand, or what there is present. 4. And the priest answered David, and said, *There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread*; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 5. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6. So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the show-bread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. 7. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul *was* there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name *was* Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that *belonged* to Saul. 8. And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought *my sword* nor *my weapons* with me, be

cause the king's business required haste. 9. And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is *here* wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for *there is no other* save that here. And David said, *There is none like that*; give it me.

Here,

I. David, in distress, flies to the tabernacle of God, now pitched at Nob, supposed to be a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Since Shiloh was forsaken, the tabernacle often removed, though the ark still remained at Kirjath-jearim. Hither David came in his flight from Saul's fury, (v. 1.) and applied himself to Ahimelech the priest. Samuel the prophet could not protect him, Jonathan the prince could not; he therefore has recourse next to Ahimelech the priest. He foresees he must now be an exile, and therefore comes to the tabernacle, 1. To take an affecting leave of it, for he knows not when he shall see it again, and nothing will be more afflictive to him in his banishment than his distance from the house of God, and his restraint from public ordinances, as appears by many of his Psalms. He had given an affectionate farewell to his friend Jonathan, and cannot go till he has given the like to the tabernacle. 2. To inquire of the Lord there, and to beg direction from him in the way of duty and safety; his case being difficult and dangerous. That this was his business, appears *ch. 22. 10.* where it is said that *Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him*, as he had done formerly, v. 15. It is a great comfort to us in a day of trouble, that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our case, and from whom we may ask and expect direction.

II. Ahimelech the priest is surprised to see him in so poor an equipage; having heard that he was fallen into disgrace at court he looked shy upon him, as most are apt to do upon their friends when the world frowns upon them. He was afraid of incurring Saul's displeasure by entertaining him, and took notice how mean a figure he now made to what he used to make. *Why art thou alone?* He had some with him, (as appears, Mark 2. 26.) but they were only his own servants; he had none of the courtiers, no persons of quality with him, as he used to have at other times, when he came to inquire of the Lord. He says, (Ps. 42. 4.) he was wont to go with a multitude to the house of God; and, having now but two or three with him, Ahimelech might well ask, *Why art thou alone?* He that was suddenly advanced from the solitude of a shepherd's life to the crowds and hurries of the camp, is now as soon reduced to the desolate condition of an exile, and is *alone like a sparrow on the house-top*. Such changes are there in this world, and so uncertain are its smiles! Those that are courted to-day, may be deserted to-morrow.

III. David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon public services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, v. 2, 3. Here David did not behave like himself; he told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to despatch; that his attendants were dismissed to such a place, that he was charged to observe secrecy, and therefore durst not communicate it, no not to the priest himself. It was all false. What shall we say to this? The scripture does not conceal it, and we dare not justify it: it was ill done, and proved of bad consequence, for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it af-

terward with regret, *ch. 22. 22.* It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for we may suppose, that if he had told him the truth he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him, and inquire of God for him. People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus foully through fear and cowardice, and both owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this for his own preservation. It is written not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest straits, but for our admonition. *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*; and let us all pray daily, *Lord, lead us not into temptation*. Let us all take occasion from this to lament, 1. The weakness and infirmity of good men; the best are not perfect on this side of heaven. There may be true grace, where yet there are many failings. 2. The wickedness of bad times, which forces good men into such straits as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppression makes a wise man do foolishly.

Two things David begged of Ahimelech, *bread and a sword*.

(1.) He wanted *bread, five loaves*, v. 3. Travelling was then troublesome, when men generally carried their provisions with them, having little money, and no public houses, else David had not now been to seek for bread. It seems David had known the seed of the righteous begging bread, occasionally, but not constantly, Ps. 37. 25.

Now, [1.] The priest objected that he had none but *hallowed bread, show-bread*, which had stood a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and was taken thence for the use of the priests and their families, v. 4. It seems the priests kept no good house, but wanted either a heart to be hospitable, or rather provisions wherewithal. Ahimelech thinks that the young men that attended David might not eat of this bread, unless they had for some time abstained from women, even from their own wives: this was required at the giving of the law; (Exod. 19. 15.) but otherwise we never find this made the matter of any ceremonial purity on the one side, or pollution on the other. And therefore the priest here seems to be over-nice, not to say, superstitious.

[2.] David pleads that he and they that were with him, in this case of necessity, might lawfully eat of the hallowed bread, for they were not only able to answer his terms of keeping from women for three days, but that *the vessels*, that is, the bodies, of the young men were holy, being possessed in sanctification and honour at all times; (1 Thess. 4. 4, 5.) and therefore God would take particular care of them, that they wanted not necessary supports, and would have his priest to do so. And being thus holy, holy things were not forbidden to them. Poor and pious Israelites were, in effect, priests to God, and rather than be starved, might feed on the bread which was appropriated to the priests. Believers are spiritual priests, and the offerings of the Lord shall be their inheritance; they eat the bread of their God. He pleads that the bread is in a manner common, now that what was primarily the religious use of it, was over; especially (as our margin reads it) *when there is this day other bread* (*hot*, v. 6.) sanctified this day in the vessel, and put in the room of it upon the table. This was David's plea, and the Son of David approves it, and shows from it that mercy is to be preferred to sacrifice, that ritual observances must give way to moral duties; and that that may be done in a case of an urgent providential necessity, which may not otherwise be done. He brings it to justify his disciples in

plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, for which the Pharisees censured them, Matth. 12. 3, 4.

[3.] Ahimelech hereupon supplies him. *He gave him hallowed bread; (v. 6.)* and some think that it was about this that *he inquired of the Lord, ch. 22. 10.* As a faithful servant, he would not dispose of his Master's provisions without his Master's leave. This bread, we may suppose, was the more agreeable to David for its being hallowed, so precious were all sacred things to him. The show-bread was but twelve loaves in all, yet out of this he gives David five, (v. 3.) though he had no more in the house; but he trusted in Providence.

(2.) He wanted a sword. Persons of quality, though officers of the army, did not then wear their swords so constantly as now they do, else surely David had not been without one; it was a wonder that Jonathan did not furnish him with his, as he had done, *ch. 18. 4.* However, it happened that he had now no weapons with him, the reason of which he pretends to be, because he came away *in haste, v. 8.* Those that are furnished with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, cannot be disarmed of them, nor need they, at any time, to be at a loss. But the priests, it seems, had no swords; the weapons of their warfare were not carnal; there was not a sword to be found about the tabernacle, but the sword of Goliath, which he laid up behind the ephod, as a monument of the glorious victory David obtained over him; probably, David had an eye to that, when he asked the priest to help him with a sword; for that being mentioned, O! says he, *there is none like that, give it me, v. 9.* He could not use Saul's armour, for he had not proved it; but this sword of Goliath he had made trial of, and done execution with; by this it appears that he was well grown in strength and stature, that he could wear and wield such a sword as that. God had *taught his hands to war*, so that he could do wonders, *Ps. 18. 34.* Two things we may observe concerning this sword. [1.] That God had graciously given it him, as a pledge of his singular favour; so that, whenever he drew it, nay, whenever he looked upon it, it would be a great support to his faith, by bringing to mind that great instance of the particular care and countenance of the divine providence. Experiences are great encouragements. [2.] That he had gratefully given it back to God, dedicating it to him and to his honour, as a token of his thankfulness; and now in his distress it stood him greatly in stead. Note, What we devote to God's praise, and serve him with, is most likely to redound, one way or other, to our own comfort and benefit. What we gave, we have from him.

Thus was David well furnished with arms and victuals; but it fell out very unhappily, that there was one of Saul's servants then attending before the Lord, *Doeg* by name, that proved a base traitor, both to David and to Ahimelech. He was by birth an Edomite; (v. 7.) and though proselyted to the Jewish religion, to get the preferment he now had under Saul, yet he retained the ancient and hereditary enmity of Edom to Israel. He was master of the herds, which, perhaps, was then a place of as much honour as master of the horse is now. Some occasion or other he had at this time to wait on the priest, either to be purified from some pollution, or to pay some vow; but whatever his business was, it is said, he was *detained before the Lord.* He must attend, and could not help it, but he was sick of the service, *snuffed at it, and said, What a weariness is it!* Mal. 1. 13. He would rather have been any where else than before the Lord, and therefore, instead of minding the business he came about, was plotting to do David a mischief, and to be avenged on Ahimelech for detaining him. God's sanctuary

could never secure itself from such wolves in sheep's clothing. See Gal. 2. 4.

10. And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, *Is not this David the king of the land?* did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? 12. And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore *then* have ye brought him to me? 15. Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this *fellow* to play the madman in my presence? shall this *fellow* come into my house?

David, though king elect, is here an exile; designed to be master of vast treasures, yet had been just now begging his bread; anointed to the crown, and yet here forced to run his country: thus do God's providences sometimes seem to run counter to his promises, for the trial of his people's faith, and the glorifying of his name, in the accomplishment of his counsels, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in the way. Here is,

1. David's flight into the land of the Philistines, where he hoped to be hid, and to remain, undiscovered, in the court or camp of Achish, king of Gath, v. 10. Israel's darling is necessitated to quit the land of Israel, and he that was the Philistines' great enemy, (upon I know not what inducements,) goes to seek for shelter among them. It should seem that as, though the Israelites loved him, yet the king of Israel had personal enmity to him, which obliged him to leave his own country; so, though the Philistines hated him, yet the king of Gath had a personal kindness for him, valuing his merit, and, perhaps, the more for his killing Goliath of Gath, who, it may be, had been no friend to Achish. To him David now went directly, as to one he could confide in; (as afterward, *ch. 27. 2, 3.*) and Achish would have now protected him, but that he was afraid of disoblighing his own people by it. God's persecuted people have often found better usage from the Philistines than from Israelites, in the Gentile theatres than in the Jewish synagogues: the king of Judah imprisoned Jeremiah, and the king of Babylon set him at liberty.

2. The disgust which the servants of Achish took at his being there, and the complaint of it to Achish; (v. 11.) "*Is not this David?* Is not this he that has triumphed over the Philistines? Witness that burthen of the song which was so much talked of; *Saul has slain his thousands*, but *David*, this very man, *his ten thousands*. Nay, is not this he that (if our intelligence from the land of Israel be true) is, or is to be, *the king of the land?* As such he must be an enemy to our country; and is it safe or honourable for us to protect or entertain such a man?" Achish perhaps, had intimated to them, that it would be policy to entertain David, because he was now an enemy to Saul, and he might be hereafter a friend to them; it is common for the outlaws of a nation to be sheltered by the enemies of that

nation; but the servants of Achish objected to his politics, and thought it not at all fit that he should stay among them.

3. The fright which this put David into. Though he had some reason to put confidence in Achish, yet, when he perceived the servants of Achish jealous of him, he began to be afraid that Achish would be obliged to deliver him up to them, and he was *sore afraid*; (v. 12.) and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of his own danger, when he was thus discovered, because he wore Goliath's sword, which, we may suppose, was well known at Gath, and which he had reason to expect they would cut off his head, as he had cut off Goliath's with it. David now learned by experience what he has taught us, (Ps. 118. 9.) that *it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes*. Men of high degree are a lie, and if we make them our hope, they may prove our fear. It was at this time that David penned the fifty-sixth Psalm, (*Michtam, a golden psalm*;) when the Philistines took him in Gath, where having showed before God his distresses, he resolves, (v. 3.) *what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*: and therefore (v. 11.) *will not be afraid what man can do unto me*, no not the sons of the giant.

4. The course he took to get out of their hands. He *feigned himself mad*; (v. 13.) he used the gestures and fashions of a natural fool, or one that was gone out of his wits; supposing they would be ready enough to believe that the disgrace he was fallen into, and the troubles he was now in, had driven him distracted. This dissimulation of his cannot be justified: it was a mean thing thus to disparage himself, and inconsistent with truth thus to misrepresent himself, and therefore not becoming the honour and sincerity of such a man as David: yet it was not a downright lie, and it was like a stratagem in war, by which he imposed upon his enemies for the preservation of his own life. What David did here in pretence, and for his own safety, which made it partly excusable, drunkards do really, and only to gratify a base lust; they make fools of themselves, and change their behaviour; their words and actions commonly are either as silly and ridiculous as an idiot's, or as furious and outrageous as a madman's, which has often made me wonder, that ever men of sense and honour should allow themselves in it.

5. His escape by this means, v. 14, 15. I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but, being desirous to protect David, as we find afterward he was very kind to him, even when the lords of the Philistines favoured him not, (ch. 28. 1, 2.—29. 6.) he pretended to his servants, that he really thought he was mad, and therefore had reason to question whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they needed not fear him, what harm could he do them now that his reason was departed from him? They suspected that Achish was inclined to entertain him; "Not I," says he, "he is a madman, I'll have nothing to do with him, you need not fear that I should employ him, or give him any countenance. *Have I need of madmen? Shall this fool come into my house? I will show him no kindness, but then you shall do him no hurt, for if he be a madman, he is to be pitied.*" He therefore *drove him away*, as it is in the title of Ps. 34. which David penned upon this occasion, and an excellent Psalm it is, and shows, that he did not change his spirit when he changed his behaviour, but even in the greatest difficulties and hurries his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord; and he concludes that Psalm with this assurance, that *none of them that trust in God shall be desolate*, though they may be, as he now was, solitary and distressed; *persecuted but not forsaken*.

## CHAP. XXII.

David being driven from Achish, returns into the land of Israel to be haunted by Saul. I. David sets up his standard in the cave of *Adullam*; entertains his relations, (v. 1.) lists soldiers, (v. 2.) but removes his aged parents to a more quiet settlement, (v. 3, 4.) and has the prophet Gad for his counsellor, v. 5. II. Saul resolves to pursue him and find him out, complains of his servants and Jonathan, (v. 6 . . 8.) and finding by Doeg's information that Ahimelech had been kind to David, he ordered him and all the priests that were with him, eighty-five in all, to be put to death, and all that belonged to them destroyed; (v. 9 . . 19.) from the barbarous execution of which sentence, Abiathar escaped to David, v. 20 . . 23.

1. **D**AVID therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave *Adullam*: and when his brethren and all his father's house heard *it*, they went down thither to him. 2. And every one *that was* in distress, and every one *that was* in debt, and every one *that was* discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. 3. And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab: and he said unto the king of Moab, Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, *and be* with you till I know what God will do for me. 4. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. 5. And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold; depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Here,

1. David shelters himself in the cave of *Adullam*, v. 1. Whether it was a natural or artificial fastness, does not appear; it is probable that the access to it was so difficult, that David thought himself able, with Goliath's sword, to keep it against all the forces of Saul, and therefore buried himself alive in it, while he was waiting to see (as he says here, v. 3.) *what God would do with him*. The promise of the kingdom implied a promise of preservation to it, and yet David used proper means for his own safety, else he had tempted God. He did not do any thing that aimed to destroy Saul, but only to secure himself. He that might have done good service to his country as a judge or general, is here shut up in a cave, and thrown by as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. We must not think it strange, if sometimes shining lights be thus eclipsed and hid under a bushel. Perhaps the apostle refers to this instance of David, among others, when he speaks of some of the Old Testament worthies that *wandered in deserts, in dens and caves of the earth*, Heb. 11. 38. It was at this time that David penned the 142d Psalm, which is entitled, *A prayer when he was in the cave*; and there he complains that *no man would know him*, and that refuge failed him, but hopes that shortly the *righteous should compass him about*.

2. Thither his relations flocked to him, *his brethren and all his father's house*, to be protected by him, to give assistance to him, and to take their lot with him. *A brother is born for adversity*. Now Joab and Abishai, and the rest of his relations, came to him, to suffer and venture with him, in hopes shortly to be advanced with him; and they were so. The first three of his worthies were those

that first owned him when he was in the cave, 1 Chron. 11. 15, &c.

3. Here he began to raise forces in his own defence, *v.* 2. He found by the late experiments he had made, that he could not save himself by flight, and therefore was necessitated to do it by force; wherein he never acted offensively, never offered any violence to his prince, nor gave any disturbance to the peace of the kingdom, but only used his forces as a guard to his own person. But whatever defence his soldiers were to him, they did him no great credit, for the regiment he had was made up not of great men, or rich men, or stout men, no nor good men, but men *in distress, in debt, and discontented*, men of broken fortunes and restless spirits, that were put to their shifts, and knew not well what to do with themselves. When David had fixed his head-quarters in the cave of Adullam, they came and enlisted themselves under him to the number of about four hundred. See what weak instruments God sometimes makes use of, by which to bring about his own purposes. The Son of David is ready to receive distressed souls, that will appoint him their Captain, and be commanded by him.

4. He took care to settle his parents in a place of safety; no such place could he find in all the land of Israel, while Saul was so bitterly enraged against him, and all that belonged to him for his sake; he therefore goes with them to the king of Moab, and puts them under his protection, *v.* 3, 4. Observe here, (1.) With what a tender concern he provided for his aged parents. It was not fit they should be exposed either to the frights or to the fatigues which he must expect during his struggle with Saul, (their age would by no means bear it,) therefore the first thing he does, is, to find *them* a quiet habitation, whatever became of himself. Let children learn from hence to *show piety at home, and to requite their parents*, (1 Tim. 5. 4.) in every thing consulting their ease and satisfaction; though ever so highly preferred, and ever so much employed, let them not forget their aged parents. (2.) With what an humble faith he expects the issue of his present distress, *Till I know what God will do for me*. He expresses his hopes very modestly, as one that had entirely cast himself upon God and committed his way to him, expecting a good issue, not from his own arts, or arms, or merits, but from what the wisdom, power, and goodness of God would do for him. Now David's father and mother forsook him, but God did not, Ps. 27. 10.

5. He had the advice and assistance of the prophet Gad, who, probably, was one of the sons of the prophets that were brought up under Samuel, and was by him recommended to David for his chaplain or spiritual guide; being a prophet, he would pray for him and instruct him in the mind of God; and David, though he was himself a prophet, was glad of his assistance. He advised him to go into the land of Judah, (*v.* 5.) as one that was confident of his own innocency, and was well assured of the divine protection, and was desirous, even in his present hard circumstances, to do some service to his tribe and country. Let him not be ashamed to own his own cause, nor decline the succours that would be offered him. Animated by this word, there he determined to appear publicly. Thus are the *steps of a good man ordered by the Lord*.

6. When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that *were* with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants *were* standing about him;) 7. Then Saul said unto his servants that

stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, *and* make you all captains of thousands, *and* captains of hundreds; 8. That all of you have conspired against me, and *there is* none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and *there is* none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 9. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10. And he inquired of the LORD for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. 11. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that *were* in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. 12. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub. And he answered, Here I *am*, my lord. 13. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 14. Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who *is so* faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and *is* honourable in thine house? 15. Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me. Let not the king impute *any* thing unto his servant, *nor* to all the house of my father: for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. 16. And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house. 17. And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also *is* with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. 18. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. 19. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

We have seen the progress of David's troubles; now here we have the progress of Saul's wickedness. He seems to have laid aside the thoughts of

all other business, and to have devoted himself wholly to the pursuit of David. He heard, at length, by the common fame of the country, that David *was discovered*, that is, that he appeared publicly, and enlisted men in his service; and hereupon he called all his servants about him, and sat down under a tree, or grove, in the high place at Gibeah, with his spear in his hand for a sceptre; intimating the force by which he designed to rule, and the present temper of his spirit, or its distemper rather, which was to kill all that stood in his way.

In this bloody court of inquisition,

I. Saul seeks for information against David and Jonathan, v. 7, 8. Two things he was willing to suspect, and desirous to see proved, that he might wreak his malice upon two of the best and most excellent men he had about him. 1. That his servant David *did lie in wait* for him, and seek his life, which was utterly false. He really sought David's life, and therefore pretended that David sought his life, though he could not charge him with any overt act that gave the least umbrage or suspicion. (2.) That his son Jonathan stirred him up to do so, and was confederate with him in compassing and imagining the death of the king. This also was notoriously false. A league of friendship there was between David and Jonathan, but no conspiracy in any evil thing; none of the articles of their covenant carried any mischief to Saul. If Jonathan had agreed, after the death of Saul, to resign to David, in compliance with the revealed will of God, what harm would that do to Saul? Yet thus the best friends to their prince and country have often been odiously represented as enemies to both; even Christ himself was so. He takes it for granted that Jonathan and David were in a plot against him, his crown and dignity, and is displeased with his servants that they do not give him information of it, supposing that they could not but know it; whereas really there was no such thing. See the nature of a jealous malice, and its pitiful arts to extort discoveries of things that are not. He looks upon all about him as his enemies, because they do not just say as he says; and tells them, (1.) That they were very unwise, and acted against the interest both of their tribe, (for they were Benjamites, and David, if he were advanced, would bring the honour into Judah which was now in Benjamin,) and of their families; for David would never be able to give them such rewards as he had for them, of *fields and vineyards*, and such preferment, to be colonels and captains. (2.) That they were unfaithful; *You have conspired against me*. What a continual agitation and torment are they in that give way to a spirit of jealousy! *If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked*; (Prov. 29. 12.) that is, they seem to be so in his eyes. (3.) That they were very unkind. He thought to work upon their good nature with that word. *There is none of you that is so much as sorry for me, or solicitous for me*, as some read it. By these reasonings he stirred them up to act vigorously, as the instruments of his malice, that they might take away his suspicions of them.

II. Though he could not learn any thing from his servants against David or Jonathan, yet he got information from Doeg, against Ahimelech the priest.

1. An indictment is brought against Ahimelech by Doeg, and he himself is evidence against him, v. 9, 10. Perhaps Doeg, as bad as he was, would not have given this information, if Saul had not extorted it for had he been very forward to it, he would have done it sooner; but now he thinks they must be all deemed traitors, if none of them be accusers, and therefore tells Saul what kindness Ahimelech had showed to David, which he himself happened

to be an eye-witness of. He had *inquired of God for him*, (which the priest used not to do but for public persons and about public affairs,) and he had furnished him with *bread and a sword*. All this was true: but it was not the whole truth; he ought to have told Saul further, that David had made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon the king's business; so that what service he did to David, however it proved, was designed in honour to Saul, and this would have proved Ahimelech, whom Saul had in his power, and would have thrown all the blame upon David, who was out of his reach.

2. Ahimelech is seized, or summoned rather to appear before the king, and upon this indictment he is arraigned. The king sent for him and all the priests who attended the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be aiding and abetting; and they, not being conscious of any guilt, and therefore not apprehensive of any danger, *came all of them to the king*, (v. 11.) and none of them attempted to make an escape, or to flee to David for shelter, as they would have done, now that he had set up his standard, if they had been as much in his interest as Saul suspected they were. Saul arraigns him himself with the utmost disdain and indignation; (v. 12.) *Hear now, thou son of Ahitub*; not so much as calling him by his name, much less giving him his title of distinction. By this it appears that he had cast off the fear of God, that he showed no respect at all to his priests, but took a pleasure in affronting them and insulting over them. Ahimelech holds up his hand at the bar in these words, *"Here I am, my lord, ready to hear my charge, knowing I have done no wrong."* He does not demur to the jurisdiction of Saul's court, nor insist upon an exemption as a priest, no, not though he were a High Priest, to which office, that of the judge, or chief magistrate, had not long since been annexed; but Saul having now the sovereignty vested in him, in things pertaining to the king, even the High Priest lowers himself to a level with common Israelites. *Let every soul be subject* (even clergymen) *to the higher powers*.

3. His indictment is read to him, v. 13. That he, a false traitor, had joined himself with the son of Jesse in a plot to depose and murder the king. "His design" (says Saul) "was to *rise up against me*, and thou didst assist him with victuals and arms." See what bad constructions the most innocent actions are liable to; how unsafe they are, that live under a tyrannical government, and what reason we have to be thankful for the happy constitution and administration of the government we are under.

4. To this indictment he pleads Not guilty; (v. 14, 15.) he owns the fact, but denies that he did it traitorously or maliciously, or with any design against the king. He pleads that he was so far from knowing of any quarrel between Saul and David, that he really took David to have been as much in favour at court as ever he had been. Observe, He does not plead that David had told him an untruth, and with that had imposed upon him, though really it was so, because he would not proclaim the weakness of so good a man, no not for his own vindication, especially to Saul, who sought all occasions against him; but he insists upon the settled reputation David had, as the most faithful of all the servants of Saul; the honour the king had put upon him in marrying his daughter to him, the use the king had often made of him, and the trust he had reposed in him; *he goes at thy bidding, and is honourable in thy house*, and therefore any one would think it a meritorious piece of service to the crown, to show him respect, so far from apprehending it to be a crime. He pleads that he had



been wont to *inquire of God for him*, when he was sent by Saul upon any expedition, and did it now as innocently as ever he had done it. He protests his abhorrence of the thought of being in a plot against the king; "*Be it far from me, I mind my own business, and meddle not with state-matters.*" He begs the king's favour, *Let him not impute any crime to us*; and concludes with a declaration of his innocence, *Thy servant knew nothing of all this*. Could any man plead with more evidences of sincerity? Had he been tried by a jury of honest Israelites, he had certainly been acquitted, for who can find any fault in him? But,

5. Saul himself gives judgment against him; (*v. 16.*) *Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech*, as a rebel, *thou and all thy father's house*. What could be more unjust? *I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there*, Eccl. 3. 16. (1.) It was unjust that Saul should himself alone, give judgment in his own cause, without any appeal either to judge or prophet, to his privy-council, or to a council of war. (2.) That so fair a plea should be overruled or rejected without any reason given, or any attempt to disprove the allegations of it, but purely with a high hand. (3.) That sentence should be passed so hastily and with so much precipitation; the judge taking no time himself to consider of it, nor allowing the prisoner any time to move in arrest of judgment. (4.) That the sentence should be passed not only on Ahimelech himself, who was the only person accused by Doeg, but on *all his father's house*, against whom nothing was alleged: must the children be put to death for the fathers? (5.) That the sentence was pronounced in passion, not for the support of justice, but for the gratification of his brutish rage.

6. He issues out a warrant (a verbal warrant only) for the immediate execution of his bloody sentence.

(1.) He ordered his footmen to be the executioners of this sentence, but they refused, *v. 17*. Hereby he intended to put a further disgrace upon the priests; they may not die by the hands of his men of war, (as 1 Kings 2. 29.) or his usual ministers of justice, but his footmen must triumph over them, and wash their hands in their blood. [1.] Never was the command of a prince more barbarously given; *Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord*. This is spoken with such an air of impiety, as can scarce be paralleled. Had he seemed to forget their sacred office and relation to God, and take no notice of that, it had intimated some regret that men of that character should fall under his displeasure; but to call them *the priests of the Lord* then, when he ordered his footmen to cut their throats, looked as if, upon that very account, he hated them. God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being avenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach. What wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to, when he gets the dominion! He alleges, in his order, that which was utterly false, and unproved to him, that they knew when David fled; whereas they knew nothing of the matter. [2.] Never was the command of a prince more honourably disobeyed. The footmen had more sense and grace than their master. Though they might expect to be turned out of their places, if not punished and put to death for their refusal, yet, come on them what would, they would not offer to fall on the priests of the Lord, such a reverence had they for their office, and such a conviction of their innocence.

(2.) He ordered Doeg (the accuser) to be the executioner, and he did it. One would have thought that the footmen's refusal should have awakened Saul's conscience, and he should not have

insisted upon the doing of a thing so barbarous as that his footmen started at the thought of it. But his mind was blinded and his heart hardened, and if they will not do it, the hands of the witness shall be upon them, Deut. 17. 7. The most bloody tyrants have found out instruments of their cruelty as barbarous as themselves; Doeg is no sooner commanded to fall upon the priests, than he does it willingly enough, and, meeting with no resistance, slays with his own hand (for aught that appears) on that same day eighty-five priests that were of the age of ministration, between twenty and fifty, for they *wore a linen ephod*, (*v. 18.*) and perhaps appeared at this time before Saul in their habits, and were slain in them. This (one would think) was enough to satiate the most blood-thirsty; but the horse-leech of persecution still cries, "Give, give." Doeg, by Saul's order no doubt, having murdered the priests, went to their city Nob, and put all to the sword there, (*v. 19.*) *men, women, and children*, and the cattle too. Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror! Strange, that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman! We may see in this, [1.] The desperate wickedness of Saul, when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him. Nothing so vile, but they may be hurried to it, who have provoked God to give them up to their heart's lusts. He that was so compassionate as to spare Agag and the cattle of the Amalekites, in disobedience to the command of God, could now, with unrelenting bowels, see the priests of the Lord murdered, and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. For that sin, God left him to this. [2.] The accomplishment of the threatenings long since pronounced against the house of Eli; for Ahimelech and his family were descendants from him. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it; now God performed against Eli that, at which the ears of them that heard it, must needs tingle, as he had told him that he would *judge his house for ever*, *ch. 3. 11-13*. No word of God shall fall to the ground. [3.] This may be considered as a great judgment upon Israel, and the just punishment of their desiring a king before the time God intended them one. How deplorable was the state of religion at this time in Israel! Though the ark had long been in obscurity, yet it was some comfort to them, that they had the altar, and priests to serve at it; but now to see their priests weltering in their own blood and the heirs of the priesthood too, and the city of the priests made a desolation, so that the altar of God must needs be neglected for want of attendants, and this by the unjust and cruel order of their own king, to satisfy his brutish rage—this could not but go to the heart of all pious Israelites, and make them wish a thousand times, they had been satisfied with the government of Samuel and his sons. The worst enemies of their nation could not have done them a greater mischief.

20. And one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Abitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. 21. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the LORD's priests. 22. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew *it* that day, when Doeg the Edomite *was* there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the *death* of all the persons of thy father's house. 23. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou *shalt be* in safeguard.

Here is,

1. The escape of Abiathar the son of Ahimelech, out of the desolation of the priests' city. Probably, when his father went to appear, upon Saul's summons, he was left at home to attend the altar, by which means he escaped the first execution, and, before Doeg and his bloodhounds came to Nob, he had intelligence of the danger, and had time to shift for his own safety. And whither should he go but to David? *v.* 20. They that suffer for the son of David, let them *commit the keeping of their souls to him*, 1 Pet. 4. 19.

2. David's resentment of the melancholy tidings he brought. He gave David an account of the bloody work Saul had made among the priests of the Lord, (*v.* 21.) as the disciples of John, when their master was beheaded, *went and told Jesus*, Matth. 14. 12. And David greatly lamented the calamity itself, but especially his being accessory to it; *I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house*, *v.* 22. Note, It is a great trouble to a good man, to find himself any way an occasion of the calamities of the church and ministry. David knew Doeg's character so well, that he feared he would do some such mischief as this, when he saw him at the sanctuary. *I knew he would tell Saul*. He calls him *Doeg the Edomite*, because he retained the heart of an Edomite, though, by embracing the profession of the Jewish religion, he had put on the mask of an Israelite.

3. The protection he granted to Abiathar. He perceived him to be terrified, as he had reason to be, and therefore bids him not fear, he would be as careful for him as for himself; *With me thou shalt be in safeguard*, *v.* 23. David, having now time to recollect himself, speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promises that Abiathar should have the full benefit of his protection. It is promised to the Son of David, that God will *hide him in the shadow of his hand*, (Isa. 49. 2.) and with him, all that are his, may be sure that *they shall be in safeguard*, Ps. 91. 1. David had now not only a prophet, but a priest, a High Priest, with him, to whom he was a blessing, and they to him, and both a happy omen of his success. Yet it appears, (*by ch.* 28. 6.) that Saul had a High Priest too, for he had a Urim to consult; it is supposed, he preferred Abitub the father of Zadok, of the family of Eleazar; (1 Chron. 6. 8.) for even those that hate the power of godliness, yet will not be without the form. It must not be forgotten here, that David at this time penned the 52d Psalm, as appears by the title of that Psalm, wherein he represents Doeg not only as malicious and spiteful, but as false and deceitful: because, though what he said was, for the substance of it, true, yet he put false colours upon it, with a design to do mischief: yet even then, when the priesthood was become as a withered branch, he looks upon himself as *a green olive tree in the house of God*, *v.* 8. In this hurry and distraction that David was continually in, yet he found both time and a heart for communion with God, and found comfort in it.

## CHAP. XXIII.

Saul, having made himself drunk with the blood of the priests of the Lord, is here, in this chapter, seeking David's life, who appears here doing good, and suffering ill, at the same time. Here is, I. The good service he did to his king and country, in rescuing the city of Keilah out of the hands of the Philistines, *v.* 1-6. II. The danger he was thereby brought into from the malice of the prince he served, and the treachery of the city he saved; and his deliverance, by divine direction, from that danger, *v.* 7-13. III. David in a wood, and his friend Jonathan visiting him there and encouraging him, *v.* 14-18. IV. The information which the Ziphites brought to Saul of David's haunts, and the expedition

Saul made in pursuit of him, *v.* 19-25. V. The narrow escape David had of falling into his hands, *v.* 26-29. *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.*

1. **WHEN** they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing-floors. 2. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. 3. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? 4. Then David inquired of the Lord yet again. And the Lord answered him, and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 5. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6. And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, *that he came down with an ephod in his hand.*

Now we find why the prophet Gad (by divine direction, no doubt) ordered David to go into the land of Judah; (*ch.* 22. 5.) it was, that since Saul neglected the public safety, he might take care of it, notwithstanding the ill treatment that was given him; for he must render good for evil, and therein be a type of him who not only ventured his life, but laid down his life, for them that were his enemies.

1. Tidings are brought to David, as to the patron and protector of his country's liberties, that the Philistines had made a descent upon the city of Keilah, and plundered the country thereabouts, *v.* 1. Probably, it was the departure both of Gad and David from Saul, that encouraged the Philistines to make this incursion. When princes begin to persecute God's people and ministers, let them expect no other than vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet, is, to let God's church be quiet in it: if Saul fight against David, the Philistines shall fight against his country.

2. David is forward enough to come in for their relief, but is willing to inquire of the Lord concerning it. Here is an instance, (1.) Of David's generosity and public-spiritedness. Though his head and hands were full of his own business, and he had enough to do, with the little force he had, to secure himself, yet he was concerned for the safety of his country, and could not sit still to see that ravaged: nay, though Saul, whose business it was to guard the borders of his land, hated him and sought his life, yet he was willing, to the utmost of his power, to serve him and his interests against the common enemy, and bravely abhorred the thought of sacrificing the common welfare to his private revenge. Those are unlike to David, who sullenly declined to do good, because they have not been so well considered as they deserved for the services they have done. (2.) Of David's piety and regard to God. He inquired of the Lord by the prophet Gad; for it should seem by *v.* 6. that Abiathar came not to him with the ephod till he was in Keilah. His inquiry is, *Shall I go and smite these Philistines?* He inquires both concerning the duty,

whether he might lawfully take Saul's work out of his hand, and act without a commission from him; and concerning the event, whether he might safely venture against such a force as the Philistines had, with such a handful of men at his feet, and such a dangerous enemy as Saul was, at his back. It is our duty, and will be our ease and comfort, whatever happens, to acknowledge God in all our ways, and to seek direction from him.

3. God appointed him, once and again, to go against the Philistines, and promised him success; *Go, and smite the Philistines*, v. 2. His men opposed it, v. 3. No sooner did he begin to have soldiers of his own, than he found it hard enough to manage them. They objected, that they had enemies enough among their own countrymen, they needed not to make the Philistines their enemies. Their hearts failed them, when they only apprehended themselves in danger from Saul's band of pursuers, much more when they came to engage the Philistine armies. To satisfy them therefore, he *inquired of the Lord again*, and now received, not only a full commission, which would warrant him to fight, though he had no orders from Saul, (*Arise, go down to Keilah*;) but also a full assurance of victory; *I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand*, v. 4. This was enough to animate the greatest coward he had in his regiment.

4. He went, accordingly, against the Philistines, routed them, and rescued Keilah; (v. 5.) and, it should seem, he made a sally into the country of the Philistines, for he carried off their cattle by way of reprisal for the wrong they did to the men of Keilah, in robbing their threshing-floors. Here notice is taken, (v. 6.) that it was while David remained in Keilah, after he had cleared it of the Philistines, that Abiathar came to him with the ephod in his hand, that is, the High Priest's ephod, in which the Urim and Thummim were. It was a great comfort to David, in his banishment, that when he could not go to the house of God, he had some of the choicest treasures of that house brought to him, the High Priest, and the breast-plate of judgment.

7. And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. 8. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9. And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 10. Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. 11. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down. 12. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up. 13. Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was

told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah: and he forbore to go forth.

Here is,

1. Saul contriving within himself the destruction of David, v. 7, 8. *He heard that he was come to Keilah*; and did he not hear what brought him thither? Was it not told him that he had bravely relieved Keilah, and delivered it out of the hands of the Philistines? This, one would think, should have put Saul upon considering what honour and dignity should be done to David for this. But instead of that he catches at it as an opportunity of doing him a mischief. An ungrateful wretch he was, and for ever unworthy to have any service or kindness done him. Well might David complain of his enemies, that they rewarded him *evil for good*, and that for his love they were his adversaries, Ps. 35. 12.—109. 4. Christ was used thus basely, John 10. 32. Now observe, 1. How Saul abused the *God of Israel*, in making his providence to patronise and give countenance to his malicious designs, and from thence promising himself success in them. *God hath delivered him into my hand*; as if he, who was rejected of God, were, in this instance, owned and favoured by him, and David infatuated. He vainly triumphs before the victory, forgetting how often he had had fairer advantages against David than he had now, and yet missed his aim. He impiously connects God with his cause, because he thought he had gained one point. Therefore David prays, (Ps. 140. 8.) *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked; further not his wicked device, lest they exalt themselves*. We must not think that one smiling providence either justifies an unrighteous cause, or secures its success. 2. How Saul abused the *Israel of God*, in making them the servants of his malice against David. He called all the people together to war, and they must with all speed march to Keilah, pretending to oppose the Philistines, but intending to besiege David and his men; concealing that design, for it is said, (v. 9.) *he secretly practised mischief against him*. Miserable is that people, whose prince is a tyrant; for while some are sufferers by his tyranny, others (which is worse) are made servants to it, and instruments of it.

II. David consulting with God concerning his own preservation. He knew, by the information brought him, that Saul was plotting his ruin, (v. 9.) and therefore applies himself to his great Protector for direction. No sooner is the ephod brought him, than he makes use of it, *Bring hither the ephod*. We have the scriptures, those lively oracles, in our hands, let us take advice from them in doubtful cases: "Bring hither the Bible." David's address to God, upon this occasion, is, 1. Very solemn and reverent. Twice he calls God, the *LORD God of Israel*, and thrice calls himself *his servant*, v. 10, 11. Those that address God, must know their distance, and who they are speaking to. 2. Very particular and express. His representation of the case is so, v. 10. "Thy servant has certainly heard on good authority" (for he would not call for the ephod upon every idle rumour) "that Saul has a design upon Keilah;" he does not say, "to destroy me," but, "to destroy the city" (as he had lately done the city of Nob) "for my sake." He seems more solicitous for their safety than for his own, and will expose himself any where, rather than they shall be brought into trouble by his being among them. Generous souls are thus minded. His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him; "Lord, direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss." He does indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into method. That

question should have been put first, and was first answered, "Will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard?" "Yea," says the oracle, "he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town." "Well, but if he do come down, will the men of Keilah stand by me in holding the city against him, or will they open him the gates, and deliver me into his hand?" If he had asked the men (that is, the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves, what they would do in that case, they could not have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the trial, much less which way the superior vote of their council would carry it; or they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterward have betrayed him; but God could tell them infallibly: "When Saul besieges their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond soever they now seem of thee, as their saviour, they will deliver thee up, rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury." Note, (1.) God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their strength, what is in them, and what they will do, if they come into such and such circumstances. (2.) He therefore knows not only what *will* be, but what *would* be if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

David having thus fair notice given him of his danger, quitted Keilah, v. 13. His followers were now increased in number to six hundred; with these he went out, not knowing whither he went, but resolving to follow Providence, and put himself under its protection. This broke Saul's measures; he thought God had delivered him *into* his hand, but it proved that God delivered him *out* of his hand, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. When *Saul heard that David was escaped from Keilah, he forbore to go forth* with the body of the army, as he intended, (v. 8.) and resolved to take only his own guards, and go in quest of him. Thus does God baffle the design of his people's enemies, and turn their counsels headlong.

14. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph: and Saul sought him every day; but God delivered him not into his hand. 15. And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David *was* in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. 16. And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. 17. And he said unto him, Fear not; for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee: and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. 18. And they two made a covenant before the LORD. And David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Here is,

I. David absconding. He abode in a *wilderness, in a mountain*, (v. 14.) *in a wood*, v. 15. We must here, 1. Commend his eminent virtues, his humility, modesty, fidelity to his prince, and patient attendance on the providence of his God, that he did not draw up his forces against Saul, fight him in the field, or surprise him by some stratagem or other,

and so avenge his own quarrel and that of the Lord's priests upon him, and put an end to his own troubles, and the calamities of the country under his tyrannical government. No, he makes no such attempt; he keeps God's way, waits God's time, and is content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses, though with some it might seem a reproach to that courage for which he had been famous. But, 2. We must also lament his hard fate, that an innocent man should be thus terrified, and put in fear of his life; that a man of honour should be thus disgraced, a man of merit thus recompensed for his services, and a man that delighted in the service both of God and his country, should be debarred from both, and wrapt up in obscurity. What shall we say to this? Let it make us think the worse of this world, which often gives such bad treatment to its best men: let it reconcile even great and active men to privacy and restraint, if Providence make that their lot, for it was David's: and let it make us long for that kingdom, where goodness shall for ever be in glory, and holiness in honour, and the righteous shall shine as the sun.

II. Saul hunting him as his implacable enemy. He sought him every day, so restless was his malice, v. 14. He sought his life no less, so cruel was his malice, v. 15. As it had been from the beginning, it was now, and will be. *He that is born after the flesh, persecuteth him that is born after the spirit*, Gal. 4. 29.

III. God defending him as his powerful Protector. God delivered him not into his hand, as Saul hoped; (v. 7.) and unless God had delivered him into his hand, he could not prevail against him, John 19. 11.

IV. Jonathan comforting him, as his faithful friend. True friends will find out means to get together; David, it is likely, appointed time and place for this interview, and Jonathan observed it, though he exposed himself by it to his father's displeasure, and, had it been discovered it might have cost him his life. True friendship will not shrink from danger, but can easily venture; will not shrink from condescension, but can easily stoop, and exchange a palace for a wood, to serve a friend. The very sight of Jonathan was reviving to David; but beside that, he said that to him, which was very encouraging.

1. As a *pious* friend, he directed him to God, the Foundation of his confidence, and the Fountain of his comfort. He *strengthened his hand in God*. David, though a strong believer, needed the help of his friends, for the perfecting of what was lacking in his faith; and herein Jonathan was helpful to him, by reminding him of the promise of God, the holy oil wherewith he was anointed, the presence of God with him hitherto, and the many experiences he had had of God's goodness to him. Thus he strengthened his hands for action, by encouraging his heart, not in the creature, but in God. Jonathan was not in a capacity of doing any thing to strengthen him, but he assured him God would.

2. As a *self-denying* friend, he takes a pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to that honour which was his own birthright; (v. 17.) "Thou shalt live to be king, and I shall think it preferment enough to be next thee, near thee, though under thee, and will never pretend to be a rival with thee." This resignation which Jonathan made to David of his title, would be a great satisfaction to him, and make his way much the more clear. This, he tells him, Saul knew very well; Jonathan having sometimes heard him say as much. Whence it appears, what a wicked man Saul was, to persecute one whom God favoured; and what a foolish man he was, in thinking to prevent that which God had determined, and which would certainly come

to pass. How could he disannul what God had purposed?

3. As a *constant* friend, he renewed his league of friendship with him; they two made a covenant now, this third time, before the Lord, calling him to witness to it, *v.* 18. True love takes delight in repeating its engagements, giving and receiving fresh assurances of the firmness of their friendship. Our covenant with God should be often renewed, and therein our communion with him kept up. David and Jonathan now parted, and never came together again, that we find, in this world; for Jonathan said what he wished, not what he had ground to expect, when he promised himself that he should be next to David in his kingdom.

19. Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? 20. Now therefore, O king, come down, according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king's hand. 21. And Saul said, Blessed *be ye of the Lord*; for ye have compassion on me. 22. Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, *and* who hath seen him there: for it is told me *that* he dealeth very subtilly. 23. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking-places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah. 24. And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men *were* in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25. Saul also and his men went to seek *him*. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard *that*, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. 26. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. 27. But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. 28. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Sela-hammah-lekoth. 29. And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

Here,

1. The Ziphites offer their services to Saul, and betray David to him, *v.* 19. 20. He was sheltering himself in the wilderness of Ziph, (*v.* 14, 15.) putting the more confidence in the people of that country, because they were of his own tribe. They had reason to think themselves happy, that they had an

opportunity of serving one, who was the ornament of their tribe, and was likely to be much more so: who was so far from plundering the country, or giving it any disturbance with his troops, that he was ready to protect it, and do them all the good offices that there was occasion for. But, to ingratiate themselves with Saul, they went to him, and not only informed him very particularly where David quartered, (*v.* 19.) but invited him to come with his forces into their country in pursuit of him, and promised to deliver him into his hand, *v.* 20. Saul had not sent to examine or threaten them, but of their own accord, and even without asking a reward, (as Judas did, *What will ye give me?*) they proffer to betray David to him, who, they knew, thirsted after his blood.

2. Saul thankfully receives their information, and gladly lays hold on the opportunity of hunting David in their wilderness, in hopes to make a prey of him at length. He intimates to them how kindly he took it; (*v.* 21.) *Blessed be ye of the Lord*, (so near is God to his mouth, though far from his heart,) *for ye have compassion on me*. It seems he looked upon himself as a miserable man and an object of pity; his own envy and ill nature made him so, else he might have been easy, and have needed no man's compassion. He likewise insinuates the little concern that the generality of his people showed for him: "You have compassion on me, which others have not." Saul gives them instructions to search more particularly for his haunts, (*v.* 22.) "For," says he, "I hear he deals very subtilly;" representing him as a man crafty to do mischief, whereas all his subtilty was to secure himself. It was strange that he did not go down with them immediately, but he hoped, by their means, to set his game with the more certainty, and thus Divine Providence gave David time to shift for himself. But the Ziphites had laid their spies upon all the places where he was likely to be discovered, and therefore Saul might come and seize him, if he was in the land, *v.* 23. Now he thought himself sure of his prey, and pleased himself with the thoughts of devouring it.

3. The eminent peril that David was now brought into. Upon intelligence that the Ziphites had betrayed him, he retired from the hill of Hachilah to the wilderness of Maon, (*v.* 24.) and at this time he penned the 54th Psalm, as appears by the title, wherein he calls the Ziphites *strangers*, though they were Israelites, because they used him barbarously; but he puts himself under the divine protection. "*Behold, God is my Helper*, and then all shall be well." Saul, having got intelligence of him, pursued him closely, (*v.* 25.) till he came so near him, that there was but a mountain between them; (*v.* 26.) David and his men on the one side of the mountain flying, and Saul and his men on the other side pursuing; David in fear, and Saul in hope. But this mountain was an emblem of the Divine Providence coming between David and the destroyer, like the pillar of cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians; David was *concealed* by this mountain, and Saul *confounded* by it. David now flees *as a bird to his mountain*, (Ps. 11. 1.) and finds God to him as the shadow of a great rock. Saul hoped with his numerous forces, to enclose David, and compass him in and his men; but the ground did not prove convenient for his design, and so it failed. A new name was given to the place in remembrance of this, *v.* 28, *Sela-hammah-lekoth, the rock of division*, because it divided between Saul and David.

4. The deliverance of David out of this danger. Providence gave Saul a diversion when he was just ready to lay hold on David; notice was brought him that the Philistines were *invading the land*,

(v. 27.) probably, that part of the land where his own estate lay, which would be seized, or at least spoiled, by the invaders: for the little notice he took of Keilah's distress, and David's relief of it in the beginning of this chapter, give us cause to suspect that he would not now have left pursuing David, and gone to oppose the Philistines, if some private interests of his own had not been at stake. However it was, he found himself under a necessity of *going against the Philistines*, (v. 28.) and by this means David was delivered when he was on the brink of destruction; Saul was disappointed of his prey, and God was glorified as his wonderful Protector. When the Philistines invaded the land, they were far from intending any kindness to David by it; yet the overruling providence of God, which orders all events, and the times of them, made it very serviceable to him. The wisdom of God is never at a loss for ways and means to preserve his people. As this Saul was here diverted, so another Saul was converted, just when he was *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints of the Lord*, Acts 9. 1.

Lastly, David having thus escaped, took shelter in some natural fortresses, which he found in the wilderness of En-gedi, v. 29. And this Dr. Lightfoot thinks was the wilderness of Judah, in which David was, when he penned the 63d Psalm, which breathes as much pious and devout affections as almost any of his Psalms; for in all places, and in all conditions, he still kept up his communion with God.

## CHAP. XXIV.

We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David, and, to his shame, he could never find it. In this chapter David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul, and, to his honour, he did not make use of it; his sparing Saul's life, was as great an instance of God's grace in him, as the preserving of his own life was of God's providence over him. Observe, I. How maliciously Saul sought David's life, v. 1, 2. II. How generously David saved Saul's life, (when he had him at an advantage,) and only cut off the skirt of his robe, v. 3. . 8. III. How pathetically he reasoned with Saul, upon this, to bring him to a better temper towards him, v. 9. . 15. IV. The good impressions this made upon Saul, for the present, v. 16. . 22.

1. **AND** it came to pass, when Saul was returning from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David *is* in the wilderness of En-gedi. 2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3. And he came to the sheep-cotes by the way, where *was* a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the

LORD. 7. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on *his* way. 8. David also rose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

Here,

I. Saul renews his pursuit of David, v. 1, 2. No sooner is he come home safe from chasing the Philistines, in which it should seem he had good success, than he inquires after David to do him a mischief, and resolves to have another thrust at him, *as if he had been delivered to do all those abominations*, Jer. 7. 10. By the frequent incursions of the Philistines, he might have seen how necessary it was to recall David from his banishment, and restore him to his place in the army again; but so far is he from that, that now, more than ever, he is exasperated against him; and, hearing that he is *in the wilderness of En-gedi*, he draws out three thousand choice men, and goes with them at his feet in pursuit of him, *upon the rocks of the wild goats*, where, one would think, David should not be envied an inhabitation, nor Saul be desirous to disturb him; for what harm could he fear from one who was no better accommodated? But it is not enough to Saul, that he is thus cooped up; he cannot be easy while he is alive.

II. Providence brings Saul alone into the same cave wherein David and his men had hid themselves, v. 3. In those countries there were very large caves in the sides of the rocks or mountains, partly natural, but, probably, much enlarged by art, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun; hence we read of places where the flocks did rest at noon, (Cant. 1. 7.) and this cave seems to be spoken of as one of the sheep-cotes. In the sides of this cave David and his men remained; perhaps not all his men, the whole 600, but only some few of his particular friends, the rest being disposed of in similar retirements. Saul, passing by, turned in himself alone, not in search of David, (for, supposing him to be an aspiring ambitious man, he thought to find him rather climbing with the wild goats upon the rocks, than retiring with the sheep into a cave,) but thither he turned aside to *cover his feet*, that is, to sleep a while, it being a cool and quiet place, and very refreshing in the heat of the day: probably, he ordered his attendants to march before, reserving only a very few to wait for him at the mouth of the cave.

III. David's servants stir him up to kill Saul, now that he had so fair an opportunity to do it, v. 4. They remind him that this was the day which he had long looked for, and of which God had spoken to him in general when he was anointed to the kingdom, which should put a period to his troubles, and open the passage to his advancement. Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he should find with Saul, and therefore what little reason he had to show mercy to him. "By all means," say his servants, "give him the fatal blow now." See how apt we are to misunderstand, 1. The promises of God. God had assured David he would deliver him from Saul, and his men interpret that as a warrant to destroy Saul. 2. The providences of God; because it was now in his power to kill him, they concluded he might lawfully do it.

IV. David cut off the skirt of his robe, but soon repented that he had done that: *his heart smote him* for it, v. 5. though he did Saul no real hurt, and



served David for a proof that it was in his power to have killed him; (v. 11.) yet, because it was an affront to Saul's royal dignity, he wished he had not done it. Note, It is a good thing to have a heart within us, smiting us for sins that seem little; it is a sign that conscience is awake and tender, and will be the means of preventing greater sins.

V. He reasons strongly both with himself and with his servants, against doing Saul any hurt. 1. He reasons with himself: (v. 6.) *The Lord forbid that I should do this thing.* Note, Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and to resist the temptations to, not only with resolution, but with a holy indignation. He considers Saul now, not as his enemy, and the only person that stood in the way of his preferment, for then he would be induced to hearken to the temptation, but as God's anointed, that is, the person whom God had appointed to reign as long as he lived, and who, as such, was under the particular protection of the divine law; and as his master, to whom he was obliged to be faithful. Let servants and subjects learn hence to be dutiful and loyal, whatever hardships are put upon them, 1 Pet. 2. 18. 2. He reasons with his servants. *He suffered them not to rise against Saul,* v. 7. He would not only not do this bad thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus did he render good for evil to him from whom he had received evil for good; and was herein both a type of Christ, who saved his persecutors, and an example to all Christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

VI. He follows Saul out of the cave, and though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity, if possible, to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for. 1. Even in showing his head, he testified that he had an honourable opinion of Saul. He had too much reason to believe that, let him say what he would, Saul would immediately be the death of him, as soon as he saw him, and yet he bravely lays aside that jealousy, and thinks Saul so much a man of sense as to hear his reasoning, when he had so much to say in his own vindication, and such fresh and sensible proofs to give of his own integrity. 2. His behaviour was very respectful, he *stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself*, giving honour to whom honour was due, and teaching us to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our superiors, even to those that have been most injurious to us.

9. And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD hath delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee: and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed. 11. Moreover, my father, see; yea, see the skirt of thy robe in mine hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the

wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14. After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea? 15. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

We have here David's warm and pathetic speech to Saul, wherein he endeavours to convince him that he did him a great deal of wrong in persecuting him thus, and to persuade him therefore to be reconciled.

1. He calls him *father*; (v. 11.) for he was not only, as king, the father of his country, but he was, in particular, his father-in-law. From a father one may expect compassion, and a favourable opinion. For a prince to seek the ruin of any of his good subjects, is as unnatural as for a father to seek the ruin of his own children.

2. He lays the blame of his rage against him upon his evil counsellors; *Wherefore hearest thou men's words?* v. 9. It is a piece of respect owing to crowned heads, if they do amiss, to charge it upon those about them, who either advised them to it, or should have advised them against it. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him purely from his own envy and malice, yet he decently supposes that others put him on to do it, and made him believe that David was his enemy, and sought his hurt. Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, has his agents in all places, and particularly in the courts of those princes that encourage them and give ear to them, who make it their business to represent the people of God as enemies to Cæsar and hurtful to kings and princes, that, being thus dressed up in bear skins, they may "be baited."

3. He solemnly protests his own innocence, and that he was far from designing any hurt or mischief to Saul, "*There is neither evil nor transgression in my hand,*" v. 11. I am not chargeable with any crime, nor conscious of any guilt, and, had I a window in my breast, thou mightest through it see the sincerity of my heart in this protestation. *I have not sinned against thee;* (however I have sinned against God;) *yet thou huntest my soul,*" that is, "my life." Perhaps it was about this time, that David penned the seventh Psalm, concerning the business of Cush the Benjamite, that is, Saul, as some think, wherein he appeals to God, (v. 3.. 5.) *If there be iniquity in my hand, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it;* putting in a parenthesis, with reference to the story of this chapter. *Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.*

4. He produces undeniable evidence to prove the falseness of the suggestion upon which Saul's malice against him was grounded; David was charged with seeking Saul's hurt; "*See,*" says he, "*yea, see the skirt of thy robe;*" (v. 11.) let this be a witness for me, and an unexceptionable witness it is: had that been true which I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and not the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this." To corroborate this evidence, he shows him, (1.) That God's providence had given him an opportunity to do it. *The Lord delivered thee, very surprisingly, to-day into mine hand;* whence many a one would have gathered an intimation, that it was the will of God he should now give the determining blow to him whose neck lay so fair for it. When Saul had but a very small advantage against David, he cried out, *God has delivered him into my hand,* (ch. 23. 7.) and resolved to make the best of that advantage; but David did not so. (2.) That

his counsellors and those about him had earnestly put him on to do it. *Some bade me kill thee.* He had blamed Saul for hearkening to men's words, and justly; "for," says he, "if I had done so, thou hadst not been alive now." (3.) That it was upon a good principle, that he refused to do it; not because his attendants were at hand, who, it may be, would have avenged his death; no, it was not by the fear of them, but by the fear of God, that he was restrained from it; "He is my Lord, and the Lord's anointed, whom I ought to protect, and to whom I owe faith and allegiance, and therefore I said, I will not touch a hair of his head. Such a happy command he had of himself, that his nature, in the midst of the greatest provocation, was not suffered to rebel against his principles.

5. He declares it his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. *The Lord avenge me of thee;* that is, "deliver me out of thy hand; but, whatever comes of it, *my hand shall not be upon thee;*" (v. 12. and again, v. 13.) *as saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.* The wisdom of the ancients is transmitted to posterity by their proverbial sayings: many such we receive by tradition from our fathers; and the counsels of common persons are very much directed by this, "As the old saying is." Here is one that was in use in David's time, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked;* that is, (1.) Men's own iniquity will ruin them at last. So some understand it. Forward furious men will cut their own throats with their own knives. Give them rope enough, and they will hang themselves. In this sense it comes in very fitly as a reason why *his hand should not be upon him.* (2.) Bad men will do bad things; according as men's principles and dispositions are, accordingly will their actions be: this suits the connexion. If David had been a wicked man, as he was represented, he would have done this wicked thing; but he durst not, because of the fear of God. Or thus: Whatever injuries bad men do us, (which we are not to wonder at; he that lies among thorns, must expect to be scratched,) yet we must not return them; never render railing for railing: though *wickedness proceed from the wicked,* yet let it not therefore proceed from us by way of retaliation. Though the dog bark at the sheep, the sheep does not bark at the dog. See Isa. 32. 6-8.

6. He endeavours to convince him, that as it was a bad thing, so it was a mean thing, for him to give chase to such an inconsiderable person as David was; (v. 14.) *Whom does the king of Israel pursue with all this care and force? A dead dog; a flea; one flea;* so it is in the Hebrew. It is below so great a king to enter the lists with one that is so unequal a match for him, one of his own servants, bred a poor shepherd, now an exile; neither able nor willing to make any resistance. To conquer him would not be to his honour, to attempt it was his disparagement. If Saul would consult his own reputation, he would slight such an enemy, (supposing he were really his enemy,) and would think himself in no danger from him. David was so far from aspiring, that he was, in his own account, as a dead dog; Mephibosheth thus calls himself, 2 Sam. 9. 8. This humble language would have wrought upon Saul, if he had any spark of generosity in him; *Satis est prostrasse leoni—Enough for the lion, that he has laid his victim low.* What credit would it be to Saul to trample upon a dead dog? What pleasure could it be to him to hunt a flea, a single flea? Which, (as some have observed,) if it be sought, is not easily found, if it be found, not easily caught, and if it be caught, is a poor prize, especially for a prince. *Aquila non capit muscas—The eagle does not dart upon flies.* David thinks Saul had no more reason to fear him, than to fear a flea-bite.

7. He once and again appeals to God as the righteous Judge; (v. 12. and v. 15.) *The Lord judge between me and thee.* Note, The justice of God is the refuge and comfort of oppressed innocence. If men wrong us, God will right us, at furthest, in the judgment of the great day. With him David leaves his cause, and so rests satisfied waiting his time to appear for him.

16. And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17. And he said to David, *Thou art more righteous than I:* for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. 18. And thou hast showed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as, when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22. And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Here is,

1. Saul's penitent reply to David's speech. It was strange that he had patience to hear him out, considering how outrageous he was against him, and how cutting David's discourse was: but God restrained him and his men; and we may suppose Saul struck with amazement at the singularity of the event, and much more when he found how much he had lain at David's mercy. His heart must have been harder than a stone, if this had not affected him.

1. He melted into tears; and we will not suppose them to be counterfeit, but real expressions of his present concern at the sight of his own iniquity, so plainly proved upon him. He speaks as one quite overcome with David's kindness; *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And, as one that relented at the thought of his own folly and ingratitude, he *lifted up his voice and wept,* v. 16. Many mourn for their sins, that do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for them, and yet continue in love and league with them.

2. He ingenuously acknowledged David's integrity, and his own iniquity; (v. 17.) *Thou art more righteous than I.* Now God made good to David that word on which he had caused him to hope, that he would bring forth his righteousness as the light, Ps. 37. 6. They who take care to keep a good conscience, may leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. This fair confession was enough to prove David innocent, (even his enemy himself being judge,) but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, *Thou art righteous, but I am wicked;* but the utmost he will own is this, *Thou art more righteous than I.* Bad men will commonly go no further than this in their

confessions; but they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are that are better than they, and more righteous. He now owns himself under a mistake concerning David; (v. 18.) "*Thou hast showed this day, that thou art so far from seeking my hurt, that thou hast dealt well with me.*" We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than really they are, and than perhaps they are proved to be; when, afterward, our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recall our suspicions, as Saul does here.

3. He prays God to recompense David for this his generous kindness to him. He owns that David's sparing him when he had him in his power, was an uncommon and an unparalleled instance of tenderness to an enemy; no man would have done the like; and therefore, either because he thought himself not able to give him a full recompense for so great a favour, or, because he found himself not inclined to give him any recompense at all, he turns him over to God for his pay; *The Lord reward thee good, v. 19.* Poor beggars can do no less than pray for their benefactors, and Saul did no more.

4. He prophesies his advancement to the throne; (v. 20.) *I know well that thou shalt surely be king.* He knew it before, by the promise Samuel had made him of it, compared with the excellent spirit that appeared in David, which highly aggravated his sin and folly, in persecuting him as he did; he had as much reason to say, concerning David, as David concerning him, *How can I put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed?* But now he knew it by the interest he found he had in the people, the special providence of God in protecting him, and the generous kingly spirit he had now given a proof of in sparing his enemy. Now he knew it; that is, now that he was in a good temper, he was willing to own that he knew it, and to submit to the conviction of it. Note, Sooner or later, God will force even those that are of the synagogue of Satan, to know and own those that he has loved, and to worship before their feet; for so it is promised, Rev. 3. 9. This acknowledgment which Saul made of David's incontestable title to the crown, was a great encouragement to David himself, and a support to his faith and hope.

5. He binds David with an oath, hereafter to show the same tenderness of his seed, and of his name, as he had now showed of his person, v. 21. David had more reason to oblige Saul by an oath that he would not destroy him, yet he insists not on that; (if the laws of justice and honour would not bind him, an oath would not;) but Saul knew David to be a conscientious man, and would think his interests safe, if he could get them secured by his oath. Saul, by his disobedience, had ruined his own soul, and never took care by repentance to prevent that ruin, and yet is very solicitous that his name might not be destroyed, nor his seed cut off. However, *David sware unto him, v. 22.* Though he might be tempted, not only in revenge, but in prudence, to extirpate Saul's family, yet he binds himself not to do it, knowing that God could and would establish the kingdom to him and his, without the use of such bloody methods. This oath he afterward religiously observed; he supported Mephibosheth, and executed those as traitors, that slew Ish-bosheth. The hanging up of several of Saul's posterity, to atone for the destruction of the Gibeonites, was God's appointment, not David's act, and therefore not the violation of this oath.

II. Their parting in peace. 1. Saul, for the present, at last fall the persecution: he went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy to David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that, when at last he had found David, he could not at that time find in his heart to

destroy him, as he had designed. God has many ways to tie the hands of persecutors, when he does not turn their hearts. 2. David continued to shift for his own safety; he knew Saul too well to trust him, and therefore *got him up into the hold.* It is dangerous venturing upon the mercy of a reconciled enemy. We read of those who believed in Christ, and yet he *did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men.* They that like David are innocent as doves, must thus like him be *wise as serpents.*

## CHAP. XXV.

We have here some intermission of David's troubles by Saul. Providence favoured him with a breathing time, and yet this chapter gives us instances of the troubles of David; if one vexation seem to be over, we must not be secure; a storm may arise from some other point, as here to David. 1. Tidings of the death of Samuel could not but trouble him, v. 1. But, II. The abuse he received from Nabal is more largely recorded in this chapter. 1. The character of Nabal, v. 2. 3. The humble request sent to him, v. 4. .9. 3. His churlish answer, v. 10, 11. 4. David's angry resentment of it, v. 12, 13, 21, 22. 5. Abigail's prudent care to prevent the mischief it was likely to bring upon her family, v. 14. .20. 6. Her address to David to pacify him, v. 23. .31. 7. David's favourable reception of her, v. 32. .35. 8. The death of Nabal, v. 36. .38. 9. Abigail's marriage to David, v. 39. .44.

1. **A**ND Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

We have here a short account of Samuel's death and burial.

1. Though he was a great man, and one that was admirably well qualified for public service, yet he spent the latter end of his days in retirement and obscurity: not because he was superannuated, for he knew how to preside in a college of the prophets, (ch. 19. 20.) but because Israel had rejected him, for which God thus justly chastised them, and because his desire was to be quiet, and to enjoy himself and his God in acts of devotion, now in his advanced years; and in this desire God graciously indulged him. Let old people be willing to rest themselves, though it look like burying themselves alive.

2. Though he was a fast friend to David, for which Saul hated him, as also for dealing plainly with him; yet he died in peace, even in the worst of the days of Saul's tyranny, who, he sometimes feared, would kill him, ch. 16. 2. Though Saul loved him not, yet he feared him, as Herod did John; and feared the people, for all knew him to be a prophet. Thus is Saul restrained from hurting him.

3. All Israel lamented him; and they had reason, for they had all a loss in him. His personal merits commanded this honour to be done him at his death; his former services to the public, when he judged Israel, made this respect to his name and memory, a just debt; it had been very ungrateful to have withheld it. The sons of the prophets had lost the founder and president of their college, and whatever weakened them was a public loss: but that was not all; Samuel was a constant intercessor for Israel, prayed daily for them; (ch. 12. 23.) if he go, they part with the best friend they have. The loss is the more grievous at this juncture, when Saul is grown so outrageous, and David driven from his country; never more need of Samuel than now, yet now he is removed. We will hope that the Israelites lamented Samuel's death the more bitterly, be-

cause they remembered against themselves their own sin and folly in rejecting him, and desiring a king. Note, (1.) Those have hard hearts, who can bury their faithful ministers with dry eyes; who are not sensible of the loss of those who have prayed for them, and taught them the way of the Lord. (2.) When God's providence removes our relations and friends from us, we ought to be humbled for our misconduct toward them, while they were with us.

4. They buried him not in the school of the prophets at Naioth, but in his own house, or perhaps in the garden pertaining to it, at Ramah, where he was born.

5. David, hereupon, went down to the wilderness of Paran, retiring, perhaps, to mourn the more solemnly for the death of Samuel. Or, rather, because now that he had lost so good a friend, who was (and he hoped would be) a great support to him, he apprehended his danger to be greater than ever, and therefore withdrew to a wilderness, out of the limits of the land of Israel; and now it was, that he *dwelt in the tents of Kedar*, Ps. 120. 5. In some parts of this wilderness of Paran, Israel wandered when they came out of Egypt; the place would bring to mind God's care concerning them, and David might improve that for his own encouragement, now in his wilderness state.

2. And *there was* a man in Maon whose possessions *were* in Carmel; and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3. Now the name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail; and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish, and evil in his doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb. 4. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5. And David sent out ten young men; and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. 6. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in *prosperity*, Peace *be* both to thee, and peace *be* to thine house, and peace *be* unto all that thou hast. 7. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now, thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there aught missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. 8. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes; for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words, in the name of David, and ceased. 10. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. 11. Shall I then take my bread and my

water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give *it* unto men whom I know not whence they *be*?

Here begins the story of Nabal.

I. A short account of him, who and what he was, v. 2, 3. A man we should never have heard of, if there had not happened some communication between him and David. Observe, 1. His name: *Nabal*; a *fool*, so it signifies. It was a wonder that his parents would give him that name, and an ill omen of what proved to be his character. Yet indeed we all of us deserve to be so called, when we come into the world; for *Man is born like the wild ass's colt, and foolishness is bound up in our hearts*. 2. His family: he was of the house of Caleb, but was indeed of another spirit. He inherited Caleb's estate; for Maon and Carmel lay near Hebron, which was given to Caleb; (Josh. 15. 54, 55.—14. 14.) but he was far from inheriting his virtues. He was a disgrace to his family, and then it was no honour to him. *Degeneranti genus offprobrium—A good extraction is a reproach to him who degenerates from it*. The Seventy, and some other ancient versions, read it appellatively; not, He was a Calebite. He was a dogged man, of a currish disposition, surly and snappish, and always snarling. He was *ἄνθρωπος κυνικός*—*a man that was a cynic*. 3. His wealth: he was very great, that is, very rich; for riches make men look great in the eye of the world; otherwise, to one that takes his measures aright, he really looked very mean. Riches are common blessings, which God often gives to Nabals, to whom he gives neither wisdom nor grace. 4. His wife: Abigail; a woman of great understanding. Her name signifies, *the joy of her father*; yet he could not promise himself much joy of her, when he married her to such a husband, inquiring more after his wealth than after his wisdom. Many a child is thrown away upon a great heap of the mire of worldly wealth; married to that and to nothing else that is desirable. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, but an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Many an Abigail is tied to a Nabal, and if it be so, be her understanding, like Abigail's, ever so great, it will be little enough for her exercises. 5. His character: he had no sense either of honour or honesty: not of honour, for he was churlish, cross, and ill-humoured; not of honesty, for he was evil in his doings, hard, and oppressive, and a man that cared not what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving, so he could but get and save. This is the character given of Nabal by Him who knows what every man is.

II. David's humble request to him, that he would send him some victuals for himself and his men.

1. David, it seems, was in such distress, that he would be glad to be beholden to him, and did, in effect, come a begging to his door. What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world, when so great a churl as Nabal was, abounds, and so great a saint as David was, suffers want! Once before, we had David begging his bread, but then it was of Ahimelech the High Priest, to whom one would not grudge to stoop. But to send a begging to Nabal, was what such a spirit as David had, could not admit without some reluctance; yet if Providence bring him to these straits, he will not say, that to beg he is ashamed. Yet see Ps. 37. 25.

2. He chose a good time to send to Nabal, when he had many hands employed about him in shearing his sheep, for whom he was to make a plentiful entertainment, so that good cheer was stirring. Had he sent at another time, Nabal would have pretended he had nothing to spare, but now he could not have that excuse. It was usual to make feasts at their sheep-shearings, as appears from

Absalom's feast on that occasion; (2 Sam. 13. 24.) for wool was one of the staple commodities of Canaan.

3. David ordered his men to deliver their message to him with a great deal of courtesy and respect; "*Go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.*" Tell him I sent you to present my service to him, and to inquire how he does, and his family, *v. 5.* He puts words in their mouths; (*v. 6.*) *Thus shall ye say to him that liveth;* (our translators add, *in prosperity;*) as if those live indeed, that live as Nabal did, with abundance of the wealth of this world about them; whereas, in truth, those that *live in pleasure, are dead while they live,* 1 Tim. 5. 6. This was, methinks, too high a compliment to pass upon Nabal, to call him *the man that liveth.* David knew better things, that in God's favour is life, not in the world's smiles; and by the rough answer he was well enough served, for this too smooth address to such a muck-worm. Yet his good wishes were very commendable; "*Peace be to thee;* all good both to soul and body: *Peace to thy house and to all that thou hast.*" Tell him I am a hearty well-wisher to his health and prosperity." He bids them call him his *son David;* (*v. 8.*) intimating, that, for his age and estate, David honoured him as a father, and therefore hoped to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

4. He pleaded the kindness which Nabal's shepherds had received from David and his men; and one good turn requires another. He appeals to Nabal's own servants, and shows that when David's soldiers were quartered among Nabal's shepherds, (1.) They did not hurt them themselves; did them no injury, gave them no disturbance, were not a terror to them, nor took any of their lambs out of their flock. Yet, considering the character of David's men, men in distress, and debt, and discontented, and the scarcity of provisions in his camp, it was not without a great deal of care and good management, that they were kept from plundering. (2.) They protected them from being hurt by others. David himself does but *intimate* this, for he would not boast of his good offices; *neither was there ought missing unto them,* *v. 7.* But Nabal's servants, to whom he appealed, went further; (*v. 16.*) *They were a wall unto us both by night and day.* David's soldiers were a guard to Nabal's shepherds, when the bands of the *Philistines* robbed the *threshing-floors,* (*ch. 23. 1.*) and would have robbed the sheep-folds. From those plunderers Nabal's flocks were protected by David's care, and therefore *let us find favour in thine eyes.* Those that have shown kindness, may justly expect to receive kindness.

5. He was very modest in his request. Though David was anointed king, he insists not upon royal dainties, but "Give whatsoever comes to thy hand, and we will be thankful for it." Beggars must not be choosers. They that deserved to have been served first, will now be glad of what is left. They plead, *We come in a good day,* a festival, when not only the provision is more plentiful, but the heart and hand are usually more open and free, than at other times: when much may be spared, and yet not be missed. He demands it not as a debt, either by way of tribute, as he was king, or by way of contribution, as he was a general, but as a boon to a friend, that was his humble servant. David's servants delivered their message faithfully, and very handsomely, not doubting but to go back well laden with provisions.

III. Nabal's churlish answer to this modest petition, *v. 10, 11.* One would not have imagined it possible that any man should be so very rude and ill-conditioned as Nabal was. David called himself his *son,* and asked bread, and a fish, but, in-

stead thereof, he gave him a stone, and a scorpion; not only denied him, but abused him. If he had not thought fit to send him any supplies for fear of Ahimelech's fate, who paid dear for his kindness to David, yet he might have given a civil answer, and made the denial as modest as the request was. But, instead of that, he falls into a passion, as covetous men are apt to do, when they are asked for any thing, thinking thus to cover one sin with another, and by *abusing* the poor to excuse themselves from *relieving* them. But God will not thus be mocked.

1. He speaks scornfully of David, as an insignificant man, not worth taking notice of. The Philistines could say of him, *This is David the king of the land, that slew his ten thousands;* (*ch. 21. 11.*) yet Nabal his near neighbour, and one of the same tribe, takes on him to say that he does not know him, or not know him to be a man of any merit or distinction; *Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse?* He could not be ignorant how much the country was obliged to David for his public services, but his narrow soul thinks not of paying any part of that debt, nor so much as acknowledge it; he speaks of David as an inconsiderable man, obscure, and not to be regarded. Think it not strange, if great men and great merits be thus disgraced.

2. He upbraids him with his present distress, and takes occasion from it to represent him as a bad man, that was fitter to be set in the stocks for a vagrant than to have any kindness shown him. How naturally does he speak the churlish clownish language of those that hate to give alms! *There be many servants now-a-days,* (as if there had been none such in former days,) *that break every man from his master;* suggesting that David was one of them himself. "He might have kept his place with his master Saul, and then he needed not have sent to me for provisions." Also that he entertained and harboured these that were fugitives like himself. It would make one's blood rise, to hear so great and good a man as David was, thus vilified and reproached by such a base churl as Nabal was; *But the vile person will speak villany,* Isa. 32. 5-7. If men bring themselves into straits by their own folly, yet they are to be pitied and helped, and not trampled upon and starved. But David is reduced to this distress, not by any fault, nor any indiscretion, of his own, but purely by the good services he had done to his country, and the honours which his God had put upon him; and yet he is represented as a fugitive and a runagate. Let this help us to bear such reproaches and misrepresentations of us with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them, that it has often been the lot of the excellent ones of the earth. Some of the best men that ever the world was blest with, were counted as the *off-scouring of all things,* 1 Cor. 4. 13.

3. He insists much upon the property he had in the provisions of his table, and will by no means admit any body to share in them. "It is my bread and my flesh, yes, and my water too," (though *usus communis aquarum—water is every one's property,*) "and it is prepared for my shearers;" priding himself in it, that it was all his own; and who denied it? Who offered to dispute his title? But this, he thinks, will justify him in keeping it all to himself, and giving David none; for may he not do what he will with his own? Whereas we mistake, if we think we are absolute lords of what we have, and may do what we please with it. No, we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but his that entrusted us with it. Riches are the *τα ἀλλότρια,* (Luke 16. 12.) they are *another's,* and we ought not to talk too much of their being our own.

12. So David's young men turned their

way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. 13. And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword, and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. 14. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. 15. But the men *were* very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: 16. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping sheep. 17. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he *is such* a son of Belial, that *a man* cannot speak to him.

Here is,

I. The report to David of the abuse Nabal had given to his messengers; (*v. 12.*) *They turned their way*; they showed their displeasure as became them to do, by breaking off abruptly from such a churl, but prudently governed themselves so well, as not to render railing for railing, nor to call him as he deserved, much less to take by force what ought of right to have been given them, but came and told David—let him do as he thought fit. Christ's servants, when they are thus abused, must leave it to him to plead his own cause, and wait till he appear in it. The servant showed his lord what affronts he had received, but did not return them, Luke 14. 21.

II. David's hasty resolution, hereupon. He girded on his sword, and ordered his men to do so too, to the number of four hundred, *v. 13.* And what he said, we are told, *v. 21, 22.* 1. He repented of the kindness he had done to Nabal, and looks upon it as thrown away upon him. He said, "*Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness*; I thought to have obliged him, and made him my friend, but I see it is to no purpose. He has no sense of gratitude, nor is he capable of receiving the impressions of a good turn, else he could not have used me thus. He hath *requited me evil for good*. But when we are thus requited, we should not repent of the good we have done, nor be backward to do good another time. God is kind to the evil and unthankful, and why may not we? 2. He determined to destroy Nabal, and all that belonged to him, *v. 22.* Here David did not act like himself. His resolution was bloody, to cut off all the males of Nabal's house, and spare none, man, nor man child. The ratification of his resolution was passionate; *So, and more also, do God* (he was going to say *to me*, but that would better become Saul's mouth (*ch. 14. 44.*) than David's, and therefore he decently turns it off) *to the enemies of David. Is this thy voice, O David?* Can the man after God's own heart speak thus unadvisedly with his lips? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, where he should have learned patience, and yet so passionate? Is this he who used to be dumb and deaf when he was reproached, (Ps. 38. 13.) who, but the other day, spared him who sought his

life, and yet now will not spare any thing that belongs to him who had only put an affront upon his messengers? He who, at other times, used to be calm and considerate, is now put into such a heat by a few hard words, that nothing will atone for them but the blood of a whole family. Lord, what is man! What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves to try them, that they may know what is in their hearts! From Saul, David expected injuries, and against these he was prepared, and stood upon his guard, and so kept his temper; but from Nabal he expected kindness, and therefore the affront he gave him, was a surprise to him, found him off his guard, and, by a sudden and unexpected attack, put him for the present into disorder. What need have we to pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

III. The account given of this matter to Abigail, by one of the servants, who was more considerate than the rest, *v. 14.* Had this servant spoken to Nabal, and showed him the danger he had exposed himself to, by his own rudeness, he would have said, "Servants are now-a-days so saucy, and so apt to prescribe, that there is no enduring them;" and, it may be, would have turned him out of doors. But Abigail, being a woman of good understanding, took cognizance of the matter, even from her servant, who, 1. Did David right, in commending him and his men for their civility to Nabal's shepherds; (*v. 15, 16.*) "The men were very good to us; and though they were themselves exposed, yet they protected us, and were a wall unto us." They who do that which is good, one way or other, shall have the praise of the same. Nabal's own servant will be a witness for David, that he is a man of honour and conscience, whatever Nabal himself says of him. And, 2. He did Nabal no wrong in condemning him for his rudeness to David's messengers. *He railed on them, v. 14. He flew upon them*, so the word is, with an intolerable rage: "For," say they, "it is his usual practice; (*v. 17.*) *He is such a son as Belial*, so very morose and untractable, that *a man cannot speak to him*, but he flies into a passion immediately." Abigail knew it too well herself. 3. He did Abigail and the whole family a kindness, in making her sensible what was likely to be the consequence. He knew David so well, that he had reason to think he would highly resent the affront, and, perhaps, had had information of David's orders to his men to march that way; for he is very positive *evil is determined against our master and all his household*; himself, among the rest, would be involved in it. Therefore he desires his mistress to consider what was to be done for their common safety. They could not resist the force David was to bring down upon them, nor had they time to send to Saul to protect them; something therefore must be done to pacify David.

18. Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses. 19. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me: behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. 20. And it was *so*, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. 21. (Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this *fel-*



*low* hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that *pertained* unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that *pertain* to him, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall.) 23. And when Abigail saw David, she hastened and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 24. And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*; and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even* Nabal: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 26. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. 27. And now this blessing, which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 28. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy days. 29. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, *as out* of the middle of a sling. 30. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, 31. That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

We have here an account of Abigail's prudent management for the preserving of her husband and family from the destruction that was just coming upon them: and we find that she did her part admirably well, and fully answered her character. The passion of fools often makes those breaches in a little time, which the wise, with all their wisdom, have much ado to make up again. It is hard to say, whether Abigail was more miserable in such a husband, or Nabal happy in such a wife. *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband*, to protect as well as adorn, and will *do him good and not evil*.

Wisdom in such a case as this, was better than weapons of war. 1. It was her wisdom, that what she did, she did quickly, and without delay; she *made haste*, v. 18. It was no time to trifle or linger, when all was in danger. They that desire conditions of peace, must send when the enemy is yet a great way off, Luke 14. 32. 2. It was her wisdom, that what she did, she did herself: because, being a woman of great conduct and very happy address, she knew better how to manage it than any servant she had. The virtuous woman will herself *look well to the ways of her household*, and not devolve it wholly upon others.

Abigail must endeavour to atone for Nabal's faults, now that he had been two ways rude to David's messengers, and in them to David. (1.) He had denied them the provisions they asked for. (2.) He had given them very provoking language. Now,

I. By a most generous present, Abigail atones for his denial of their request. If Nabal had given them what came next to hand, they had gone away thankful: but Abigail prepares the very best the house afforded, and abundance of it, (v. 18.) according to the usual entertainments of those times. Not only *bread and flesh*, but *raisins and figs*, which were their dried sweetmeats. Nabal grudged them *water*, but she took *two bottles (casks or rundlets) of wine*, loaded her asses with these provisions, and sent them before; *for a gift pacifieth anger*, Prov. 21. 14. Jacob thus pacified Esau. When the *instruments of the churl are evil, the liberal devise liberal things*, and loses nothing by it; *for by liberal things shall he stand*, Isa. 32. 7, 8. Abigail not only lawfully, but laudably, disposed of all these goods of her husband's, without his knowledge, even when she had reason to think that if he had known, he would not have consented to it; because it was not to gratify her own pride, or vanity, but for the necessary defence of him and his family, which otherwise had been inevitably ruined. Husbands and wives, for their common good and benefit, have a joint-interest in their worldly possessions; but if either waste, or unduly spend any way, it is robbing the other.

II. By a most obliging demeanour, and charming speech, she atones for the abusive language which Nabal had given them. She met David upon the march, big with resentment, and meditating the destruction of Nabal; (v. 20.) but with all possible expressions of complaisance and respect she humbly begs his favour, and solicits him to pass by the offence. Her demeanour was very submissive; *she bowed herself to the ground before David*, v. 23. and *fell at his feet*, v. 24. Yielding pacifies great offences. She puts herself into the place and posture of a penitent, and of a petitioner, and was not ashamed to do it, when it was for the good of her house, in the sight both of her own servants, and of David's soldiers. She humbly begs of David that he will give her the hearing; *Let thy handmaid speak in thy audience*. But she needed not thus to bespeak his attention and patience; what she said was sufficient to command it; for certainly nothing could be more fine or more moving. No topic of argument is left untouched, every thing is well placed, and well expressed, most pertinently and pathetically urged and improved to the best advantage, with such a force of natural rhetoric as cannot easily be paralleled.

1. She speaks to him all along with the deference and respect due to so great and good a man; calls him *My lord* over and over, to expiate her husband's crime in saying, "Who is David?" She does not upbraid him with the heat of his passion, though he deserved to be reproved for it; nor does she tell him how ill it became his character: but endeavours

to soften him, and bring him to a better temper; not doubting but that then his own conscience would upbraid him with it.

2. She takes the blame of the ill treatment of his messengers upon herself; "*Upon me, my lord, upon me, let this iniquity be, v. 24.* If thou wilt be angry, be angry with me, rather than with my poor husband, and look upon it as *the trespass of thy handmaid,*" v. 28. Sordid spirits care not how much others suffer for their faults, while generous spirits can be content to suffer for the faults of others. Abigail here discovered the sincerity and strength of her conjugal affection, and concern for her family: whatever Nabal was, he was her husband.

3. She excuses her husband's fault by imputing it to his natural weakness and want of understanding; (v. 23.) "*Let not my lord take notice of his rudeness and ill manners, for it is like him; it is not the first time that he has behaved so churlishly: he must be borne with, for it was for want of wit; Nabal is his name,*" (which signifies *a fool*, "and folly is with him." It was owing to his folly, not his malice. He is simple, but not spiteful. Forgive him, for he knows not what he does." What she said, was too true, and she said it to excuse his fault and prevent his ruin, else she had not done well to give such a bad character as this of her own husband, whom she ought to make the best of, and not to speak ill of.

4. She pleads her own ignorance of the matter; "*I saw not the young men*, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand:" intimating hereby, that though her husband was foolish, and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her, and take her advice.

5. She takes it for granted that she had gained the point already, perhaps, perceiving by David's countenance, that he began to change his mind; (v. 26.) "*Seeing the Lord hath withholden thee.* She depends not upon her own reasonings, but God's grace, to mollify him, and doubts not but that grace would work powerfully upon him; and then, "*Let all thine enemies be as Nabal;* that is, if thou forbear to avenge thyself, no doubt, God will avenge thee on him, as he will on all other thine enemies." Or it intimates that it was below him to take vengeance on so weak and impotent an enemy as Nabal was, who, as he *would* do him no kindness, so he *could* do him no hurt, for he needed to wish no more concerning his enemies, than that they might be as unable to resist him as Nabal was. Perhaps she refers to his sparing of Saul, when, but the other day, he had him at his mercy. "Didst thou forbear to avenge thyself on that lion that would devour thee, and wilt thou shed the blood of this dog that can but bark at thee?" The very mentioning of what he was about to do, to shed blood, and to avenge himself, was enough to work upon such a tender gracious spirit as David had; and it should seem, by his reply, (v. 33.) that it affected him.

6. She makes a tender of the present she had brought, but speaks of it as unworthy of David's acceptance; and therefore desires it might be given to the *young men that followed him*, (v. 27.) and particularly to those ten that were his messengers to Nabal, whom he had treated so rudely.

7. She applauds David for the good services he had done against the common enemies of his country, the glory of which great achievements, she hoped, he would not stain by any personal revenge. "*My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord* against the Philistines, and therefore he will leave it to God to fight his battles against those that affront him. "*Evil hath not been found in thee all thy days,* (v. 28.) thou never yet didst wrong to any of thy

countrymen, (though persecuted as a traitor,) and therefore thou wilt not begin now, nor do a thing which Saul will improve for the justifying of his malice against thee."

8. She foretells the glorious issue of his present troubles. "It is true, *a man pursues thee, and seeks thy life;*" (she names not Saul, out of respect to his present character as a king;) "but thou needest not look with so sharp and jealous an eye upon every one that affronts thee; for all these storms that now ruffle thee, will be blown over shortly." She speaks it with assurance, (1.) That God would keep him safe; "*The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God;* that is, God shall *hold thy soul in life*, (as the expression is, Ps. 66. 9.) as we hold these things tight which are bundled up, or which are precious to us, (Ps. 116. 15.) Thy soul shall be *treasured up in the treasure of lives*, so the Chaldee, under lock and key, as our treasure is, "Thou shalt abide under the special protection of the Divine Providence." The *bundle of life is with the Lord our God*, for in his hand our breath is, and our times. Those are safe, and may be easy, that have him for their Protector. The Jews understand this, not only of the *life that now is*, but of that *which is to come*, even the happiness of separate souls, and therefore use it commonly as an inscription on their grave-stones. "Here we have laid the body, but trusting that *the soul is bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God.*" There it is safe, while the dust of the body is scattered. (2.) That God would make him victorious over his enemies. Their souls he shall *sling out*, v. 29. The stone is bound up in the sling, but it is in order to be thrown out again: so the souls of the godly shall be bundled as corn for the barn, but the souls of the wicked as tares for the fire. (3.) That God would settle him in wealth and power; "*The Lord will certainly make my lord a sure house*, and no enemy thou hast can hinder it; therefore *forgive this trespass;*" that is, "show mercy as thouapest to find mercy. God will make thee great, and it is the glory of great men to pass by offences."

9. She desires him to consider how much more comfortable it would be to him in the reflection to have forgiven this affront than to have revenged it, v. 30, 31. She reserves this argument for the last, and a very powerful one with so good a man: That the less he indulged his passion, the more he consulted his peace and the repose of his own conscience, which every wise man will be tender of. (1.) She cannot but think, that if he should avenge himself, it would afterward be a grief, and an offence of heart to him. Many have done that in a heat, which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetness of revenge is soon turned into bitterness. (2.) She is confident that if he pass by the offence, it will afterward be no grief to him; but, on the contrary, it would yield him unspeakable satisfaction that his wisdom and grace had got the better of his passion. Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider how it will appear in the reflection. Let us never do any thing for which our own conscience will afterward have occasion to upbraid us, and which we shall look back upon with regret. *My heart shall not reproach me.*

Lastly, She recommends herself to his favour; "*When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid*, as one that kept thee from doing that which would have disgraced thine honour, disquieted thy conscience, and made a blot in thine history." We have reason to remember those with respect and gratitude, who have been instrumental to keep us from sin.

32. And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: 33. And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 34. For in very deed, *as* the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened, and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any that pisseth against the wall. 35. So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house: see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

*As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprovener upon an obedient ear,* Prov. 25. 12. Abigail was a wise reprovener of David's passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof, according to his own principle, (Ps. 141, 5.) *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* Never was such an admonition either better given, or better taken.

1. David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check in a sinful way; (*v.* 32.) *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me.* Note, (1.) God is to be acknowledged in all the kindnesses that our friends do us either for soul or body. Whoever meets us with counsel, direction, comfort, caution, or reasonable reproof, we must see God sending them. (2.) We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are means of preventing sin.

2. He gives Abigail thanks for interposing so opportunely between him and the mischief he was about to do; *Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, v.* 33. Most people think it enough, if they take a reproof patiently; but we meet with few that will take it thankfully, and will commend those that give it them, and accept it as a favour. Abigail did not rejoice more that she had been instrumental to save her husband and family from death, than David rejoiced that she had been instrumental to save him and his men from sin.

3. He seems very apprehensive of the great danger he was in, which magnified the mercy of his deliverance. (1.) He speaks of the sin as very great. He was coming to shed blood, a sin which he had, prevailingly, a great horror of; witness his prayer, *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness:* he was coming to *avenge himself with his own hand*, and that is stepping into the throne of God, who has said, *Vengeance is mine I will repay.* The more heinous any sin is, the greater mercy it is to be kept from it. He seems to aggravate the evil of his design with this, that it would have been an injury to so wise and good a woman, as Abigail; God has *kept me back from hurting thee, v.* 34. Or, perhaps, at the first sight of Abigail, he was conscious of a thought to do her a mischief for offering to oppose him; and therefore reckons it a great mercy that God gave him patience to hear her speak. (2.) He speaks of the danger of his falling into it, as very imminent; "*Except thou hadst hastened, the bloody execution had been done.*" The nearer we were to the commission of sin, the greater was the mercy of a seasonable restraint: *Almost gone,* (Ps. 73. 2.) and yet upheld.

4. He dismissed her with an answer of peace, *v.*

35. He does, in effect, own himself overcome by her eloquence; "*I have hearkened to thy voice,* and will not prosecute the intended revenge, for *I have accepted thy person;* am well pleased with thee, and what thou hast said." Note, (1.) Wise and good men will hear reason, and let that rule them, though it come from those that are every way their inferiors, and though their passions are up, and their spirits provoked. (2.) Oaths cannot bind us to that which is sinful. David had solemnly vowed the death of Nabal; he did ill to make such a vow, but he had done worse if he had performed it. (3.) A wise and faithful reproof is often better taken, and speeds better than we expected: such is the hold God has of men's consciences. See Prov. 28. 23.

36. And Abigail came to Nabal: and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart *was* merry within him, for he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. 37. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as* a stone. 38. And it came to pass, about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died. 39. And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee to take thee to him to wife. 41. And she arose, and bowed herself on *her* face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let* thine handmaid *be* a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. 42. And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43. David also took Abinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. 44. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which *was* of Gallim.

We are now to attend Nabal's funeral, and Abigail's wedding.

I. Nabal's funeral. The apostle speaks of some that were *twice dead*, Jude 12. We have here Nabal *thrice* dead, though but just now wonderfully rescued from the sword of David, and delivered from so great a death; for the preservations of wicked men, are but reservations for some further sorer strokes of divine wrath. Here is,

1. *Nabal dead drunk, v.* 36. Abigail came home, and, it should seem, he had so many people, and so much plenty about him, that he neither missed her, nor the provisions she took to David; but she found him in the midst of his jollity, little thinking how

near he was to ruin, by one whom he had foolishly made his enemy. Sinners are often most secure, when they are most in danger, and destruction is at the door. Observe, (1.) How extravagant he was in the entertainment of his company; *He held a feast like the feast of a king*, so magnificent and abundant, though his guests were but his sheep-shearers. This abundance might have been allowed, if he had considered what God gave him his estate for, not to *look great* with, but to *do good* with. It is very common for those that are most niggardly in any act of piety or charity, to be most profuse in gratifying a vain humour or a base lust. A mite is grudged to God and his poor; but, to make a *fair show in the flesh, gold is lavished out of the bag*. If Nabal had not answered to his name, he would never have been thus secure and jovial, till he had inquired whether he was safe from David's resentments; but (as Bishop Hall observes) thus foolish are carnal men, that give themselves over to their pleasures, before they have taken any care to make their peace with God. (2.) How sottish he was in the indulgence of his own brutish appetite; *He was very drunk*. A sign he was *Nabal, a fool*, that could not *use* his plenty without *abusing* it; could not be present with his friends without making a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that man has but little wisdom, nor a surer way to ruin the little he has, than drinking to excess. Nabal, that never thought he could bestow too little in charity, never thought he could bestow too much in luxury. Abigail finding him in this condition, (and probably, those about him little better, when the master of the feast set them so bad an example,) she had enough to do to set the disordered house to rights a little, but told Nabal nothing of what she had done with reference to David, nothing of his folly in provoking David, of his danger or of his deliverance; for, being drunk, he was as incapable to hear reason, as he was to speak it. To give good advice to those that are in drink, is to *cast pearls before swine*; it is better to stay till they are sober.

2. Nabal dead with melancholy, *v. 37*. Next morning, when he was come to himself a little, his wife told him how near to destruction he had brought himself and his family, by his own rudeness: and with what difficulty she had interposed to prevent it; and, upon this, *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone*. Some suggest, that the expense of the satisfaction made to David, by the present Abigail brought him, broke his heart: it seems rather, that the apprehension he now had of the danger he had narrowly escaped, put him into a consternation, and seized his spirits, so that he could not recover it. He grew sullen, and said little, ashamed of his own folly, and put out of countenance by his wife's wisdom. How is he changed! His heart over-night merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; so deceitful are carnal pleasures; so transient the laughter of the fool; *the end of that mirth is heaviness*. Drunkards are sometimes sad, when they reflect upon their own folly. Joy in God makes the heart always light. Abigail could never, by her wise reasonings, bring Nabal to repentance; but now, by her faithful reproof, she brings him to despair.

3. Nabal, at last, dead indeed. *About ten days after*, when he had been kept so long under this pressure and pain, *the Lord smote him that he died*; (*v. 38.*), and, it should seem, he never held up his head. It is just with God, (says Bishop Hall,) that they who live without grace, should die without comfort; nor can we expect better, while we go on in our sins. Here is no lamentation made for Nabal; he departed without being lamented; every one signified that the country would be well off, if it never sustained a greater loss. *David* when he heard

the news of his death, *gave God thanks* for it, *v. 39*. He blessed God, (1.) That he had kept him from killing him; *Blessed be the Lord, who hath kept his servant from evil*. He rejoices that Nabal died a natural death, and not by his hand. We should take all occasions to mention and magnify God's goodness to us, in keeping us from sin. (2.) That he had taken the work into his own hands, and had vindicated David's honour, and not suffered him to go unpunished, who had been abusive to him: hereby his interest would be confirmed, and all would stand in awe of him, as one for whom God fought. (3.) That he had thereby encouraged him, and all others, to commit their cause to God, when they are any way injured, with an assurance that, in his own time, he will right them, if they sit still, and leave it to him.

II. Abigail's wedding. David was so charmed with the beauty of her person, and the uncommon prudence of her conduct and address, that, as soon as was proper, after he heard she was a widow, he informed her of his attachment to her, (*v. 39.*) not doubting, but that she who approved herself so good a wife to so bad a husband as Nabal was, would much more make him a good wife; and, having taken notice of her respect to him, and her confidence of his coming to the throne, 1. He solicited by proxy, his affairs, perhaps, not permitting him to come himself. 2. She received the address with great modesty and humility, (*v. 41.*) reckoning herself unworthy of the honour, yet having such a respect for him, that she would gladly be one of the poorest servants in his family, to wash the feet of the other servants. None so fit to be preferred as those that can thus humble themselves. 3. She agreed to the proposal, went with his messengers, took a retinue with her agreeable to her quality, and *she became his wife*, *v. 42*. She did not upbraid him with his present distresses, and ask him how he could maintain her, but valued him, (1.) Because she knew he was a *very good* man. (2.) Because she believed he would, in due time, be a *very great* man; she married him in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet God's promise to him would at length be fulfilled. Thus they who join themselves to Christ, must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him.

*Lastly*, On this occasion, we have some account of David's wives. 1. One that he had lost before he married Abigail; Michal, Saul's daughter, his first, and the wife of his youth, to whom he would have been constant, if she would have been so to him; but Saul had given her to another, (*v. 44.*) in token of his displeasure against him, and disclaiming the relation of a father-in-law to him. 2. Another that he married beside Abigail, (*v. 43.*) and, as should seem, before her, for she is named first, *ch. 27. 3*. David was carried away by the corrupt custom of those times; but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it so now that Messias is come, and the times of reformation, *Matth. 19. 4, 5*. Perhaps Saul's defrauding David of his only rightful wife, was the occasion of his running into this irregularity; for when the knot of conjugal affection is once loosed, it is scarcely ever tied fast again. When David could not keep his first wife, he thought that would excuse him, if he did not keep to his second. But we deceive ourselves, if we think to make another's faults a cloak for our own.

## CHAP. XXVI.

David's troubles from Saul here begin again, and the clouds return after the rain, when one would have hoped the storm had blown over, and the sky had cleared up on that

side: but, after Saul had owned his fault in persecuting David, and David's title to the crown, yet here he revives the persecution; so perfectly lost was he to all sense of honour and virtue. I. The Ziphites informed him where David was, (v. 1.) and, thereupon, he marches out with a considerable force in quest of him, v. 2, 3. II. David gained intelligence of his motions, (v. 4.) and took a view of the camp, v. 5. III. He and one of his men ventured into his camp in the night, and found him and all his guards fast asleep, v. 6, 7. IV. David, though much urged to it by his companions, would not take away Saul's life; but only carried off his spear and his cruse of water, v. 8., 12. V. He produced those as a further witness for him, that he did not design any ill to Saul, and reasoned with him upon it, v. 13., 20. VI. Saul was hereby convinced of his error, and once more let fall the persecution, v. 21., 25. The story is much like that which we had, ch. 24. In both, David is delivered out of Saul's hand, and Saul out of David's.

1. **AND** the Ziphites came unto Saul to a Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, *which is before Jeshimon?* 2. Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3. And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah *which is before Jeshimon*, by the way: but David abode in the wilderness; and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 4. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. 5. And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched: and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host: and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

Here, I. Saul gets information of David's motions, and acts offensively. The Ziphites came to him, and told him where David now was; in the same place where he was when they formerly betrayed him, *ch. 23. 19.* Perhaps, (though it is not mentioned,) Saul had given them intimation, underhand, that he continued his design against David, and would be glad of their assistance: if not, they were very officious to Saul, aware of what would please him, and very malicious against David, to whom they despaired of ever reconciling themselves, and therefore they stirred up Saul (who needed no such spur) against him, v. 1. For aught we know, Saul would have continued in the same good mind that he was in, (*ch. 24. 17.*) and would not have given David this fresh trouble, if the Ziphites had not put him on. See what need we have to pray to God, that, since we have so much of the tinder of corruption in our own hearts, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from us, lest, if they come together, we be set on fire of hell. Saul readily caught at the information, and went down with an army of 3000 men, to the place where David hid himself, v. 2. How soon do unsanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them, and *return with the dog to their vomit!*

2. David gets information of Saul's motions, and acts defensively. He did not march out to meet and fight him; he sought only his own safety, not Saul's ruin; therefore he *abode in the wilderness*, (v. 3.) putting thereby a great force upon himself, and curbing the bravery of his own spirit by a silent retirement, showing more true valour than he could have done by an irregular resistance. (1.) He had

spies who ascertained him of Saul's descent; *that he was come in very deed; (v. 4.)* for he would not believe that Saul would have dealt so basely with him till he had the utmost evidence of it. (2.) He observed with his own eyes how Saul was encamped, v. 5. He came toward the place where Saul and his men had pitched their tents, so near as to be able, undiscovered, to take a view of their intrenchments, probably, in the dusk of the evening.

6. Then answered David, and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. 7. So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster; but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time. 9. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? 10. David said furthermore, *As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish.* 11. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that *is* at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. 12. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster; and they gat them away, and no man saw *it*, nor knew *it*, neither awaked; for they *were* all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

Here is,

I. David's bold adventure into Saul's camp in the night, accompanied only by his kinsman Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. He proposed it to him and to another of his confidants, (v. 6.) but the other declined it, either as too dangerous an enterprise, or, at least, was content that Abishai, who was forward to it, should run the risk of it rather than himself. Whether David was prompted to do this by his own courage, or by an extraordinary impression upon his spirits, or by the oracle, does not appear; but, like Gideon, he ventured through the guards, with a special assurance of divine protection.

II. The posture he found the camp in. *Saul lay sleeping in the trench*, or as some read it, *in his chariot*, and in the midst of his carriages, with his *spear stuck in the ground* by him, to be ready if his quarters should be beaten up, (v. 7.) and all the soldiers, even those that were appointed to stand sentinel, were *fast asleep*, v. 12. Thus were their eyes closed and their hands bound, for a *deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them*; something extraordinary there was in it, that they should all be asleep together, and so fast asleep, that David

and Abishai walked and talked among them, and yet none of them stirred. Sleep, when God gives it his beloved, is their rest and refreshment; but he can, when he pleases, make it to his enemies their imprisonment. Thus are the *stout hearted spoiled; they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands, at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob*, Ps. 76. 5, 6. *It was a deep sleep from the Lord*, who has the command of the powers of nature, and makes them to serve his purposes as he pleases. When God will disable or destroy, he binds up with a *spirit of slumber*, R. m. 11. 8. How helpless do Saul and all his forces lie! All, in effect, disarmed and chained, and yet nothing is done to them; they are only rocked asleep. How easily can God weaken the strongest, befoul the wisest, and baffle the most watchful! Let all his friends therefore trust him, and all his enemies fear him.

III. Abishai's request to David for a commission to despatch Saul with the spear that stuck at his bolster, which (now that he lay so fair,) he undertook to do at one blow, v. 8. He would not urge David to kill him himself, because he had declined before, when he had a like opportunity; but he begged earnestly that he would give him leave to do it, pleading that he was his enemy, not only cruel and implacable, but false and perfidious, whom no reason would rule, nor kindness work upon, and that *God had now delivered him into his hand*, and did, in effect, bid him strike. The last adventure he had of this kind, was indeed but accidental, when Saul happened to enter the cave with him at the same time; but in this there was something extraordinary: the deep sleep that was fallen on Saul, and all his guards, was manifestly from the Lord, so that it was a special providence which gave him this opportunity; he ought not therefore to let it slip.

IV. David's generous refusal to suffer any harm to be done to Saul, and in it, a resolute adherence to his principles of loyalty, v. 9. David charged Abishai not to destroy him; would not only not do it himself, but not permit another to do it. And he gave two reasons for it. 1. It would be a sinful affront to God's ordinance. Saul was the Lord's anointed king of Israel, by the special appointment and nomination of the God of Israel; the power that was; and to resist him was to *resist the ordinance of God*, Rom. 13. 2. No man could do it and be guiltless; the thing he feared, was guilt, and his concern respected his innocence more than his safety. 2. It would be a sinful anticipation of God's providence; God had sufficiently showed him, in Nabal's case, that, if he left it to him to do him right, he would do it in due time. Encouraged therefore by his experience, in that instance, he resolves to wait till God shall think fit to avenge him on Saul, and he will by no means *avenge himself*; (v. 10.) *The Lord shall smite him*, as he did Nabal, with some sudden stroke, or he shall *die in battle*, (as it proved he did soon after,) or, however, *his day shall come to die a natural death*, and David will contentedly wait till then, rather than force his way to the promised crown by any indirect methods. The temptation indeed was very strong; but if he yield, he sins against God, and therefore he resists the temptation with the utmost resolution; (v. 11.) *"The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed; no, I will never do it, nor suffer it to be done."* Thus bravely does he prefer his conscience to his interest, and trust God with the issue.

V. The improvement he made of this opportunity, for the further evidence of his own integrity. He and Abishai carried away the spear and cruse of water which Saul had by his bed-side, (v. 12.)

and, which was very strange, none of all the guards were aware of them: if a physician had given them the strongest opiate or stupefying dose, they could not have been faster locked up with sleep. Saul's spear which he had by him for defence, and his cup of water which he had for his refreshment, were both stolen from him while he slept. Thus do we lose our strength and our comfort, when we are careless and secure, and off our watch.

13. Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of a hill afar off, (a great space *being* between them;) 14. And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, *Who art thou that criest to the king?* 15. And David said to Abner, *Art not thou a valiant man?* and *who is like to thee in Israel?* wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. 16. This thing *is* not good that thou hast done. *As the Lord liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed.* And now see where the king's spear *is*, and the cruse of water that *was* at his bolster. 17. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And David said, *It is my voice, my lord, O king.* 18. And he said, *Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant?* for what have I done? or what evil *is* in mine hand? 19. Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the Lord have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if *they be* the children of men, cursed *be* they before the Lord; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods. 20. Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the Lord: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

David being got safe from Saul's camp himself, and having brought with him proofs sufficient that he had been there, posts himself conveniently, so that they might hear him, and yet not reach him, (v. 13.) and then begins to reason with them upon what had passed.

1. He reasons ironically with Abner, and keenly banters him. David knew well that it was from the mighty power of God, that Abner and the rest of the guards were cast into so deep a sleep, and that God's immediate hand was in it. But he reproaches Abner, as unworthy to be captain of the life-guards, who could sleep, when the king his master lay so much exposed. By *this* it appears that the hand of God locked them up in this deep sleep, that, as soon as ever David was got out of danger, a very little thing awakened them, even David's voice at a great distance roused them, v. 14. Abner got up, (we may suppose it early in a summer's morning,) and asked who called and dis-



turbed the king's repose. "It is I," says David; and then he upbraids him with his sleeping, when he should have been upon his guard. Perhaps Abner, looking upon David as a despicable enemy, and one that there was no danger from, had neglected to set a watch; however, he himself ought to have been more wakeful. David, to put him in confusion, tells him, 1. That he had lost his honour; (v. 15.) "*Art not thou a man?*" so the word is; "a man in office, that art bound by the duty of thy place, to inspect the soldiery? Art not thou in reputation for a valiant man? So thou wouldest be esteemed; a man of such courage and conduct, that there is none like thee; but now thou art shamed for ever. A sluggard call himself a general!" 2. That he had deserved to lose his head; (v. 16.) "*Ye are all worthy to die*, by martial law, for being off your guard, when you had the king himself asleep in the midst of you. *Ecce signum—Behold this token.* See where the king's spear is, in the hand of him whom the king himself is pleased to count his enemy. They that took away this, might as easily and safely have taken away his life. Now see who are the king's best friends; you that neglected him and left him exposed, or I that protected him, when he was exposed. You pursue me as worthy to die, and irritate Saul against me; but who is worthy to die now?" Nete, Sometimes those that unjustly condemn others, are justly left to fall into condemnation themselves.

II. He reasons seriously and affectionately with Saul. By this time he was so well awakened as to hear what was said, and discern who said it; v. 17. *Is this thy voice, my son David?* In the same manner he had expressed his relents, ch. 24. 16. He had given his wife to another, and yet calls him *son*; thirsted after his blood, and yet is glad to hear his voice. Those are bad indeed that have never any convictions of good, nor any good impressions. And now David has as fair an opportunity of reaching Saul's conscience, as he had just now of taking away his life; *this* he lays hold on, though he had refused the other; and enters into a close argument with him, concerning the trouble he still continued to give him, endeavouring to persuade him to let fall the persecution, and be reconciled.

1. He complains of the very melancholy condition he was brought into by the enmity of Saul against him. Two things he laments; (1.) That he was driven from his master, and from his business; "*My Lord pursues after his servant*, v. 18. How gladly would I serve thee as formerly, if my service might be accepted; but, instead of being owned as a servant, I am pursued as a rebel, and my lord is my enemy, and he compels me to flee from him, whom I would follow with respect." (2.) That he was driven from his God and from his religion; and this was a much greater grievance than the former; (v. 19.) "*They have driven me out from the inheritance of the Lord*; have made Canaan, at least the inhabited parts of it, a dangerous abode, and have forced me into the deserts and mountains, and will, ere long, oblige me to quit the country." And that which troubled him, was, not so much that he was driven out from his own inheritance, as that he was driven out from the *inheritance of the Lord*, the holy land. It should be more comfortable to us to think of God's title to our estates, and his interest in them, than of our own; and that with them we may honour him, than that with them we may maintain ourselves. Nor was it so much his trouble, that he was constrained to live among strangers, as that he was constrained to live among the worshippers of strange gods, and was thereby thrust into temptation to join with them in their idolatrous worship. His enemies did, in effect send him to *go serve other gods*; and perhaps he had heard that some of them had spoken to that purport of him.

They that forbid our attendance on God's ordinances, do what in them lies to estrange us from God, and to make us heathens. If David had not been a man of extraordinary grace, and firmness to his religion, the ill usage he met with from his own prince and people, who were Israelites, and worshippers of the true God, would have prejudiced him against the religion they professed, and have driven him to communicate with idolaters. "If these be Israelites," he might have said, "let me live and die with Philistines;" and no thanks to them that it had not that effect. We are to reckon that the greatest injury that can be done us, which exposes us to sin. Of those who thus led David into temptation, he here says, *Cursed be they before the Lord*. Those fall under a curse, that thrust out those whom God receives, and endeavour to send those to the Devil, who are dear to God.

2. He insists upon his own innocence; *What have I done, or what evil is in mine hand?* v. 18. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had never done, nor ever designed, any mischief to the person, honour, or government, of his prince, nor to any of the interests of his country: he had lately had Saul's own testimony concerning him, ch. 24. 17, *Thou art more righteous than I*. It was very unreasonable and wicked for Saul to pursue him as a criminal, when he could not charge him with any crime.

3. He endeavours to convince Saul that his pursuit of him was not only wrong, but mean, and much below him; "*The king of Israel*, whose dignity is great, and who has so much other work to do, *is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains*," v. 20. A poor game for the king of Israel to pursue. He compares himself to a partridge, a very innocent harmless bird, which, when attempts are made upon its life, flies if it can, but makes no resistance. And would Saul bring the flower of his army into the field, only to hunt one poor partridge? What a disparagement was this to his honour! What a stain would it be on his memory! To trample upon so weak and patient, as well as so innocent, an enemy; (James 5. 6.) *Ye have killed the just, and he doth not resist you*.

4. He desires that the core of the controversy might be searched into, and some proper method taken to bring it to an end, v. 19. Saul himself could not say that justice put him on thus to persecute David, or that he was obliged to do it for the public safety. David was not willing to say (though it was very true) that Saul's own envy and malice put him on to do it; and therefore he concludes it must be attributed either to the righteous judgment of God, or to the unrighteous designs of evil men. Now, (1.) "*If the Lord have stirred thee up against me*, either in displeasure to me, (taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, though, as to thee, I am guiltless,) or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee, *let him accept an offering* from us both; let us join in making our peace with God, and reconciling ourselves to him, which may be done, by sacrifice; and then I hope the sin will be pardoned, whatever it is, and the trouble, which is so great a vexation both to thee and me, will come to an end." See the right method of peace-making: let us first make God our Friend by Christ the great Sacrifice, and then all other enmities shall be slain, Eph. 2. 16. Prov. 16. 7. But, (2.) "*If thou art put upon it by wicked men, that incense thee against me, cursed be they before the Lord*;" that is, they are wicked people, and it is fit that they should be abandoned as such, and excluded from the king's court and councils. He decently lays the blame upon the evil counsellors who advised the king to that which

was dishonourable and dishonest, and insists upon it, that they be removed from about him, and forbid-den his presence, as men cursed before the Lord, and then he hoped he should gain his petition, which is, (v. 20.) "*Let not my blood fall to the earth, as thou threatenest, for it is before the face of the Lord, who will take cognizance of the wrong, and avenge it.*" Thus pathetically does David plead with Saul for his life, and, in order to that, for his favourable opinion of him.

21. Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. 22. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. 23. The LORD render to every man his righteousness, and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to-day; but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed. 24. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. 25. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Here is,

I. Saul's penitent confession of his fault and folly in persecuting David, and his promise to do so no more. This second instance of David's respect to him wrought more upon him than the former, and extorted from him better acknowledgments, v. 21. 1. He owns himself melted and quite overcome by David's kindness to him; "*My soul was precious in thine eyes this day*, which, I thought, had been odious." 2. He acknowledges he had done very ill to persecute him: that he had therein acted against God's law, *I have sinned*; and against his own interest, "*I have played the fool*, in pursuing him as an enemy who would have been one of my best friends, if I could but have thought so; herein (says he) I have *erred exceedingly*, and wronged both thee and myself." Note, Those that sin, play the fool, and err exceedingly; those especially that hate and persecute God's people, Job 19. 28. 3. He invites him to court again; *Return, my son David*. Those that understand themselves, will see it their interest to have those about them, that *behave themselves wisely*, as David did, and have God with them. 4. He promises him that he would not persecute him as he had done, but protect him; *I will no more do thee harm*. We have reason to think, according to the mind he was now in, that he meant as he said, and yet neither his confession nor his promise of amendment came from a principle of true repentance.

II. David's improvement of Saul's convictions and confessions, and the evidence he had to produce of his own sincerity. He desired that one of the footmen might fetch the spear, (v. 22.) and then, v. 23. 1. He appeals to God as Judge of the controversy; *The Lord render to every man his righteousness*. David, by faith, is sure that he will do it, for he infallibly knows the true characters of all

persons and actions, and is inflexibly just to render to every man according to his work; and, by prayer, he desires he would do it, wherein he does, in effect, pray against Saul, who had dealt unrighteously and unfaithfully with him; *Give them according to their deeds*; (Ps. 28. 4.) but he principally intends it as a prayer for himself, that God would protect him in his righteousness and faithfulness, and reward him for it, since Saul so ill requited him. 2. He reminds Saul again of the proof which he had now given of his respect to him, from a principle of loyalty; *I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed*; intimating to Saul, that the anointing oil was his protection, for which he was indebted to the Lord, and ought to express his gratitude to him: had he been a common person, he would not have been so tender of him; and, perhaps, with this further suggestion, Saul knew, or had reason to think, that David was the Lord's anointed too, and therefore, by the same rule, Saul ought to be as tender of David's life as he had been of his. 3. Not relying much upon Saul's promises, he puts himself under God's protection, and begs his favour; (v. 24.) "*Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord*, how light soever thou makest of it." Thus he takes God to be his Paymaster for his kindness to Saul, which they may with a holy confidence do, *that do well and suffer for it*.

III. Saul's prediction of David's advancement. He commends him; (v. 25.) *Blessed be thou, my son David*. So strong was the conviction Saul was now under of David's honesty, and he was not ashamed to condemn himself and applaud David, even in the hearing of his own soldiers, who could not but blush to think that they were come out so furiously against a man, whom their master, when he meets, caresses thus. He foretells his victories, and his elevation at last; *Thou shalt do great things*. Note, Those who make conscience of doing that which is truly good, may come, by the divine assistance, to do that which is truly great. He adds, "*Thou shalt also still prevail*, more and more;" he means, against himself, but was loath to speak that out. The princely qualities which appeared in David, his generosity in sparing Saul, his military authority in reprimanding Abner for sleeping, his care of the public good, and the signal token of God's presence with him, convinced Saul that he would certainly be advanced to the throne at last, according to the prophecies concerning him.

Lastly, A palliative cure being thus made of the wound, they parted friends. Saul returned to Gibeath *re infecta*—without accomplishing his design, and ashamed of the expedition he had made; but David could not take his word so far as to return with him. Those that have once been false, are not easily trusted another time. Therefore *David went on his way*. And, after this parting, it does not appear that ever Saul and David saw one another again.

## CHAP. XXVII.

David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he had his faults, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition; witness the story of this chapter, in which, though, I. We find, to his praise, that he prudently took care of his own safety and his family's, (v. 2. . 4.) and valiantly fought Israel's battles against the Canaanites; (v. 8, 9.) yet, II. We find, to his dishonour, 1. That he began to despair of his deliverance, v. 1. 2. That he deserted his own country, and went to dwell in the land of the Philistines, v. 1, 5. . 7. 3. That he imposed upon Achish with an equivocation, if not a lie, concerning his expedition, v. 10. . 12.

1. **A**ND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that

I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. 2. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that *were* with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, *even* David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. 4. And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath; and he sought no more again for him. 5. And David said unto Achish, If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? 6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day. 7. And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines was a full year and four months.

Here is,

I. The prevalency of David's fear, which was the effect of the weakness of his faith; *v. 1.* *He said to his heart,* (so it may be read,) in his communings with it concerning his present condition, *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.* He represented to himself the restless rage and malice of Saul, who could not be wrought into a reconciliation; the treachery of his own countrymen, witness that of the Ziphites, once and again; he looked upon his own forces, and observed how few they were, and that no recruits had come in to him of a great while, nor could he perceive that he got any ground; and from hence, in a melancholy mood, he draws this dark conclusion, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.* But, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?* Was he not anointed to be king? Did not that simply give an assurance that he should be preserved to the kingdom? Though he had no reason to trust *Saul's* promises, had he not all the reason in the world to trust the promises of *God*? His experience of the particular care Providence took of him, ought to have encouraged him. He that has delivered, does and will. But unbelief is a sin that easily besets even good men. When *without* are *fightings*, *within* are *fears*, and it is a hard matter to get over them. *Lord, increase our faith!*

II. The resolution he came to hereupon. Now that Saul was, for this time, returned to his place, he determined to take this opportunity of retiring into the Philistines' country. Consulting his own heart only, and not the ephod or the prophet, he concludes, *There is nothing better for me, than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines.* Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience even of very good men. Now, 1. Saul was an enemy to himself and his kingdom, in driving him to this extremity. He weakened his own interest when he expelled from his service, and forced into the service of his enemies, so great a general as David was, and so brave a regiment as he had the command of. 2. David was no friend to himself in taking this course. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah;

(*ch. 22. 5.*) there God had wonderfully preserved him, and employed him sometimes for the good of his country; why then should he think of deserting his post? How could he expect the protection of the God of Israel, if he went out of the borders of the land of Israel? Can he expect to be safe among the Philistines, out of whose hands he had lately escaped so narrowly by feigning himself mad? Will he receive obligations from those now, whom he knows, when he comes to be king, he must not return kindness to, but be under an obligation to make war upon? He will hereby gratify his enemies, who bid him go serve other gods, that they might have wherewith to reproach him; and will very much weaken the hands of his friends, who would not have wherewith to answer that reproach. See what need we have to pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

III. The kind reception he had at Gath; Achish bade him welcome, partly out of generosity, being proud of entertaining so brave a man; partly out of policy, hoping to engage him for ever to his service, and that his example would invite many more to desert, and come over to him. No doubt he gave David a solemn promise of protection, which he could rely upon, when he could not trust Saul's promises. We may blush to think that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, who, if an Israelite indeed, would be without guile; and that the city of Gath should be a place of refuge for a good man when the cities of Israel refuse him a safe abode. David, 1. Brought his men with him, (*v. 2.*) that they might guard him, and might themselves be safe where he was; and to recommend himself the more to Achish, who hoped to have service out of him. 2. He brought his family with him, his *wives* and his *household*; so did all *his men*, *v. 2, 3.* Masters of families ought to take care of those that are committed to them, to protect and provide for those of their own house, and to *dwell with them as men of knowledge.*

IV. Saul's desisting from the further persecution of him; (*v. 4.*) *He sought no more again for him*; this intimates that, notwithstanding the professions of repentance he had lately made, if he had had David in his reach, he would have aimed another blow. But, because he dares not come where he is, he resolves to let him alone. Thus many seem to leave their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them, if they could. Saul sought no more for him, contenting himself with his banishment, since he could not have his blood; and hoping, it may be, (as he had done, *ch. 8. 25.*) that he would, some time or other, *fall by the hand of the Philistines*; and though he would rather have the pleasure of destroying him himself, yet if they do it, he will be satisfied, so that it be done effectually.

V. David's removal from Gath to Ziklag.

1. David's request for leave to remove, was prudent, and very modest, *v. 5.* (1.) It was really *prudent*. David knew what it was to be envied in the court of Saul, and had much more reason to fear in the court of Achish, and therefore declines preferment there, and wishes for a settlement in the country, where he might be private, more within himself, and less in other people's way. In a town of his own, he might have the more free exercise of his religion, and keep his men better to it, and not have his righteous soul vexed as it was at Gath, with the idolatries of the Philistines. (2.) As it was presented to Achish, it was very *modest*. He does not prescribe to him what place he should assign him, only begs it might be in some town in the country, where he pleased; beggars must not be choosers; but he gives this for a reason, *"If thy servant dwell in the royal city, to crowd*

thee, and disoblige those about thee?" Note, Those that would stand fast, must not covet to stand high; and humble souls aim not to dwell in royal cities.

2. The grant which Achish made him, upon that request, was very generous and kind; (*v. 6, 7.*) Achish gave him Ziklag. Hereby, (1.) Israel recovered their ancient right; for Ziklag was in the lot of the tribe of Judah, Josh. 15. 31. and afterward, out of that lot, was assigned, with some other cities, to Simeon, Josh. 19. 5. But either it was never subdued, or the Philistines had, in some struggle with Israel, made themselves masters of it. Perhaps they had got it unjustly, and Achish being a man of sense and honour, took this occasion to restore it. *The righteous God judgeth righteously.* (2.) David gained a commodious settlement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen, and whither they might resort to him, at the revolution that was now approaching. Though we do not find that he augmented his forces at all, while Saul lived, (*for ch. 30. 10. he had but his six hundred men,*) yet, immediately after Saul's death, that was the rendezvous of his friends. Nay, it should seem, while he kept himself close, because of Saul, multitudes resorted to him, at least, to assure him of their sincere intentions, 1 Chron. 12. 1-22. And this further advantage David gained, that Ziklag was annexed to the crown, at least the royalty of it pertained to the kings of Judah, ever after, *v. 6.* Note, There is nothing lost by humility and modesty, and a willingness to retire. Real advantages follow those that flee from imaginary honours. Here David continued for a full year and some days, even *four months*, as it may very well be read, (*v. 7.*) or some days above four months. The Seventy read it, *some months*; so long he waited for the set time of his accession to the throne; for *he that believeth, shall not make haste.*

8. And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those *nations* were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. 9. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive; and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. 10. And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. 11. And David saved neither man nor woman alive to bring *tidings* to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so *will be* his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

Here is an account of David's actions, while he was in the land of the Philistines; a fierce attack he made upon some remains of the devoted nations, his success in it, and the representation he gave of it to Achish.

1. We may acquit him of cruelty and injustice in this action, because these people whom he cut off, were such as Heaven had long since doomed to destruction, and he that did it, was one whom Heaven had ordained to dominion; so that the thing was very fit to be done, and he was very fit to do it. It was not for him that was anointed to fight the Lord's battles, to sit still in sloth, however he thought fit, in modesty, to retire. He desired to be safe from Saul, only that he might expose himself for Israel; he avenged an old quarrel that God had with these nations, and at the same time fetched in provisions for himself and his army, for by their swords they must live. The Amalekites were to be all cut off; probably the Geshurites and Gezrites were branches of Amalek: Saul was rejected for sparing them; David makes up the deficiency of his obedience before he succeeds him. He smote them, and *left none alive*, *v. 8, 9.* The service paid itself, for they carried off abundance of spoil, which served for the subsistence of David's forces.

2. Yet we cannot acquit him of dissimulation with Achish, in the account he gave him of this expedition.

(1.) David, it seems, was not willing that he should know the truth, and therefore spared none to carry tidings to Gath; (*v. 11.*) not because he was ashamed of what he had done as a bad thing, but because he was afraid, if the Philistines knew it, they would be apprehensive of danger to themselves or their allies, by harbouring him among them, and would expel him their coasts. It would be easy to conclude, *If so he did, so will be his manner*; and therefore he industriously conceals it from them, which, it seems, he could do, by putting them all to the sword; for none of their neighbours would inform against him, nor, perhaps, would soon come to the knowledge of what was done; intelligence not being so readily communicated then as now.

(2.) He hid it from Achish, with an equivocation not at all becoming his character. Being asked which way he had made his sally, he answered, *Against the south of Judah*, *v. 10.* It was true, he had invaded those countries that lay *south of Judah*, but he made Achish believe he had invaded those that lay *south in Judah*, the Ziphites, for example, that had once and again betrayed him; so Achish understood him, and from thence inferred that he *had made his people Israel to abhor him*, and so riveted himself in the interest of Achish. The fidelity of Achish to him, his good opinion of him, and the confidence he put in him, aggravate his sin in deceiving him thus; which with some other such instances, David seems penitently to reflect upon, when he prays, *Remove from me the way of lying.*

## CHAP. XXVIII.

Preparations are herein making for that war which will put an end to the life and reign of Saul, and so make way for David to the throne. In this war, 1. The Philistines are the aggressors, and Achish their king makes David his confidant, *v. 1, 2.* 2. The Israelites prepare to receive them, and Saul their king makes the Devil his privy-counsellor, and thereby fills the measure of his iniquity. Observe, 1. The despairing condition which Saul was in, *v. 3. 6.* 2. The application he made to a witch, to bring him up Samuel, *v. 7. 14.* 3. His discourse with the apparition, *v. 15. 19.* 4. The damp it struck upon him, *v. 21. 25.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass in those days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare, to fight with Israel. And Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2. And

David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. 3. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. 6. And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Here is,

I. The design of the Philistines against Israel; they resolve to *fight them*, *v. 1*. If the Israelites had not forsaken God, there had been no Philistines remaining to molest them; if Saul had not forsaken him, they had by this time been put out of all danger by them. The Philistines took an opportunity to make this attempt, when they had David among them, whom they feared more than Saul and all his forces.

II. The expectation Achish had of assistance from David in this war, and the encouragement David gave him to expect it; "*Thou shalt go with me to battle*," says Achish, "if I protect thee, I may demand service from thee;" and he will think himself happy, if he may have such a man as David on his side, who prospered whithersoever he went. David gave him an ambiguous answer, "We will see what will be done, it will be time enough to talk of that hereafter; but surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do;" (*v. 2*.) that is, "I will consider in what post I may be best able to serve thee, if thou wilt but give me leave to choose it." Thus he keeps himself free from a promise to serve him, and yet keeps up his expectation of it. For Achish took it in no other sense than as an engagement to assist him, and promised him, thereupon, that he would make him captain of the guards, protector, or prime minister of state.

III. The drawing of the armies, on both sides, into the field, *v. 4*, *The Philistines pitched in Shunem*, which was in the tribe of Issachar, a great way north from their country. The land of Israel, it seems, was ill guarded, when the Philistines could march their army into the very heart of the country. Saul, while he pursued David, left his people naked and exposed. On some of the adjacent mountains of Gilboa, Saul musters his forces and prepares to engage the Philistines, which he had little heart to do, now that the *Spirit of the Lord departed from him*.

IV. The terror Saul was in, and the loss he was at, upon this occasion. He saw the host of the Philistines, and by his own view of them, and the intelligence his spies brought him, he perceived they were more numerous, better armed, and in better heart, than his own were, which made him afraid, so that *his heart greatly trembled*, *v. 5*. Had he kept close to God, he needed not have been afraid at the sight of an army of Philistines; but now that he had provoked God to forsake him, his interest failed, his armies dwindled, and looked mean, and, which was worse, his spirits failed him, his heart

sunk within him. A guilty conscience made him tremble at the shaking of a leaf: now he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites, which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests, which he had spilt; his sins are set in order before his eyes, they put him into confusion, embarrass all his counsels, and rob him of his courage; so that there remained only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation. Note, Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience. In this distress, *Saul inquired of the Lord*, *v. 6*. Need drives those to God, who, in the day of their prosperity, slighted his oracles and alarms. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*, Isa. 26. 16. Did ever any seek the Lord, and not find him? Yes, Saul did; the Lord answered him not, took no notice either of his petitions or of his inquiries; gave him no directions what to do, or any encouragement to hope that he would be with him. *Should he be inquired of at all*, by such a one as Saul? Ezek. 14. 3. No, he could not expect an answer of peace, for, 1. He inquired in such a manner, that it was as if he had not inquired at all. Therefore it is said, (1 Chron. 10. 14.) *He inquired not of the Lord*, for he did it faintly, and coldly, and with a secret design, if God did not answer him, to consult the Devil. He did not inquire in faith, but with a double unstable mind. 2. He inquired of the Lord when it was too late, when the days of his probation were over, and he was finally rejected. *Seek the Lord while he may be found*, for there is a time when he will not be found. 3. He had forfeited the benefit of all the methods of inquiry. Could he that hated and persecuted Samuel and David, who were both prophets, expect to be answered by prophets? Or he that hath slain the High Priest, to be answered by Urim? Or he that had sinned away the Spirit of grace, to be answered by dreams? No, *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*.

V. The mention of some things, that had happened a good while ago, to introduce the following story, *v. 3*. 1. The death of Samuel. Samuel was dead, which made the Philistines the more bold, and Saul the more afraid; for had Samuel been alive, Saul would, probably, have thought that his presence and countenance, his good advice and good prayers, would have availed him in his distress. 2. Saul's edict against witchcraft. He had put the laws in execution against those that had familiar spirits, who must not be suffered to live, Exod. 22. 18. Some think that he did this in the beginning of his reign, while he was under Samuel's influence; others think that it was lately done, for it was spoken of here, *v. 9*, as a late edict. Perhaps, when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit, he suspected that he was bewitched, and, for that reason, cut off all that had familiar spirits. Many seem zealous against sin, when they themselves are any way hurt by it, (they will inform against swearers if they swear at them, or against drunkards, if, in their drink, they abuse them,) who otherwise have no concern for the glory of God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. However, it was commendable in Saul, thus to use his power for the terror and restraint of these evil doers. Note, Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul will drive the Devil out of his kingdom, and yet harbour him in his heart, by envy and malice.

7. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and inquire of her. And his servants said unto him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor. 8. And Saul disguised

himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me *him* up whom I shall name unto thee. 9. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10. And Saul sware to her by the LORD, saying, *As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing.* 11. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou *art* Saul. 13. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14. And he said unto her, What form *is* he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he *is* covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it *was* Samuel, and he stooped with *his* face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Here,

I. Saul seeks for a witch, *v. 7.* When God *answereth him not*, if he had humbled himself by repentance, and persevered in seeking God, who knows but at length he might have been entreated for him? But since he can discern no comfort, either from heaven or earth, (Isa. 8. 21, 22.) he resolves to knock at the gates of hell, and to see if any there will befriend him, and give him advice; *Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, v. 7.* And his servants were too officious to serve him in this bad affair; they presently recommended one to him at En-dor, (a city not far off,) who had escaped the execution of Saul's edict: to her he resolves to apply himself. Herein he is chargeable, 1. With contempt of the God of Israel; as if any creature could do him a kindness, when God had left him, and frowned upon him. 2. With contradiction to himself. He knew the heinousness of the sin of witchcraft, else he would not have cut off those that had familiar spirits; yet now he has recourse to that as an oracle, which he had before condemned as an abomination. It is common for men to inveigh severely against those sins which they are in no temptation to, but suffer themselves afterward to be overcome by them. Had one told Saul, when he was destroying the witches, that he himself would, ere long, consult with one, he would have said, as Hazeel did, *What! is thy servant a dog?* But who knows what mischiefs they will run into, that forsake God, and are forsaken of him?

II. Hearing of one, he hastens to her, but goes by night, and in disguise, only with two servants, and probably on foot, *v. 8.* See how those that are led captive by Satan, are forced, 1. To disparage themselves. Never did Saul look so mean as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune. 2. To dissemble. Evil works are works of darkness, and they hate the light, neither care for coming to

it. Saul went to the witch, not in his robes, but in the habit of a common soldier; not only lest the witch herself, if she had known him, should have declined to serve him, either fearing he came to trepan her, or resolving to be avenged on him for his edict against those of her profession, but lest his own people should know it, and abhor him for it. Such is the power of natural conscience, that even those who do evil, blush, and are ashamed to do it.

III. He tells her his errand, and promises her impunity. 1. All he desires of her is, to bring him up one from the dead, whom he had a mind to discourse with. It was necromancy, or divination by the dead, that he hoped to serve his purpose by; this was expressly forbidden by the law, (Deut. 18. 11.) seeking for the living to the dead, Isa. 8. 19. *Bring me up him whom I shall name, v. 8.* This supposes that it was generally taken for granted, that souls exist after death, and that, when men die, there is not an end of them: it supposes too that great knowledge was attributed to separate souls. But to think that any good souls should come up at the beck of an evil spirit, or that God, who had denied a man the benefit of his own institutions should suffer him to reap any real advantage by a cursed diabolical invention, was very absurd. 2. She signifies her fear of the law, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare: (*v. 9.*) *Thou knowest what Saul has done.* Providence ordered it so, that Saul should be told to his face, of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her price; for, though no mention is made of her fee, no doubt she demanded, and had, a large one. Observe how sensible she is of danger from the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against it; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations of God's law, and the terrors of his wrath. She considers what *Saul* had done, not what God had done, against such practices, and fears a snare laid for her life, more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men, than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promises with an oath not to betray her, *v. 10.* It was his duty, as a king, to punish her, and he knew it, yet he swears not to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from doing that, which, by the divine command, he was bound to do. But he promised more than he could perform, when he said, *There shall no punishment happen to thee;* for he could not secure himself, much less secure her, from divine vengeance.

IV. Samuel, who was lately dead, is the person whom Saul desired to have some talk with; and the witch, with her enchantments, gratifies his desire, and brings them together.

1. As soon as Saul had given the witch the assurance she desired, (that he would not discover her,) she applied herself to her witchcrafts, and asked very confidently, *Whom shall I bring up to thee?* *v. 11.* Note, Hopes of impunity embolden sinners in their evil ways, and harden their hearts.

2. Saul desires to speak with Samuel, *Bring me up Samuel.* Samuel had anointed him to the kingdom, and had formerly been his faithful friend and counsellor, and therefore with him he wished to advise. While Samuel was living at Ramah, not far from Gibeah of Saul, and presided there in the school of the prophets, we never read of Saul's going to him to advise with him in any of the difficulties he was in; (it had been well for him if he had;) then he slighted him, and perhaps hated him, looking upon him to be in David's interest: but now that he is dead, "O for Samuel again! By all means, *bring me up Samuel.*" Note, Many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when they



are living, would be glad to have them again, when they are gone. *Send Lazarus to me, and send Lazarus to my father's house*, Luke 16. 24-27. The sepulchres of the righteous are garnished.

3. Here is a seeming defect or chasm in the story: Saul said, *Bring me up Samuel*, and the very next words are, *When the woman saw Samuel*, v. 12. Whereas one would have expected to be told how she performed the operation, what spells and charms she used, or that some little intimation should be given of what she said or did: but the profound silence of the scripture concerning it, forbids our coveting to *know the depths of Satan*, (Rev. 2. 24.) or to have our curiosity gratified with an account of the mysteries of iniquity. It has been said of the books of some of the popish confessors, that, by their descriptions of sin, they have taught men to commit it; but the scripture conceals sinful art, that we may be *simple concerning evil*, Rom. 16. 19.

4. The witch, upon sight of the apparition, was aware that her client was Saul: her familiar spirit, it is likely, informing her of it, v. 12, "*Why hast thou deceived me with a disguise? for thou art Saul, the very man that I am afraid of above any man!*" Thus she gave Saul to understand the power of her art, in that she could discover him through his disguise; and yet she feared lest, hereafter, at least, he should take advantage against her for what she was now doing. Had she believed that it was really Samuel whom she saw, she would have had no reason to be afraid of him, who was a good prophet, than of Saul, who was a wicked king. But the wrath of earthly princes is feared by most, more than the wrath of the King of kings.

5. Saul (who, we may suppose, was kept at a distance in the next room) bade her not be afraid of him, but go on with the operation, and inquired *what she saw?* v. 13. *O*, says the woman, *I saw gods ascending out of the earth*: that is, a spirit: they called angels *gods*, because spiritual beings. Poor gods that ascend *out of the earth!* But she speaks the language of the heathen, who had their *infernal* deities, and had them in veneration. If Saul had thought it necessary to his conversation with Samuel, that the body of Samuel should be called out of the grave, he would have taken the witch with him to Ramah, where his sepulchre was; but the design was wholly upon his soul, which yet, if it became visible, was expected to appear in the usual resemblance of the body; and God permitted the Devil, to answer the design, to put on Samuel's shape, that they who would not *receive the love of the truth*, might be *given up to strong delusion, and believe a lie*. That it could not be the soul of Samuel himself, they might easily apprehend, when it *ascended out of the earth*; for the *spirit of a man*, much more of a good man, *goes upward*, Eccl. 3. 21. But if people will be deceived, it is just with God to say, "*Let them be deceived.*" That the Devil, by the divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel, is not strange, since he can *transform himself into an angel of light*: nor is it strange that he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion; that Saul might be driven to despair, by inquiring of the Devil, since he would not, in a right manner, inquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort. Saul, being told of gods ascending, was eager to know what was the form of this deity, and in what shape he appeared; so far was he from conceiving any horror at it, his heart being wretchedly *hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*. Saul, it seems, was not permitted to see any manner of similitude himself, but he must take the woman's word for it, that she saw an *old man covered with a mantle, or robe*, the habit of a judge, which Samuel had sometimes worn; and, some think, it was for the sake of that, and the majesty

of its aspect, that she called this apparition *Elohim*, a god, or gods; for so magistrates are styled, Ps. 92. 1.

6. Saul perceiving, by the woman's description, that it was Samuel, *stooped with his face to the ground*, either, as it is generally taken, in reverence to Samuel, though he saw him not, or perhaps to listen to that soft and muttering voice which he now expected to hear; for they that had familiar spirits, *feebled and muttered*; (Isa. 8. 19.) and, it should seem, Saul bowed himself, (probably by the witch's direction,) that he might hear what was whispered, and listen carefully to it; for the *voice of one that has a familiar spirit, is said to come out of the ground, and to whisper out of the dust*, Isa. 29. 4. He would stoop to that who would not stoop to the word of God.

15. And Samuel said to Saul, *Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?* And Saul answered, *I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do.* 16. Then said Samuel, *Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?* 17. And the LORD hath done to him, as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, *even to David*: 18. Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 19. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee into the hand of the Philistines; and to-morrow *shalt* thou and thy sons *be* with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

We have here the conference between Saul and Satan. Saul came in disguise, (v. 6.) but Satan soon discovered him, v. 12. Satan comes in disguise, in the disguise of Samuel's mantle, and Saul cannot discover him. Such is the disadvantage we labour under, in wrestling with the *rulers of the darkness of this world*, that they know us, while we are ignorant of their wiles and devices.

I. The spectre, or apparition, personating Samuel, asks why he is sent for, (v. 15.) *Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?* To us this discovers that it was an evil spirit that personated Samuel; for (as Bishop Patrick observes) it is not in the power of witches to disturb the rest of good men, and to bring them back into the world when they please: nor would the true Samuel have acknowledged such a power in magical arts: but to Saul this was a proper device of Satan's to draw veneration from him, to possess him with an opinion of the power of divination, and so to rivet him in the Devil's interests.

II. Saul makes his complaint to this counterfeit Samuel, mistaking him for the true; and a most doleful complaint it is: "*I am sore distressed, and know not what to do, for the Philistines make war against me*; yet I should do well enough with them,

if I had but the tokens of God's presence with me; but, alas! *God is departed from me.*" He complained not of God's withdrawals till he fell into trouble, till the *Philistines made war against him*, and then he begins to lament God's departure. He that in his prosperity inquired not after God, in his adversity thought it hard that God answered him not, nor took any notice of his inquiries, either by dreams or prophets; he neither gave answers immediately himself, nor sent them by any of his messengers. He does not, like a penitent, own the righteousness of God in this; but, like a man enraged, flies out against God as unkind, and flies off from him; *therefore I have called thee*: as if Samuel, a servant of God, would favour those whom God frowned upon; or as if a dead prophet could do him more service than the living ones. One would think, from this, that he really desired to meet with the Devil, and expected no other, (though under the covert of Samuel's name,) for he desires advice otherwise than from God, therefore from the Devil, that is, a rival with God. "*God denies me, therefore I come to thee.*" *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo—If I fail with Heaven, I will succeed with Hell.*

III. It is cold comfort which this evil spirit in Samuel's mantle gives to Saul, and is manifestly intended to drive him to despair and self-murder. Had it been the true Samuel, when Saul desired to be told what he should do, he would have bid him repent, and make his peace with God, and recall David from his banishment; and would then have told him, that he might hope in this way to find mercy with God: but, instead of that, he represents his case as helpless and hopeless, serving him as he did Judas, to whom he was first a tempter, and then a tormentor, persuading him first to sell his Master, and then to hang himself.

1. He upbraids him with his present distress; (v. 16.) he tells him, not only that God was departed from him, but that he was become his Enemy, and therefore he must expect no comfortable answer from him; "*Wherefore dost thou ask me? How can I be thy friend, when God is thine enemy; or thy counsellor, when he has left thee?*"

2. He upbraids him with the anointing of David to the kingdom, v. 17. He could not have touched upon a string that sounded more unpleasant in the ear of Saul than this. Nothing is said to reconcile him to David, but all tends rather to exasperate him against David, and widen the breach. Yet, to make him believe that he was Samuel, he says, it was what God spake by him. The Devil knows how to speak with an air of religion, and can teach *false apostles to transform themselves into the apostles of Christ*, and imitate their language. Those who use spells and charms, and plead, in defence of them, that they find nothing in them but what is good, may remember what good words the Devil here spoke, and yet with what a malicious design.

3. He upbraids him with his disobedience to the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, v. 18. Satan had helped him to palliate and excuse that sin, when Samuel was dealing with him to bring him to repentance; but now he aggravates it, to make him despair of God's mercy. See what they get, that hearken to Satan's temptations! He himself will be their accuser, and insult over them. And see whom they resemble, that allure others to that which is evil, and reproach them for it when they have done.

4. He foretells his approaching ruin, v. 19. (1.) That his army should be routed by the Philistines. This is twice mentioned; *The Lord shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines*. This he might foresee, by considering the superior strength and number of the Philistines, the weakness of the

armies of Israel, Saul's terror, and especially God's departure from them. Yet, to personate a prophet, he very gravely ascribes it once and again to God; *The Lord shall do it*. (2.) That he and his sons should be slain in the battle. *To-morrow*, that is, in a little time, (and supposing that it was now after midnight, I see not but it may be taken strictly for the very next day after that which was now begun,) *thou and thy sons shall be with me*; that is, in the state of the dead, separate from the body. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have foretold it, unless God had revealed it to him; and though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretell it; as we read of an evil spirit that foresaw Ahab's fall at Ramoth-Gilead, and was instrumental in it, (1 Kings 22. 20, &c.) as perhaps this evil spirit was, by the divine permission, in Saul's destruction. That evil spirit flattered Ahab, this frightened Saul, and both, that they might fall; so miserable are they that are under the power of Satan; for *whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest*, Prov. 29. 9.

20. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him; for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. 21. And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold, thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto thy words which thou spakest unto me. 22. Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way. 23. But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him; and he hearkened unto their voice. So he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24. And the woman had a fat calf in the house, and she hasted, and killed it, and took flour, and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof: 25. And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants; and they did eat. Then they rose up, and went away that night.

We are here told how Saul received this terrible message from the ghost he consulted. He desired to be told *what he should do*, (v. 15.) but it only told what he had not done, and what should be done to him. Those that expect any good counsel or comfort otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul here was. Observe,

1. How he sunk under the load, v. 20. He was indeed unfit to bear it, having *eaten nothing all the day before, nor that night*: he came fasting from the camp, and continued fasting; not for want of food, but for want of an appetite. The fear he was in of the power of the Philistines, (v. 5.) took away his appetite; or perhaps the struggle he had with his own conscience, after he had entertained the thought of consulting the witch, made him to nauseate even his necessary food, though ever so dainty. This made him an easy prey to this fresh ter-

ror, that now came upon him like an armed man. *He fell along on the earth*, as if the archers of the Philistines had already hit him, *and there was no strength in him* to bear up against these heavy tidings. Now he had enough of consulting witches, and found them miserable comforters. When God in his word speaks terror to sinners, he opens to them, at the same time, a door of hope, if they repent: but they that apply themselves to the gates of hell for succour, must there expect darkness without any glimpse of light.

II. With what difficulty he was persuaded to take so much relief as was necessary to carry him back to his post in the camp. The witch, it should seem, had left Saul alone with the spectre, to have his talk with him by himself: but, perhaps, hearing him fall and groan, and perceiving him to be in an agony, she came to him, (v. 21.) and was importunate with him to take some refreshment, that he might be able to get clear from her house, fearing that if he should be ill, especially if he should die there, she should be punished for it as a traitor, though she had escaped punishment as a witch. This, it is probable, rather than any sentiment of kindness, made her solicitous to help him. But what a deplorable condition had he brought himself to, when he needed so wretched a comforter!

1. She shows herself very importunate with him to take some refreshment; she pleads, (v. 21.) that she had obeyed his voice to the endangering of her life; and why therefore should not he hearken to her voice for the relieving of his life, v. 22. She had a fat calf at hand, (and the word signifies one that was made use of in treading out the corn, and therefore could the worse be spared,) this she prepares for his entertainment, v. 24. Josephus is large in applauding the extraordinary courtesy and liberality of this woman, and recommending it for an example of compassion to the distressed, and readiness to communicate for their relief, though we have no prospect of being recompensed for it.

2. He showed himself very averse to it; *He refused, and said, I will not eat*, (v. 23.) choosing rather to die obscurely by famine than honourably by the sword. Had he laboured only under a defect of animal spirits, food might help him; but, alas! his case was out of the reach of such succours. What are dainty meats to a wounded conscience? *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart*; so disagreeable and unwelcome.

3. The woman at length, with the help of his servants, over-persuaded him, against his inclination and resolution, to take some refreshment. Not by force, but by friendly advice, they *compelled him*; (v. 23.) and of no other than such a rational and courteous compulsion, are we to understand that in the parable, *Compel them to come in*, Luke 14. 23. *How forcibly are right words*, when men are pressed by them to that which is for their own interest! Job. 6. 25. Saul was somewhat revived with this entertainment; so that he and his servants, when they had eaten, *rose up and went away* before it was light, (v. 25.) that they might hasten to their business, and that they might not be seen to come out of such a scandalous house. Josephus here much admires the bravery and magnanimity of Saul, that though he was assured he should lose both his life and honour, yet he would not desert his army, but resolutely returned to the camp, and stood ready for an engagement. I wonder more at the hardness of his heart, that he did not again apply himself to God by repentance and prayer, in hopes yet to obtain, at least, a reprieve; but he desperately ran headlong upon his own ruin. Perhaps, indeed, now that rage and envy possessed him to the uttermost, he was the better reconciled to his hard fate, being told that his sons, and Jonathan among the rest, whom he

hated for his affection to David, should die with him. If he must fall, he cared not what desolations of his family and kingdom accompanied his fall, hoping it would be the worse for his successor, *ἐὰν θάνωτος γὰρ μὴ τίτα πυρί—I care not if, when I am dead, the world be set on fire.* He begged not, as David, “Let thy hand be against me, but not against thy people.”

## CHAP. XXIX.

How Saul, who was forsaken of God, when he was in a strait, was more and more perplexed and embarrassed with his own counsels, we read in the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we find how David, who kept close to God, when he was in a strait, was extricated and brought off by the providence of God, without any contrivance of his own. We have him, I. Marching with the Philistines, v. 1. 2. II. Excepted against by the lords of the Philistines, v. 3. . . 5. III. Happily dismissed by Achish, from the service which did so ill become him, and which yet he knew not how to decline, v. 6. . . 11.

1. **N**OW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. 2. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish. 3. Then said the princes of the Philistines, *What do these Hebrews here?* And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day?* 4. And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, *Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for where-with should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men?* 5. *Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?*

Here is,

I. The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of his asking advice from God, nor any project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, v. 1. Achish, who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself, and bring the forces he had, into his service. David came accordingly, and, upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rear, v. 2. Now, 1. If, when the armies engaged, he should retire and quit his post, he would fall under the indelible reproach, not only of cowardice and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor, and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an unprincipled thing as this, he could by no means persuade himself to do. 2. If he

should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God, and a traitor to his country; would make his own people hate him, and unaimously oppose his coming to the crown, as unworthy the name of an Israelite, much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, who had fought against them, under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was) in this engagement, the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him; so that on each side there seemed to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was to a good man, greater to see sin before him than to see trouble. Into this strait he brought himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised. It is strange, if those that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, come off without guilt, or grief, or both. What he himself proposed to do, does not appear. Perhaps he designed to act only as a keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him, (*ch.* 28. 2.) and not to do any thing offensively against Israel. But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin, and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because his heart was upright with him, he would *not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for him to escape*, 1 Cor. 10. 13.

II. A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait. God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed. Thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness. 1. It was a proper question which they asked, upon the mustering of the forces; "*What do these Hebrews here?*" v. 3. What confidence can we put in them? Or what service can we expect from them? *A Hebrew is out of his place*, and, if he have the spirit of *a Hebrew, is out of his element*, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be made uneasy there. David used to *hate the congregation of evil doers*, (Ps. 26. 5.) however he came now to be among them. 2. It was an honourable testimony which Achish, on this occasion, gave to David. He looked upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongful persecution in his own country, and had put himself under his protection, whom therefore he was obliged, in justice, to take care of, and thought he might in prudence employ; for (says he) he has been with me *these days, or these years*, that is, a considerable time, many days at his court, and a year or two in his country, and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think any other than that he was heartily come over to him. By this it appears, that David had conducted himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people. We have need to *walk in wisdom toward them that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked is before us*, and to be upon the reserve. 3. Yet the princes are peremptory in it, that he must be sent home; and they give good reasons for their insisting on it. (1.) Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; witness what was sung in honour of his triumphs over them, *Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands*, v. 5. "It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so noted a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought that he should now act heartily against Saul, who then acted so vigorously with him and for him." Who would be fond of popular praise and applause, when even that may,

another time, be turned against a man to his reproach? (2.) Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief than all Saul's army could, v. 4. "*He may in the battle be an adversary to us*, and surprise us with an attack in the rear, while their army charges us in the front; and we have reason to think he will do so, that, by betraying us, he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man, who, besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us?" It is dangerous to put confidence in a reconciled enemy.

6. Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host is good in my sight; for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless, the lords favour thee not. 7. Wherefore, now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines. 8. And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? 9. And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God: notwithstanding, the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. 10. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning, with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. 11. So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines: and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

If the reasons Achish had to trust David, were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered why they should distrust him, (as I do not see that, in policy, they were, for the princes were certainly in the right,) yet Achish was but one of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king; accordingly, in a council of war, held on this occasion, he was over-voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

1. The discharge Achish gives him, is very honourable, and not a final discharge, but only from the present service. (1.) He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him, and in his conversation. Thou art *good in my sight as an angel of God*, v. 9. Wise and good men will gain respect, wherever they go, from all that know how to make a right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish says of David, God, by the prophet, says of the house of David, (Zech. 12. 8.) that it shall be as the angel of the Lord. But the former is a court compliment; the latter is a divine promise. (2.) He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, v. 6. It is very full, and in obliging terms; "*Thou hast been upright*, and thy whole conduct has been *good in my sight, and I have not found evil in thee*." Saul would not have given him such a testimonial,

though he had done far more service to him than to Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so unoffensively, as, if possible, to get the good word of all they have dealings with: and it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well, to give them the praise of it. (3.) He lays all the blame of his dismissal upon the princes, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. "The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand; *but the lords favour thee not*, and we must not disoblige them, nor can we oppose them, therefore *return, and go in peace*." He had better part with his favourite, than occasion a disgust among his generals, and a mutiny in his army. He intimates a reason why they were uneasy; it was not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls *his master's servants*, namely, Saul's; (v. 10.) they could trust him, but not them. (4.) He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light, (v. 10.) to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

2. His reception of this discourse is very complimentary; but, I fear, not without some degree of dissimulation. "What!" says David, "must I leave *my lord the king*, whom I am bound by office to protect, just now when he is going to expose himself in the field? Why may not I go *fight against the enemies of my lord the king*?" v. 8. He seemed anxious to serve him, when he was at this juncture really anxious to leave him; but he was not willing that Achish should know that he was. No one knows how strong the temptation is to compliment and dissemble, which they are in, that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

3. God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him. For, besides that the snare was broken, and he was delivered out of the dilemma to which he was reduced, it proved a happy hastening of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him, proved more ways than one, an advantage to him. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way.* What he does with us, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter and shall see it was all for good.

## CHAP. XXX.

When David was dismissed from the army of the Philistines, he did not go over to the camp of Israel, but, being expelled by Saul, observed an exact neutrality, and silently retired to his own city Ziklag, leaving the armies ready to engage. Now here we are told, I. What a melancholy posture he found the city in, all laid waste by the Amalekites, and what distress it occasioned him and his men, v. 1. . 6. II. What course he took to recover what he had lost. He inquired of God, and took out a commission from him, v. 7, 8. pursued the enemy, v. 9, 10, gained intelligence from a straggler, v. 11. . 15. attacked and routed the plunderers, v. 16, 17. and recovered all they had carried off, v. 18. . 20. III. What method he observed in the distribution of the spoil, v. 21. . 31.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burnt it with fire; 2. And had taken the women captives that *were* therein: they slew not any, either great or small, but carried *them* away, and went on their way. 3. So David and his men came to the city, and, behold, *it was* burnt with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters,

were taken captives. 4. Then David and the people that *were* with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. 6. And David was greatly distressed: for the people spake of stoning him; because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

Here is,

I. The descent which the Amalekites made upon Ziklag, in David's absence, and the desolations they made there. They surprised the city when it was left unguarded, plundered it, burnt it, and carried all the women and children captives, v. 1, 2. They intended, by this, to avenge the like havoc that David had lately made of them and their country, *ch.* 27. 8. He that had made so many enemies, ought not to have left his own concerns so naked and defenceless. They that make bold with others, must expect that others will make as bold with them, and provide accordingly. Now observe in this, 1. The cruelty of Saul's piety (as it proved) in sparing the Amalekites; if he had utterly destroyed them, as he ought to have done, these had not been in being to do this mischief. 2. How David was corrected for being so forward to go with the Philistines against Israel. God showed him that he had better have staid at home, and looked after his own business. When we go abroad in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise. 3. How wonderfully God inclined the hearts of these Amalekites to carry the women and children away captives, and not to kill them. When David invaded them, he put all to the sword; (*ch.* 27. 9.) and no reason can be given why they did not retaliate upon this city, but that God restrained them; for he has all hearts in his hands, and says to the fury of the most cruel men, *Hitherto thou shalt come, and no further*. Whether they spared them, to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or to use them for slaves, God's hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make use of the Amalekites for the correction, not for the destruction, of the house of David.

II. The confusion and consternation that David and his men were in, when they found their houses in ashes, and their wives and children gone into captivity. Three days' march they had from the camp of the Philistines to Ziklag; and now that they came thither weary, but hoping to find rest in their houses, and joy in their families, behold, a black and dismal scene is presented to them, (v. 3.) which made them all weep, David himself not excepted, though they were men of war, *till they had no more power to weep*, v. 4. The mention of David's wives, *Ahinoam and Abigail*, and their being carried captive, intimate that that went nearer his heart than any thing else. Note, It is no disparagement to the boldest and bravest spirits, to lament the calamities of relations and friends. Observe, 1. This trouble came upon them when they were absent. It was the ancient policy of Amalek to take Israel at an advantage. 2. It met them at their return, and for aught that appears, their own eyes gave them the first intelligence of it. Note, When we go abroad, we cannot foresee what evil tidings may meet us when we come home again. The going out may be very cheerful, and yet the coming in be very doleful.

*Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow*, nor of to-night neither, *for thou knowest not what a day*, or a piece of a day, *may bring forth*, Prov. 27. 1. If, when we come off a journey, we find our *tabernacles in peace*, and not laid waste; as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it.

III. The mutiny and murmuring of David's men against him, *v. 6.* *David was greatly distressed*, for, in the midst of all his losses, his own people spake of stoning him, 1. Because they looked upon him as the occasion of their calamities, by the provocation he had given the Amalekites, and his indiscretion in leaving Ziklag without a garrison in it. Thus apt are we, when we are in trouble, to fly into a rage against those who are, in any way, the occasion of our trouble, while we overlook the Divine Providence, and have not that regard to the operations of God's hand in it, which would silence our passions, and make us patient. 2. Because now they began to despair of that preferment which they promised themselves in following David. They hoped, ere this, to have been all princes; and now, to find themselves all beggars, was such a disappointment to them, as made them grow outrageous, and threaten the life of him, on whom, under God, they had the greatest dependence. What absurdities will not ungoverned passions plunge men into! This was a sore trial to the man after God's own heart, and could not but go very near him. Saul had driven him from his country; the Philistines had driven him from their camp, the Amalekites had plundered his city, his wives were taken prisoners, and now, to complete his woe, his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, whom he had sheltered, and who did eat of his bread, instead of sympathizing with him, and offering him any relief, *lifted up the heel against him*, and threatened to stone him. Great faith must expect such severe exercises. But it is observable that David was reduced to this extremity just before his accession to the throne; at this present time, perhaps, the stroke was struck, which opened the door to his advancement. Things are sometimes at the worst with the church and people of God, just before they begin to mend.

IV. David's pious dependence upon the Divine Providence and grace, in this distress. *But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* 1. His men fretted at their loss; *the soul of the people was bitter*, so the word is; their own discontent and impatience added *wormwood and gall* to the affliction and misery, and made it doubly grievous. But David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it; they gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces on work, and, by encouraging himself in God, while they dispirited each other, he kept his spirit calm and sedate. Or, 2. David's language opposed itself to the threatening words his men gave out against him, *they shake of stoning him*; but he, not offering to avenge the affront, not terrified by their menaces, *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*; believed and considered, with application to his present case, the power and providence of God, his justice and goodness, the method he commonly takes of bringing low, and then raising up; his care of his people that serve him, and trust in him, and the particular promises he had made to him of bringing him safe to the throne; with these considerations he supported himself, not doubting but the present trouble would end well. Note, Those that have taken the Lord for their God, may take encouragement from their relation to him in the worst of times. It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever happens, to encourage themselves in God as their Lord and their God, assuring themselves that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble,

and good out of evil, to all that love him, and are *the called according to his purpose*, Rom. 8. 28. It was David's practice, and he had the comfort of it; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* When he was at his wit's end, he was not at his faith's end.

7. And David said unto Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee, bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. 8. And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake *them*, and without fail recover *all*. 9. So David went, he and the six hundred men that *were* with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind stayed. 10. But David pursued, he and four hundred men: (for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint that they could not go over the brook Besor.) 11. And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat; and they made him drink water: 12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him; for he had eaten no bread, nor drunk *any* water, three days and three nights. 13. And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I *am* a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite; and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. 14. We made an invasion *upon* the south of the Cherethites, and upon *the coast* which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb; and we burnt Ziklag with fire. 15. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. 16. And when he had brought him down, behold, *they were* spread abroad upon all the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. 17. And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men which rode upon camels, and fled. 18. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away; and David rescued his two wives. 19. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil, nor any *thing* that they had taken to them: David recovered all. 20. And David took



all the flocks and the herds, *which* they drove before those *other* cattle, and said, *This is David's spoil.*

Solomon observes, that *the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead; that the just falleth seven times a day, and riseth again;* so it was with David. Many were his troubles, but the Lord delivered him out of them all; and particularly out of this which here we have an account of.

I. He inquired of the Lord both concerning his duty, *Shall I pursue after this troop?* and concerning the event, *Shall I overtake them?* v. 8. It was a great advantage to David, that he had the High Priest with him, and the breast-plate of judgment, which, as a public person, he might consult in all his affairs, Numb. 27. 21. We cannot think that he left Abiathar and the ephod at Ziklag, for then he and it would have been carried away by the Amalekites, unless we may suppose them hidden by a special providence, that they might be ready for David to consult at his return. If we conclude that David had his priest and ephod with him in the camp of the Philistines, it was certainly a great neglect in him, that he did not inquire of the Lord by them, concerning his engagement to Achish. Perhaps he was ashamed to own his religion so far from among the uncircumcised; but now he begins to apprehend that this trouble is brought upon him to correct him for that oversight; and therefore the first thing he does, is, to call for the ephod. It is well if we get this good by our afflictions, to be reminded by them of neglecting duties, and particularly to be quickened by them to inquire of the Lord. See 1 Chron. 15. 13. David had no room to doubt but that his war against these Amalekites was just, and he had an inclination strong enough to set upon them, when it was for the recovery of that which was dearest to him in this world; and yet he would not go about it without asking counsel of God, thereby owning his dependence upon God, and submission to him. If we thus, in all our ways, acknowledge God, we may expect that he will direct our steps, as he did David's here, answering him above what he asked, with an assurance that he should recover all.

II. He went himself in person, and took with him all the force he had, in pursuit of the Amalekites, v. 9, 10. See how quickly, how easily, how effectually, the mutiny among the soldiers was crushed by his patience and faith. When they *spoke of stoning him*, (v. 6.) if he had spoken of hanging them, or had ordered that the ringleaders of the faction should immediately have had their heads struck off, though it had been just, yet it might have been of pernicious consequence to his interest in this critical juncture; and while he and his men were contending, the Amalekites would have clearly carried off their spoil: but when he, as a deaf man, heard not, smothered his resentments, and encouraged himself in the Lord his God, the tumult of the people was stilled by his gentleness, and the power of God on their hearts; and, being thus mildly treated, they are now as ready to follow his foot, as they were but a little before to fly in his face. Meekness is the security of any government.

All his men were willing to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, and he needed them all; but he was forced to drop a third part of them by the way; two hundred, out of six, were so fatigued with their long march, and so sunk under the load of their grief, that they could not pass the brook Besor, but staid behind there. This was, 1. A great trial of David's faith, whether he could go on, in a dependence upon the word of God, when so

many of his men failed him. When we are disappointed and discouraged in our expectations from second causes, then go on with cheerfulness, confiding in the divine power, this is giving glory to God, by believing against hope, in hope. 2. A great instance of David's tenderness to his men, that he would by no means urge them beyond their strength, though the cause itself was so very urgent. The Son of David thus considers the frame of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits and conflicts; but, where we are weak, there he is kind; nay more, there he is strong, 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10.

III. Providence threw one in their way, that gave them intelligence of the enemy's motions, and guided their's; a poor Egyptian lad, scarcely alive, is made instrumental of a great deal of good to David. *God chooses the foolish things of the world, with them to confound the wise.* Observe, 1. His master's cruelty to him. He had got out of him all the service he could, and when he fell sick, probably being over-toiled with his work, he barbarously left him to perish, in the field, when he was in no such haste but he might have put him into some of the carriages, and brought him home, or, at least, have left him wherewith to support himself. That master has the spirit of an Amalekite, not of an Israelite, that can thus use a servant worse than one would use a beast. *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* This Amalekite thought he should now have servants enough of the Israelite captives, and therefore cared not what became of his Egyptian slave; but could willingly let him die in a ditch for want of necessities, while he was *eating and drinking*, v. 16. Justly did Providence make this poor servant, that was thus basely abused, instrumental toward the destruction of a whole army of Amalekites, and his master among the rest; for God hears the cry of oppressed servants. 2. David's compassion to him; though he had reason to think he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, yet, finding him in distress, he generously relieved him, not only with *bread and water*, (v. 11.) but with *figs and raisins*, v. 12. Though the Israelites were in haste, and had no great plenty for themselves, yet they would not *forbear to deliver one that was drawn unto death*, nor say, *Behold, we know it not*, Prov. 24. 11, 12. They are unworthy the name of Israelites, who shut up the bowels of their compassion from persons in distress. It was also prudently done to relieve this Egyptian; for, though despicable, he was capable of doing them service; so it proved, though they were not certain of it when they relieved him. It is a good reason why we should neither do an injury, nor deny a kindness, to any man, that we know not but, some time or other, it may be in his power to return either a kindness or an injury. 3. The intelligence David received from this poor Egyptian, when he was come to himself. He gave him an account concerning his party; (1.) What they had done, (v. 14.) *We made an invasion.* The countries which David had pretended to Achish to have made an incursion upon, (ch. 27. 10.) they really had invaded and laid waste. What was then false, now proved too true. (2.) Whither they were gone, v. 15. This he promised David to inform him of, upon condition he would spare his life and protect him from his master, who, if he could hear of him again, (he thought,) would add cruelty to cruelty. Such an opinion this poor Egyptian had of the obligation of an oath, that he desired no greater security for his life than that, *Swear unto me by God*; not by the gods of Egypt or Amalek, but by the one supreme God.

IV. David, being directed to the place where they lay, securely celebrating their triumphs, fell

upon them, and, as he used to pray, *saw his desire upon his enemies.*

1. The spoilers were cut off. The Amalekites, finding the booty was rich, and being got with it (as they thought) out of the reach of danger, were making themselves very merry with it, *v. 16.* All thoughts of war were laid aside, nor were they in any haste to house their prey, but *spread themselves abroad on the earth* in the most careless manner that could be, and there they were found *eating and drinking, and dancing*, probably in honour of their idol-gods, to whom they gave the praise of their success. In this posture, David surprised them, which made the conquest of them, and the blow he gave them, the more easy to him, and the more dismal to them. Then are sinners nearest to ruin, when they cry, *Peace and safety, and put the evil day far from them.* Nor does any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage against us than sensuality, and the indulgence of the flesh. *Eating and drinking, and dancing*, have been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. Finding them thus off their guard, and from their arms, (many of them, it may be, drunk, and unable to make any resistance,) he put them all to the sword, and only four hundred escaped, *v. 17.* Thus is the triumphing of the wicked short, and wrath comes on them, as on Belshazzar, when they are in the midst of their jollity.

2. The spoil was recovered and brought off, and nothing was lost, but a great deal gotten. (1.) They retrieved all their own; (*v. 18, 19.*) *David rescued his two wives*; that is mentioned particularly, because that pleased David more than all the rest of his achievements. Providence had so ordered it, that the Amalekites carefully preserved all that they had taken, concluding that they kept it for themselves, though really they preserved it for the right owners; so that there was nothing lacking to them; so it proved, when they concluded all was gone; so much better is God oftentimes to us, than our own fears. Our Lord Jesus was indeed the son of David, and the son of Abraham, in this resembling them both, that he *took the prey from the mighty, and led captivity captive*: Abraham, Gen. 14. 16. and David here. But this was not all. (2.) They took all that belonged to the Amalekites besides, *v. 20, flocks and herds*; either such as were taken from the Philistines, and others which David had the disposal of by the law of war; or perhaps he made a sally into the enemy's country and fetched off these flocks and herds from thence, as interest for his own. This drove was put in the van of the triumph, with this proclamation, "*This is David's spoil.*" This we may thank him for. Those who lately spake of stoning him, now carressed him, and cried him up, because they got by him more than they had then lost. Thus are the world, and its sentiments, governed by interest.

21. And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that *were* with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. 22. Then answered all the wicked men, and *men of Belial*, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that

they may lead *them* away, and depart. 23. Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. 24. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so *shall* his part *be* that carrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. 25. And it was so, from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. 26. And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, *even* to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. 27. To *them* which *were* in Beth-el, and to *them* which *were* in south Ramoth, and to *them* which *were* in Jattir, 28. And to *them* which *were* in Aroer, and to *them* which *were* in Siphmoth, and to *them* which *were* in Eshtemoa, 29. And to *them* which *were* in Rachal, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to *them* which *were* in the cities of the Kenites, 30. And to *them* which *were* in Hormah, and to *them* which *were* in Cor-ashan, and to *them* which *were* in Athach, 31. And to *them* which *were* in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

We have here an account of the distribution of the spoil which was taken from the Amalekites. When the Amalekites had carried away a rich booty from the land of Judah and the Philistines, they spent it in sensuality, in eating and drinking, and making merry with it; but David disposed of the spoil taken, after another manner, as one that knew that justice and charity must govern us, in the use we make of whatever we have in this world. What God gives us, he designs we should do good with, not serve our lust with. In the distribution of the spoil,

1. David was just and kind to those who abide by the stuff. They came forth to meet the conquerors, and to congratulate them on their success, though they could not contribute to it; (*v. 21.*) for we should rejoice in a good work done, though Providence had laid us aside, and rendered us incapable of lending a hand to it. David received their address very kindly, and was so far from upbraiding them with their weakness, that he showed himself solicitous concerning them; he saluted them, *he asked them of peace*, so the word is; inquired how they did, because he had left them faint, and not well; or wished them peace, bid them be of good cheer, they should lose nothing by staying behind; for of this they seemed afraid; David perhaps saw it in their countenances.

1. There were those that opposed their coming in to share in the spoil; some of David's soldiers, probably the same that spake of stoning him, spake now of defrauding their brethren; they are called wicked men, and *men of Belial*, *v. 22.* Let not the best of men think it strange, if they have those attending them that are very bad, and they cannot prevail to make them better. We may suppose that David had instructed his soldiers, and praye-

with them, and yet there were many among them that were wicked men, and men of Belial; often terrified with the apprehensions of death, and yet wicked men still, and men of Belial. These made a motion, that the two hundred men who abode by the stuff, should only have their wives and children given them, but none of their goods. Well might they be called *wicked men*; for this bespeaks them, (1.) Very covet us themselves, and greedy of gain; for hereby the more would fall to their share. A while ago, they would gladly have given half their own to recover the other half; yet now that they have all their own, they are not content unless they can have their brethren's too; so soon do men forget their low estate. All seek their own, and too often more than their own. (2.) Very barbarous to their brethren; for, to give them their wives and children, and not their estates, was to give them the mouths without the meat. What joy could they have of their families, if they had nothing to maintain them with? Was this to do as they would be done by? These are men of Belial indeed, who delight in putting hardships upon their brethren, and care not who is starved, so they may be fed to the fall.

2. David would by no means admit this, but ordered that they who tarried behind, should come in for an equal share in the spoils with those that went to the battle, v. 23, 24. This he did, (1.) In gratitude to God. The spoil we have, is that which God has given us; we have it from him, and therefore must use it under his direction, as good stewards. Let this check us when we are tempted to misapply that which God has intrusted us with of this world's good; "Nay, I must not do so with that which God has given me, not serve Satan and a base lust, with those things which are not only the creatures of his power, but the gifts of his bounty. God has righted us by *delivering the company that came against us into our hand*, let not us then wrong our brethren; God has been kind to us in preserving us, and giving us victory, let not us be unkind to them. God's mercy to us should make us merciful to one another. (2.) Injustice to them. It is true, they tarried behind; but, [1.] It was not for want of good will to the cause, or to their brethren, but because they had not strength to keep up with them. It was not their fault, but their infelicity; and therefore they ought not to suffer for it. [2.] Though they tarried behind now, they had formerly engaged many times in battle, and done their part as well as the best of their brethren, and their former services must be considered, now that there was something to enjoy. [3.] Even now they did good service, for they abode by the stuff, to guard that which somebody must take care of, else that might have fallen into the hands of some other enemy. Every post of service is not alike a post of honour, yet those that are any way serviceable to the common interest, though in a meaner station, ought to share in the common advantages; as in the natural body, every member has its use, and therefore has its share of the nourishment. *First*, Thus David overruled the wicked men, and men of Belial, with reason, but with a great deal of mildness: (for the force of reason is sufficient, without the force of passion;) he calls them *his brethren*, v. 23. Superiors often lose their authority by haughtiness, but seldom by courtesy and condescension; *Secondly*, Thus he settled the matter for time to come, made it a statute of his kingdom, (a statute of distributions, *primo Davidis—in the first year of David's reign*,) an ordinance of war, (v. 25.) that as his part is that goes down to the battle, and jeopard his life in the high places of the field, so shall his be that guards the carriages. Abraham returned the spoils of Sodom to the right owners, and quitted his title to

them, *jure belli—derived from the laws of war*. If we help others to recover their right, we must not think that this alienates the property and makes it ours. God appointed that the spoil of Midian should be divided between the soldiers and the whole congregation, Numb. 31. 27. The case here was somewhat different, but governed by the same general rule—that we are members one of another. The disciples, at first, *had all things common*, and we should still be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate*, 1 Tim. 6. 18. When *kings of armies did flee apace, she that tarried at home did divide the spoil*, Ps. 68. 12.

II. David was generous and kind to all his friends. When he had given every one his own with interest, there was a considerable overplus, which David, as general, had the disposal of: probably the spoil of the tents of the Amalekites consisted much in plate and jewels; (Judg. 8. 24, 26.) and those, because he thought they would but make his own soldiers proud and effeminate, he thought fit to make presents of to his friends, even the *elders of Judah*, v. 26. Several places are here named to which he sent of these presents, all of them in or near the tribe of Judah. The first place named is *Beth-el*, which signifies *the house of God*; that place shall be first served for its name's sake; or, perhaps, it means not the city so called, but the place where the ark was, which was therefore *the house of God*. Thither David sent the first and best, to them that attended there, for his sake who is the First and Best. *Hbron* is named last, (v. 31.) probably because thither he sent the residuum, which was the largest share, having an eye upon that place as fittest for his head-quarters, 2 Sam. 2. 1.

In David's sending these presents, observe, 1. His generosity. He aimed not to enrich himself, but to serve his country; and therefore God afterwards enriched him, and set him to rule the country he had served. It becomes gracious souls to be generous; *there is that scatters and yet increases*. 2. His gratitude. He sent presents to *all the places where he and his men were wont to haunt*; (v. 31.) that is, to all he had received kindness from, that had sheltered him, and sent him intelligence or provisions. Note, Honesty, as well as honour, obliges us to requite the favours that have been done us, or, at least, make a real acknowledgment of them as far as is in the power of our hand. 3. His piety; that he calls it a *blessing*; for no present we give to our friends will be a comfort to them, but as it is made so by the blessing of God: it intimates that his prayers for them accompanied his presents; also, that he sent them out of *the spoil of the enemies of the Lord*, (so he calls them, not *his enemies*,) that they might rejoice in the victory, for the Lord's sake, and might join with him in thanksgivings for it. 4. His policy, that he sent these presents among his countrymen, to oblige them to be ready to appear for him, upon his accession to the throne, which he now saw at hand. *A man's gift maketh room for him*. He was fit to be a king, who thus showed the bounty and liberality of a king. Munificence recommends a man more than magnificence. The Ziphites had none of his presents, nor the men of Keilah; and thus he showed, that, though he was such a saint as not to revenge affronts, yet he was not such a fool as not to take notice of them.

## CHAP. XXXI.

In the foregoing chapter, we had David conquering, yea, more than a conqueror. In this chapter, we have Saul conquered, and worse than a captive. Providence ordered it, that both these things should be doing just at the same time. The very same day, perhaps, that David was triumphing over the Amalekites, were the Philis-

times triumphing over Saul. One is set against the other, that men may see what comes of trusting in God, and what comes of forsaking him. We left Saul ready to engage the Philistines, with a shaking hand and an aching heart, having had his doom read from hell, which he would not regard when it was read him from heaven. Let us now see what comes of him. Here is, I. His army routed, v. 1. II. His three sons slain, v. 2. III. Himself wounded, v. 3. Slain by his own hand, v. 4. IV. His armour-bearer, (v. 5.) and all his men, v. 6. V. His country possessed by the Philistines, v. 7. His camp plundered, and his dead body deserted, v. 8. His fall triumphed in, v. 9. His body publicly exposed, (v. 10.) and with difficulty rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead, v. 11. 13. Thus fell the man that was rejected of God.

I. **N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul, and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Melchi-shua, Saul's sons. 3. And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was sore afraid: therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together. 7. And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

The day of recompense is now come, in which Saul must account for the blood of the Amalekites, which he had sinfully spared, and that of the priests, which he had more sinfully spilt; that of David too, which he would have spilt, must come into the account. Now his day is come to fall, as David foresaw, when he should descend into battle, and perish, *ch.* 26. 10. Come, and see the *righteous judgments of God*.

I. He sees his soldiers fall about him, v. 1. Whether the Philistines were more numerous, better posted, and better led on, or what other advantages they had, we are not told; but it seems they were more vigorous, for they made the onset, they fought against Israel, and the Israelites fled and fell. The best of the troops were put into disorder, and multitudes slain; probably, those whom Saul had employed in pursuing David. Thus they who had followed him, and served him in his sin, go before him in his fall, and share with him in his plagues.

II. He sees his sons fall before him. The victorious Philistines pressed most forcibly upon the king of Israel, and those about him; his three sons were next him, it is probable, and they were all three slain before his face, to his great grief, for they were the hopes of his family; and to his great terror, for they were now the guard of his person; and

he can conclude no other, than that his own turn comes next. His sons are named, (v. 2.) and it grieves us to find Jonathan among them: that wise, valiant, good man, who was as much David's friend as Saul was his enemy; *he falls with the rest*. Duty to his father would not permit him to stay at home, or to retire when the armies engaged; and Providence so orders it, that he falls in the common fate of his family, though he never involved himself in the guilt of it; so that the observation of Eliphaz does not hold, (Job 4. 7.) *Who ever perished, being innocent?* For here was one. What shall we say to it? 1. God would hereby complete the vexation of Saul in his dying moments, and the judgment that was to be executed upon his house. If the family must fall, Jonathan, that is one of it, must fall with it. 2. He would hereby make David's way to the crown the more clear and open. For though Jonathan himself would have cheerfully resigned all his title and interest to him, (we have no reason to suspect any other,) yet it is very probable, that many of the people would have made use of his name for the support of the house of Saul, or, at least, would have come in but slowly to David. If Ish-bosheth (who was now left at home as one unfit for action, and so escaped) had so many friends, what would Jonathan have had, who had been the darling of the people, and had never forfeited their favour? They that were so anxious to have a king like the nations, would be zealous for the right line, especially if that threw the crown upon such a head as Jonathan's. This would have embarrassed David; and if Jonathan could have prevailed to bring in all his interest to David, then it would have been said that Jonathan had made him king, whereas God was to have all the glory. *This is the Lord's doing*. So that though the death of Jonathan would be a great affliction to David, yet, by making him mindful of his own frailty, as well as by facilitating his accession to the throne, it would be an advantage to him. 3. God would hereby show us, that the difference between good and bad is to be made in the other world, not in this. *All things come alike to all*. We cannot judge of the spiritual or eternal state of any, by the manner of their death; for in that *there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked*.

III. He himself is sorely wounded by the Philistines, and then slain by his own hand. The archers hit him, (v. 3.) so that he could neither fight nor fly, and therefore must inevitably fall into their hands. Thus, to make him the more miserable, destruction comes gradually upon him, and he dies so as to feel himself die. To that extremity was he now reduced, that, 1. He was desirous to die by the hand of his own servant, rather than by the hand of the Philistines, lest they should abuse him as they did Samson. Miserable man! He finds himself dying, and all his care is, to keep his body out of the hands of the Philistines, but no care to resign his soul into the hands of God who gave it, *Ecc.* 12. 7. As he lived, so he died, proud and jealous, and a terror to himself and all about him. They who rightly understand themselves, think it of small account, in comparison, how it is with them in death, so it may be well with them after death. Those are in a deplorable condition indeed, who, being *bitter in soul, long for death, but it cometh not*, (Job 3. 20, 21.) especially those, who, despairing of the mercy of God, like Judas, leap into hell before them, to escape a hell within them. 2. When he could not obtain that favour, he became his own executioner, thinking thereby to avoid shame, but running upon a heinous sin, and with it entailing upon his own name a mark of perpetual infamy, as *felo de se—a self-murderer*. Jonathan, who received his death-wound from the hand of the Philistines, and bravely yielded to the fate of war,

died in the bed of honour; but Saul died as a fool dieth, as a coward dieth, a proud fool, a sneaking coward; he died as a man that had neither the fear of God, nor hope in God; neither the reason of a man, nor the religion of an Israelite, nor the resolution of a soldier. Let us all pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation*, this temptation. His armour-bearer would not run him through, and he did well to refuse it; for no man's servant ought to be a slave to his master's lusts or passions of any kind: the reason given is, that *he was sore afraid*, not of death, for he himself ran witfully upon that immediately; but, having a profound reverence for the king his master, he could not conquer that so far as to do him any hurt; or perhaps he feared lest his trembling hand should have given him but half a blow, and so have put him to the greater misery.

IV. His armour-bearer, who refused to kill him, refused not to die with him, but *fell likewise upon his sword*, v. 5. This was an aggravating circumstance of the death of Saul, that, by the example of his wickedness, in murdering himself, he drew in his servant to be guilty of the same wickedness, and *perished not alone in his iniquity*. The Jews say that Saul's armour-bearer was Doeg, whom he preferred to that dignity for killing the priests, and if so, justly does his *violent dealing return on his own head*. David had foretold concerning him, that God would *destroy him for ever*, Ps. 52. 5.

V. The country was put into such confusion by the rout of Saul's army, that the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities (*on that side Jordan*, as it might be read) quitted them, and the Philistines, for a time, had possession of them, till things were settled in Israel, v. 7. Such a sad pass had Saul by his wickedness brought this country to, which might have remained in the hands of the uncircumcised, if David had not been raised up to repair the breaches of it. See what a king he proved, for whom they rejected God and Samuel. They still had done wickedly (it is to be feared) as well as he, and therefore *were consumed, both they and their king*, as the prophet had foretold concerning them, ch. 12. 25. And to this reference is had long after; (Hos. 13. 10, 11.) *Where are thy saviours in all thy cities, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath*; that is, he was a plague to thee living and dying: thou couldest expect no other.

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish *it in the house of their idols*, and among the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth; and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. 11. And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul, 12. All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13. And they took their bones, and buried *them* under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The scripture makes no mention of the souls of Saul and his sons, what became of them after they were dead; (secret things belong not to us;) but of their bodies only.

I. How they were basely abused by the Philistines. The day after the battle, when they had recovered their fatigue, they came to strip the slain, and, among the rest, found the bodies of Saul and his three sons, v. 8. Saul's armour-bearer perhaps intended to honour his master, by following the example of his self-murder, and to show thereby how well he loved him; but if he had consulted his reason more than his passions, he would have spared that foolish compliment, not only in justice to his own life, but in kindness to his master, to whom, by the opportunity of survivorship, he might have done all the service that could be done him by any man after he was dead: for he might, in the night, have conveyed away his body, and those of his sons, and buried them decently. But such false and foolish notions as these, vain men have, (though they would be wise,) of giving and receiving honour. Nay, it should seem, Saul might have saved himself the fatal thrust, and have made his escape; for the pursuers (in fear of whom he slew himself) came not to the place where he was, till the next day. But whom God will destroy, he infatuates, and utterly consumes with his terrors. See Job 18. 5, &c.

Finding Saul's body, (which, now that it lay extended on the bloody turf, was distinguishable from the rest by its length, as it was, while erect, by its height, when he proudly overlooked the surrounding crowd,) they will, in that, triumph over Israel's crown, and poorly gratify a barbarous and brutish revenge, by insulting the deserted corpse, which, when alive, they had stood in awe of.

1. They cut off his head. Had they designed in this to revenge the cutting off of Goliath's head, they should rather have cut off the head of David, who did that execution, when he was in their country; they intended it, in general, for a reproach to Israel, who promised themselves that a crowned, and an anointed head, would have saved them from the Philistines, and a particular reproach to Saul, who was taller by the head than other men, (which perhaps he was wont to boast of,) but was now shorter by the head.

2. They stripped him of his armour, (v. 9.) and sent that to be set up as a trophy of their victory in the house of Ashtaroth their goddess; (v. 10.) and we are told, 1 Chron. 10. 10. (though it is omitted here,) that they fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. Thus did they ascribe the honour of their victory, not, as they ought to have done, to the real justice of the true God, but to the imaginary power of their false gods; and by this respect paid to pretended deities, shame those who give not the praise of their achievements to the living God. Ashtaroth, the idol, that Israel had many a time gone a whoring after, now triumphs over them.

3. They sent expresses throughout their country, and ordered public notice to be given in the houses of their gods, of the victory they had obtained, (v. 9.) that public rejoicings might be made, and thanks given to their gods. This David regretted sorely; (2 Sam. 1. 20.) *Tell it not in Gath*.

4. They fastened his body, and the bodies of his sons, (as appears, v. 12.) to the wall of *Beth-shan*; a city that lay not far from Gilboa, and very near to the river Jordan. Hither the dead bodies were dragged, and here hung up in chains, to be devoured by the birds of prey. Saul slew himself, to avoid being abused by the Philistines, and never was royal corpse so abused as his was; perhaps the more, if they understood that he slew himself, and for what reason. He that thinks to save his honour

by sin, will certainly lose it. See to what a height of insolence the Philistines were arrived, just before David was raised up, who perfectly subdued them. Now that they had slain Saul and his sons, they thought the land of Israel was their own for ever; but they soon found themselves deceived. When God has accomplished his whole work *by* them, he will accomplish it *upon* them. See Isa. 10. 6, 7.

II. How they were bravely rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead. Little more than the river of Jordan lay between Beth-shan and Jabesh-gilead, and Jordan was in that place passable by its fords; a bold adventure was therefore made by the valiant men of that city, who, in the night, passed the river, took down the dead bodies, and gave them decent burial, *v.* 11-13. This they did, 1. Out of a common concern for the honour of Israel, or the land of Israel, which ought not to be defiled by the exposing of any dead bodies, and especially of the crown of Israel, which was thus profaned by the uncircumcised. 2. Out of a particular sense of gratitude to Saul, for his zeal and forwardness to rescue them from the Ammonites, when he first came to the throne, *ch.* 11. It is an argument of a gracious spirit, and an encouragement to beneficence, when the remembrance of kindness is thus retained, and they are thus returned, in an extremity. The men of Jabesh-gilead would have done Saul better service, if they had sent their valiant men to him sooner, to strengthen him against the Philistines. But his day was come to fall, and now this is all the service they can do him, in honour to his memory.

We find not that any general mourning was made for the death of Saul, as was for the death of Samuel, (*ch.* 25. 1.) only those Gileadites of Jabesh did him honour at his death; for, (1.) They made a burning for the bodies, to perfume them. So some understand the burning of them. They burnt spices over them, *v.* 12. And that it was usual thus to do honour to their deceased friends, at least, their princes, appears by the account of Asa's funeral, (2 Chron. 16. 14.) that *they made a very great burning for him*. Or, (as some think,) they burnt the flesh because it began to putrefy. (2.) They buried the bodies, when, by burning over them, they had sweetened them, (or, if they burnt them, they buried the bones and ashes,) under a tree, which served for a grave-stone and monument. And, *lastly*, they *fasted seven days*; that is, each day of the seven, they fasted till the evening; thus they lamented the death of Saul, and the present distracted state of Israel, and perhaps joined prayers with their fasting, for the re-establishment of their shattered state. Though *when the wicked perish, there is shouting*, that is, it is to be hoped a better state of things will ensue, which will be matter of joy, yet humanity obliges us to show a decent respect to dead bodies, especially those of princes. This book began with the birth of Samuel, but now it ends with the burial of Saul, the comparing of which two together will teach us to prefer the honour that comes from God, before any of the honours which this world pretends to have the disposal of.