AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

UPON THE SECOND BOOK OF

SAMUEL.

This book is the history of the reign of king David. We had, in the foregoing Book, an account of his designation to the government, and his struggles with Saul, which ended at length in the death of his persecutor. This Book begins with his accession to the throne, and is entirely taken up with the affairs of the government during the forty years he reigned, and therefore is entitled, by the Seventy, The Third Book of the Kings. It gives us an account of David's triumphs and his troubles.

I. His triumphs over the house of Saul; (ch. 1-4.) over the Jebusites and Philistines; (ch. 5.) at the bringing up of the ark; (ch. 6 and 7.) over the neighbouring nations that opposed him, ch. 8-10. And so far the history is agreeable to what we might expect from David's character, and the choice made of him. But his cloud has a dark side.

II. We have his troubles, the cause of them, his sin in the matter of Uriah, (ch. 11 and 12.) The troubles themselves from the sin of Amnon, (ch. 13.) the rebellion of Absalom, (ch. 14-19.) and of Sheba, (ch. 20.) and the plague in Israel for his numbering the people, (ch. 24.) beside the famine for the Gibeonites, (ch. 21.) His song we have, (ch. 22.) and his words and worthies, ch. 23. Many things in this history are very instructive; but for the hero, that is the subject of it, though, in many instances, he appears here very great, and very good, and very much the favourite of Heaven, yet it must be confessed that his honour shines brighter in his Psalms than in his Annals.

II. SAMUEL, I.

In the close of the foregoing Book, (which with this is connected as a continuation of the same history,) we had Saul's exit; he went down slain to the pit, though he was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. We are now to look toward the rising sun, and to inquire where David is, and what he is doing. In this chapter, we have, I. Tidings brought him to Ziklag of the death of Saul and Jonathan, by an Amalekite, who undertook to give him a particular narrative of it, v. 1-10. II. David's sorrowful reception of these tidings, v. 11, 12. III. Justice done upon the messenger, who boasted that he had helped Saul to despatch himself, v. 13, 16. IV. An elegy which David penned upon this occasion, 11-27. And in all this, David's breast appears very happily free from the sparks, either of revenge or ambition, and he observes a very suitable demeanour.

1. NOW it came to pass, after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag; 2. It came even to pass on the third day, that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. 5. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? 6. And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear; and, lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him.
And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me: and I answered, *Here am I.* And he said unto me, *Who art thou?* And I answered him, *I am an Amalekite.*

9. He said unto me again, *Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me:* for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. 10. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

Here is,

I. David settling again in Ziklag his own city: after he had rescued his family and friends out of the hands of the Amalekites, (v. 1.) he abode in Ziklag. The handiwork was now sentinels, to his answer, 1 Sam. 30. 26, and there he was ready to receive those that came into his interests; not men in distress and debt, as his first followers were, but persons of quality in their country, mighty men, men of war, and captains of thousands; (as we find, 1 Chron. 12. 1, 8, 20,) such came day by day to him, God stirred up their hearts to do so, till he had a great host, like the host of God; as it is said there, v. 4. The use of such springs of revolution is important, and must be resolved into that Providence, which turns all hearts as the rivers of water.

II. Intelligence brought him thither of the death of Saul. It was strange that he did not leave some spices about the camps, to bring him early notice of the issues of the engagement, a sign that he desired not Saul's worldy day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believes, does not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not uneasy while it is in the coming.

1. The messenger presents himself to David as an express, in the posture of a mourner for the deceased prince, and a subject to the succeeding one. He brings with his clothes and money, for he had no baggage with him, David (v. 2.) pleasanting himself with the fancy that he had the honour to be the first that did him homage as his sovereign; but it proved he was the first that received from him sentence of death, as his judge. He told David he came from the camp of Israel, and intimated the confusion it was in, when he said he was escaped out of it, having much ado to get away with his life, &c.

2. He gives him a general account of the issue of the battle. David was very desirous to know how the matter went, as one that had more reasons than any to be concerned for the public; and he told him very distinctly that the army of Israel was routed, many slain, and, among the rest, Saul and Jonathan, v. 4. He names only Saul and Jonathan, because he knew David would be most solicitous to know their fate; for Saul was the man whom he most feared, and Jonathan the man whom he most loved.

3. He gives him a more particular account of the death of Saul. It is probable that David had heard, by the report of others, what the issue of the war was, for multitudes resorted to him, it should seem, in consequence; but he was desirous to know the certainty of the report concerning Saul and Jonathan, either because he was not forward to believe it, or because he would not proceed upon it, to make his own claims, till he was fully assured. He therefore asks, *How knowest thou that Saul art alive?* In answer to which, the young man tells him a very ready story, putting it past doubt that Saul was dead, for he himself had been not only an eye-witness of his death, but an instrument of it; and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul thinking (as David understood it well enough, ch. 4. 10,) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is, (v. 5.) *Very sorrowful was I for the death of Saul:* so David supposed him in his journey to go to the place where Sa i was, (v. 6.) as a passenger, not as a soldier, an therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die; he therefore called this stranger to it, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul thinking (as David understood it well enough, ch. 4. 10,) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is, (v. 5.) *Very sorrowful was I for the death of Saul:* so David supposed him in his journey to go to the place where Sa i was, (v. 6.) as a passenger, not as a soldier, an therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die; he therefore called this stranger to it, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul thinking (as David understood it well enough, ch. 4. 10,) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is, (v. 5.) *Very sorrowful was I for the death of Saul:* so David supposed him in his journey to go to the place where Sa i was, (v. 6.) as a passenger, not as a soldier, an therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die; he therefore called this stranger to it, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He says nothing, in his narrative, of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul thinking (as David understood it well enough, ch. 4. 10,) that he should be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.
But a man after God's own heart, is not to be judged of by common men. I am not clear whether this young man's story were true or no; it may consist with the narrative in the chapter before, and be an addition to, as Peter's account of the death of Judas, Acts I. 18. is to the narrative, Matth. 27. 5. What is there called a sword, may here be called a spear; or when he fell upon his sword, he leaned on his spear.

(3.) However, he produced that which was proof sufficient of the death of Saul, the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm. It should seem, these Saul was so foolishly find of, as to wear them in the field of battle, which made him a fair mark for the archers, by distinguishing him from those about him; but was marked to be cut off, so it fears no danger from that which gratifies it. These fell into the hands of this Amalekite. Saul spared the best of their spoil, and now the best of his came to one of that devoted nation. He brought them to David, as the rightful owner of them now that Saul was dead, not doubting but by his officiousness herein, to recommend himself to the best preferments in his court or camp. The tradition of the Jews, is, that this Amalekite was the son of Doeg, (for the Amalekites were descendants from Edom,) and that Doeg, who, they suppose, was Saul's armour-bearer before he slew himself, gave Saul's crown and bracelet (the ensigns of his royalty) to his son, and bade him carry them to David, to curry favour with him. But this is a groundless conceit; Doeg's son, it is likely, was so well known to Saul, that he needed not ask him as he did, (v. 8.) Who art thou? David had been long waiting for the crown, and now it is brought him by an Amalekite. See how God can serve his own purpose of kindness to his people, even by designing (ill-designing) men, who aim at nothing but to set up themselves.

11. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them; and likewise all the men that were with him: 12. And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lorn, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. 13. And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, an Amalekite. 14. And David said unto him, How wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed? 15. And David said unto one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head; for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed.

Here is, I. David's reception of these tidings. So far was he from falling into a transport of joy, as the Amalekite expected, that he falls into a passion of weeping, rent his clothes, (v. 11.) mourned and fasted, (v. 12.) not only for his people Israel, and Jonathan his friend, but for Saul his enemy. This he did, not only as a man of honour, in observance of that decorum which forbids us to insult over those that are fallen, and requires us to attend our relations to the grave with respect, whatever we lose by their life, or got by their death; but as a good man and a man of conscience, that had forgiven the injuries Saul had done him, and bore him no malice. He knew before his heart wrote it, (Prox. 24. 17, 18.) that if we reject when our enemy fails the Lord sees it, and it displeases him; and, that he was to be glad of Saul's death, and should not go unpunished, Prov. 17. 5. By this it appears, that these passages in David's psalms, which express his desire of, and triumph in, the ruin of his enemies, proceed not from a spirit of revenge, or any irregular passion, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the public good; for by what he did here, when he heard of Saul's death, we may perceive that his natural temper was very tender, and that he was kindly affected to those that hated him. He was very sincere, no question, in his mourning for Saul, and it was not pretended, or a copy of his countenance only. His passion was so strong, on this occasion, that it moved those about him; all that were with him, at least, in complaisance to him, rent their clothes, and they fasted till even, in token of their sorrow; and, probably, it was a religious fast, they offering themselves under the hand of God, and prayed for the repaying of the breaches made upon Israel by this defeat.

II. The reward he gave to him that brought him the tidings; instead of preferring him, he put him to death; judged him, out of his own mouth, as a murderer of his prince, and ordered him forthwith to be executed for the same. What a surprise was this to the messenger, who thought he should have favour shown him for his pains! In vain did he plead that he had Saul's order for it, that it was a real kindness to him, that he must inevitably have died; all these pleas are overruled, Thy mouth has testified against thee, saying, I have slain the Lord's anointed; (v. 16.) therefore thou must die.

Now, I. David herein did not do unjustly. For, (1.) The man was an Amalekite. This, lest he had mistook it in his narrative, he made him own a second time, v. 13. That notion, and all that belonged to it, were doomed to destruction; so that, in slaying David, David did what his predecessor should have done, and was rejected for not doing. (2.) He did himself confess the crime, so that the evidence was, by the consent of all laws, sufficient to convict him; for every man is presumed to make the best of himself. If he did as he said, he deserved to die for treason, (v. 14.) doing that which it is probable he would not have done, if he had refused to do; if not, yet by boasting that he had done it, he plainly showed, that if there had been occasion, he would have done it, and would have made nothing of it; and by boasting of it to David, he showed what opinion he had of him, that he would rejoice in it, as one altogether like himself; which was an intolerable affront to him, who had himself confessed he again refused to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. As to David, if indeed it were a lie, was highly criminal, and proved, as sooner or later that sin will prove, lying against his own head.

2. He did honourably and well. Hereby he demonstrated the sincerity of his grief; discouraged all others from thinking, by doing the like, to gratify themselves with him; and did that which is right, proferring to judge between the just, and win upon them, and recommend him to the people, as one that was zealous for public justice, without regard to his own private interest. We may learn from it, that to give assistance to any in murdering themselves, directly or indirectly, if done wittingly, incurs the guilt of blood; and that the lives of princes ought to be, in a special manner, precious to us.
17. And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 18. (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher:) 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were sweeter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights: who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel. 25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. 27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

When David had rent his clothes, and wept, and fasted, for the death of Saul, and done justice upon him who made himself guilty of it, one would think he had made full payment of the debt of honour he owed to his memory; yet this is not all: we have here a poem he wrote on the occasion; for he was a great master of his pen as well as sword. By this elegy he designed both to express his own sorrow for this great calamity, and to impress the like on the minds of others, who ought to lay it to heart. The putting of lamentations into poems, made them, 1. The more moving and affecting. The passion of the poet, or singer, is, by this way, wonderfully communicated to the readers and hearers. 2. The more lasting. Thus they were made, not only to spread far, but to continue long; from generation to generation. These might gain information by poems, that would not read history. Here we have,

I. The orders David gave with this elegy; (v. 18.) He bade them teach the children of Judah (his own tribe, whatever others did) the use of the bow: either, 1. The bow used in war. Not but that the children of Judah knew how to use the bow; (it was so commonly used in war, long before this, that the sword and bow were put for all we pens of war, Gen. 49. 24.) but, perhaps, they had of late made more use of it. As David, in killing Goliath, because base-born; which David would have them now to see the inutility of, (for they were the archers of the Philistines) so hard upon Saul, 1 Sam. 31. 5. While I return more generally to the use of the bow, to exercise themselves in this weapon, that they might be in a capacity to avenge the death of their prince upon the Philistines, and to outdo them at their own weapon. It was pity but those that had such good heads and hearts, as the children of Judah, should not be well armed. David hereby showed his authority over, and concern for, the armies of Israel, for let himself to rectify the errors of the former reign. But we find that the companies which were now come to David to Ziklag, were armed with bows; (1 Chron. 12. 2.) therefore, 2. Some understand it, either of some musical instrument called a bow, to which he would have the mournful ditties sung, or, of the elegy itself; he bade them teach the children of Judah, Ketheth, the bow, that is, this song, which was so entitled, for the sake of Jonathan's bow; the archers of Ziklag are here celebrated. Moses commanded Israel to learn his song, (Deut. 31. 19.) so David his. Probably, he bade the Levites teach them. It is written in the book of Jasher, there it was kept upon record, and from thence transcribed into this history. That book was, probably, a collection of state poems; what is said to be written in that book, (Josh. 10. 13.) is also poetical, a fragment of an historical poem. Ere such songs could be forgotten and losd, if they were not committed to writing, that best conservatory of knowledge.

II. The elegy itself. It is not a divine hymn, nor given by inspiration of God, to be used in divine service; nor is there any mention of God in it; but is a human composition, and therefore was inserted, not in the book of Psalms, which, being divine original, is preserved; but in the book of Jasher, which, being only a collection of common poems, is long since lost.

This elegy bespeaks David to be,

1. A man of an excellent spirit, in four things.

(1.) He was very generous to Saul, his sworn enemy. Saul was his father-in-law, his sovereign, and the anointed of the Lord; and therefore, though he had done him a great deal of wrong, he does not wreak his revenge upon his memory when he is in his grave; but, like a good man, and a man of honour, [1.] He conceals his faults: and though there was no preventing of their appearance in his history, yet they should not appear in this elegy. Charity teaches us to make the best we can of every body; and these we can say no good of, to say nothing of, especially when they are gone. De mortuis nil nisi bonum—Speak evil of no one. We ought to deny ourselves the satisfaction of making personal reflections upon those who have offended us, and show no more drawing their character from thence, as if every man must of necessity be a bad man, that has done ill by us. Let the corrupt part of the memory be buried with the corrupt part of the man, earth to earth, ashes to ashes; let the blemish be hidden, and a veil drawn over the defamity. [2.] He celebrates that which was praise-worthy in him. He does not condemn him for that which he was not; saw nothing in his life, his piety, his public service, and all his commendations, which are gathered out of the spoils of truth, are not at all to the praise of those on whom they are bestowed, but very much the dispraise of those who unjustly misplace them. But he has this to say, in honour of Saul himself, First, That he was anointed with oil, (v. 21.) the sacred oil, which signified his elevation to, and qualification for, the government. Where, however, he was anointed, (Lev. 4. 12.) and, on that account, he was to be honored, because God, the Fountain of honour, had honoured him. Secondly, That he was a man of war, a mighty man, (v. 19-21.) that he had often been victorious over the enemies of Israel, and vexed them whithersoever he turned; (1 Sam. 14. 17.) his sword
II. SAMUEL, II.

383

returned not empty, but satiated with blood and spoil, v. 22. His disgrace and fall, at last, must not make his former successes and services to be forgotten. Though his sun set under a cloud, time was, when it shone bright. Thirdly, That, when he joined with Jonathan, he was a man of a very agreeable temper, that recommended himself to the affections of his subjects; (v. 23.) Saul and Jonathan were as two olive-oil vessels joined together. God was always with Saul, and Saul was as long as he concerned with him. Take them together, and in the pursuit of the enemy, never were men more bold, more brave, swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions. Observe, They that were most fierce and fiery in the camp, were no less sweet and lovely in the court; as amiable to the subject, as they were formidable to the foe; a rare composition of softness and sharpness they had, of which no man could reason any very happy. It may be understood of the harmony and affection, that, for the most part, subsisted between Saul and Jonathan; they were lovely and pleasant one another. Jonathan a dutiful son, Saul an affectionate father, and therefore dear to each other in their lives, and in their death they were not divided, but kept close together in the stand they made against the Philistines, and fell together in the same cause. Fourthly, To the desire of his country with the spoils of conquered nations, and introduced a more splendid attire. When they had a king like the nations, they must have clothes like the nations; and herein he was, in a particular manner, obligeing to his female subjects, v. 24. The daughters of Israel clothed in scarlet, which was their delight.

(2) He was very grateful to Jonathan his sworn friend. Beside the tears he shed over him, and the encomiums he gives of him in common with Saul, he mentions him with some marks of distinction; (v. 25.) O Jonathan, thou wast slain in them high places! which, compared with v. 19. intimates that he meant him by the beauty of Israel, which, he there says, was slain upon the high places. He laments Jon than as his particular friend; (v. 26.) My brother Jonathan; not so much of what he would have been to him if he had lived, very viceregal, no doubt, in his advancement to the throne, and instrumental to prevent those long struggles, which, for want of his assistance, he had with the house of Saul: had this been the only ground of his grief, it had been selfish) but he lamented him for what he had been: "Very pleasant hast thou been unto me, but that pleasantness is now over, and I am desolate."

He had declared that Jonathan's love to him was wonderful; sure never the like, for a man to love one who he knew was to take the crown over his head; and he was so faithful to his rival; this far surpassed the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy. See here, [1.] That nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend, that is wise and good, that kind and charitable; Saul's body returns our affection, and is thankful to us in all the interim of the time. There is nothing more distressful than the less of such a friend; it is parting with a piece of one's self. It is the vanity of this world, that what is most pleasant to us, we are most liable to be distressed from. The more we love, the more we grieve.

(3.) He was deeply concerned for the honour of God; for that is it which he has an eye to, when he feigns that the daughters of the uncircumcised, that are out of covenant with God, triumph over Israel, and the God of Israel. v. 20. Good men are touched in a very sensible part by the reproaches of them that reproach God.

(4.) He was deeply concerned for the public welfare. It was the beauty of Israel that was slain, (v. 19.) and the honour of the public that was disgraced; the mighty are fallen, that is three times lamented, (v. 19, 23, 27.) and so the strength of the people is weakened. Public losses are most laid to heart by men of public spirits. David hoped God would make him instrumental to repair their losses, and yet laments them.

2. David here shows himself to be a man of a fine imagination, as well as a wise and holy man. The expression is altogether grand and calculated to work upon the passions. The most usurious would fail lay upon a name, is elegant. (v. 20.) Tell it not in Gath. It grieved him to the heart, to think that it would be proclaimed in the cities of the Philistines, and that they would insult over Israel upon it, and the more, in remembrance of the victories of Israel over them formerly, when they sung, Saul has slain his thousands, that would now be retracted. (5.) The curse he entailed on the mountains of Gilboa, the theatre on which this tragedy was acted, Let there be no dew upon you, nor fields of offerings, v. 21. This is a peculiar strain, like that of Job, Let the day perish wherein I was born. Not as if David wished that any part of the land of Israel might be barren, but, to express his sorrow for the thing, he speaks with a seeming indignation at the place. Observe, [1.] How the fruitfulness of the earth was likely to be diminished, when Saul was dead. The worst thing he could wish to the mountains of Gilboa, was barrenness, and unprofitableness to mind: these are miserable, that are useless; it was the curse Christ pronounced on the fig-tree, Not a fruit grow on thee more; and that took effect, the fig-tree withered away; this, on the mountains of Gilboa, did not; but when he was shed his blood, he wished there might be no rain upon them and if the heavens be brass, the earth a pot in the fire, he is more fit to every man should aim at the fruits of the earth, to prevent this; for the fruitfulness of the earth must therefore be devoted to heaven; which is intimated in his calling the fruitful fields, fields of offerings. These fruits of their land that were offered to God, were the crown and glory of its and therefore the failure of the offerings is the saddest consequence of the failure of the corn. See Joel 1. 9. To want that wherewith we should honour God, is worse than to want that wherewith we should serve ourselves. To be a curse to God is to be a blessing to ourselves. David fastens upon the mountains of Gilboa, which, having been stained with royal blood, thereby forfeited celestial dews. In this elegy, Saul had a more honourable interment, than that which the men of Jabesh-gilead gave him.

CHAP. II.

David had paid due respect to the memory of Saul's prince, and Jonathan his friend, and what he did, was as much his praise as theirs; he is now considering what is to be done next. Saul is dead, now therefore David arises. 1. By direction from God, he went up to Hebron, and was acknowledged king. 2. He received thanks to the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul, v. 3. 7. 3. Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, is set up in opposition to him, v. 5. 11. A warm encounter happened between David and Ish-bosheth, which, 1. Twelve of each side engaged hand to hand, and were all slain, v. 13. 16. 2. Saul's party was beaten, v. 17. 3. Asahel, on David's side, was slain by Abner, v. 18. 23. 4. Jonathan, Abner's brother, speaks a revolt, v. 24. 25. 5. Abner takes the best of his way, (v. 29.) and the loss on both sides compared, v. 30. 38. So that here we have an account of a civil war in Israel, which in process of time, ended in the complete settlement of David on the throne.

1. AND it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the Lorp, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lorp said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said Unto Hebron. 2. So David went up
thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail, Nabal's wife, the Carmelitess. 3. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. 5. And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. 6. And now the Lord show kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

When Saul and Jonathan were dead, though David knew himself anointed to be king, and now saw his way very clear, yet he did not immediately send messengers through all the coasts of Israel, to summon all people to come in and swear allegiance to him, upon pain of death, but proceeded leisurely; for he that believeth, doth not make haste, but waits God's time for the accomplishment of God's promises. Many were come in to his assistance from several tribes, while he continued at Ziklag, (as we find, 1 Chron. 12, 1-22,) and by such a force he might have come in by conquest; but he that will rule with meekness, will not rise with violence. Observe here,

1. The direction he sought and had from God, in this critical juncture, v. 1. He doubted not of success, yet he uses proper means, both divine and human. Assurance of hope in God's promise, will be so far from slackening, that it will quicken pious endeavours. If I be elected to the crown of life, it does not follow, Then will I do nothing; but, Then I will do all that he directs me, and follow his counsel: which this good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen.

2. David, according to the precept, acknowledged God in his way. He inquired of the Lord, by the breast-plate of judgment, which Abiathar brought him. We must apply ourselves to God, not only when we are in distress, but even then when the world smiles upon us, and second causes work in favour of us. His inquiry was, Shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah? Shall I still continue at Ziklag? Though Ziklag be in ruins, he will not quit it without direction from God: "If I stir hence, shall I go up to one of the cities of Judah?" Not limiting God to them; if God should so direct him, he would go to any of the cities of Israel. But it bespeaks his prudence, in the cities of Judah he would find most friends; and his modesty, he would look no further at present than his own tribe. In all the promises of God's grace, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us. 2. God, according to the promise, directed his path, bade him go up, told him whither, unto Hebron, a priest's city, one of the cities of refuge; so it was to David, and an intimation that God himself would be to him a little Sanctuary. The sepulchres of the patriarchs, adding to Hebron, would remind him of the ancient promise, on which God had caused him to hope. God sent him, not to Beth-lehem his own city, because that was little among the thousands of Judah; (Mic. 5. 2.) but to Hebron, a more considerable place, and which, perhaps, was then as the country town of that tribe.

II. The family and friends of David in his remove to Hebron. 1. He took his wives with him, (v. 2.) that, as they had been companions with him in tribulation, they might be so in the kingdom. It does not appear that as yet he had any children; his first-born was in Hebron, ch. 3. 2. 2. He took his friends and followers with him; (v. 3.) they had accompanied him in his wanderings, and therefore, when he gained a settlement, they should go with him. Thus he says to them, We shall reign with him, 2 Tim. 2. 2. Nay, Christ does more for his good soldiers, than David could do for his; he found lodging for them, They dwelt in the cities of Hebron, the adjacent towns; but to those who continue with Christ in his temptations, he appoints a kingdom, and will feast them at his own table, Luke 22. 29, 30.

III. The honour done him by the men of Judah; they anointed him king over the house of Judah, v. 4. The tribe of Judah had often stood by itself, more than any other of the tribes; in Saul's time it was numbered by itself as a distinct body, (1 Sam. 15. 4.) and had been used to act separately; they did so now; yet they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel, (as Judg. 9. 22.) but only over the house of Judah; the rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but as for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God had chosen. See how David rose gradually; he was first anointed king in resurrection, then, in possession, of one tribe only, and, at last, of all the tribes, thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the son of David, is set up by degrees; he is Lord of all, by divine designation, but we see not yet all things put under him, Heb. 2. 8. David's reigning at first over the house of Judah only, was a tacit intimation of Providence, that his kingdom would in a short time be reduced to that again, as it was when the ten tribes revolted from his grandson, and it would be an encouragement to the godly kings of Judah, that David himself, at first, reigned over Judah only.

IV. The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabesh-gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness which he had shewn them. So that he paid a due respect to the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to show, that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition, or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him, that the men of Jabesh-gilead buried Saul, perhaps, by some that thought he would have been displeased at them as over-officiants. But he was far from that; 1. He commended them for it, v. 5. 2. He ordered the house of the Lord, who will deal kindly with the dead, as it is in Ruth 1. 8. Due respect and affection showed to the bodies, names, and families, of those that are dead, in conscience toward God, is a piece of charity, which shall in no wise lose its reward, The Lord show kindness and truth to you! (v. 6.) that is, kindness according to the promise: what kindness God shows, is, in truth, what one
may trust to. 3. He promises to make them amends for it, 
also will requite you. He does not turn them over to God for recompense, that he might excuse himself from rewarding them; good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude, but they are too cheap to be rested in where there is an ability to do more. 4. He prudently takes this opportunity to gain them to his interest, v. 7. They had paid their last respects to Saul, and had hoped they would have them to be the 1st; “The house of 
Judah have anointed me king, and it will be your 
wisdom to concur with them, and in that to be 
valiant.” We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or 
desire the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.

8. But Abner the son of Ner, captain of 
Saul’s host, took Ish-bosheth the son of 
Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim: 
9. And he made him king over Gilead, and 
over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and 
over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and 
over all Israel. 10. Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, 
was forty years old when he began to reign 
over Israel, and reigned two years. But 
the house of Judah followed David. 11. 
And the time that David was king in 
Hebron, over the house of Judah, was seven 
years and six months. 12. And Abner 
the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-
boseth the son of Saul, went out from 
Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13. And Joab the 
son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David, 
went out, and met together by the pool of 
Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the 
one side of the pool, and the other on the 
other side of the pool. 14. And Abner 
said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, 
and play before us. And Joab said, Let 
them arise. 15. Then there arose, and 
went over by number, twelve of Benjamin, 
which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of 
Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 
16. And they caught every one his fellow 
by the head, and thrust his sword into his 
fellow’s side; so they fell down together: 
wherefore that place was called Helkath-
azzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17. And 
there was a very sore battle that day: and 
Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, 
before the servants of David.

Here is,

1. A rivalryship between two kings; David, whom 
God made king, and Ish-bosheth, whom Abner 
made king. One would have thought, when Saul 
was slain, and all his sons that had sense and spirit 
enough to take the field with him, David should 
have come to the throne without any oppo-
sition, since all Israel knew not only how he had signalized 
himself, but also that manifestly God had destined him to it; but such a spirit of contradiction is there, 
in the devices of men, to the counsels of God, that 
such a weak and silly thing as Ish-bosheth, who was 
not thought fit to go with his father to the battle, 
shall yet be thought fit to succeed him in the go-
vernment, rather than David shall come peaceably 
to it. Herein David’s kingdom was typical of the 
Messiah’s, against which the heathens rage, and 
the rulers take counsel, Ps. 2. 1, 2. 1. Abner was the 
person who set up Ish-bosheth in competition with 
David; perhaps, in his zeal for the linear success-
ion; since they must have a king like the nations, 
in this they must be like them, that the crown must 
descend from father to son. Or rather, in his affec-
tion to his own family and relations, (for he was 
Saul’s uncle,) and because he had no other way to 
secure to himself the rest of honour he was in, as 
captain of the host. See how much mischief the 
pride and ambition of one man may be the occasion 
of. Ish-bosheth would never have set up himself, 
if Abner had not set him up, and made a tool of him 
to serve his own purposes. 2. Mahanaim was the 
place where he first made his claim. On the other 
side Jordan, Saul’s house was very strong, and David 
had the least interest, and being at a distance from 
his forces, they might have time to strengthen them-
elves. But, having set up his standard there, the 
unthinking people of all the tribes of Israel, that 
is, the generality of them submitted to him, (v. 9.) 
and Judah only was entire for David. This was a 
further trial of the faith of David in the promise 
of God, and of his patience, whether he could wait 
God’s time, and in the meantime silence the perjury 
of Abner. 3. Some difficulty there is about the time of 
the continuance of this competition. David reigned 
over Judah only, about seven years; (v. 11.) and 
yet (v. 10.) Ish-bosheth reigned over Israel but 
two years: either before these two years, or 
after, or both, it was in general for the house of 
Judah, (ch. 3. 6.) and not any particular person 
of that house, that Abner declared. Or, these two 
years he reigned before the war broke out, (v. 12.) 
which continued long, even the remaining five 
years, ch. 3. 1.

II. A encounter between their two armies. It 
does not appear that either side brought their whole 
force into the field, for the slaughter was but small, 
v. 30, 31. We may wonder, 1. That the men of 
Judah did not appear and act more vigorously for 
David, to reduce all the nation into obedience to him; but, it is likely, David would not 
let them act offensively, choosing rather to wait till the thing would do itself, or rather till God would do it 
for him, without the effusion of Israelitish blood, 
for to him, as a type of Christ, that was very 
precious, Ps. 72. 14. Even these that were his adver-
saries he looked upon as his subjects, and would 
treat them accordingly. 2. That the men of Israel 
could in a month, and perhaps in forty days, be 
formed under Ish-bosheth, for so many years, especially 
considering what characters many of the tribes 
displayed at this time, as we find, 1 Chron. 12. 23, 
&c. Wise men, mighty men, men of valour, ex-
pert in war, and not of double heart, and yet 
for seven years together, for aught that appears, most 
of them seemed indifferent in whose hand the pub-
lic administration was. Divine Providence serves 
such occasions, by the stupidity of men at some 
times, and the activity of the same persons at 
other times; they are unlike themselves, and yet 
the motions of Providence uniform.

(1.) In this battle Abner was the aggressor. 
David sat still to see how the matter would fall; 
but the house of Saul, and Abner at the head of it, 
gave the challenge, and they went by the worst. 
Therefore go not forth hastily to strive, nor be 
for ever ready to begin a quarrel, lest they shew not what to 
do in the end thereof, Prov. 25. 8. A fool’s lips 
and hands enter into contention.

(2.) The seat of the war was Gibeon; Abner 
chose it, because it was in the lot of Benjamin, 
where Saul had the most friends; yet, since he of-
II.

The engagement was first proposed by Abner, and accepted by Joab, v. 14. 

II. The trial of skill began in sport. Abner made the motion, v. 14. Let the young men arise, and play before us, as gladiators; perhaps, Saul had used his men to these barbarous pastimes, like a tyrant indeed, and Abner had learnt it, to make a jest of wounds and death, and divert himself with the scenes of blood and horror. He meant, Let them fight before us, when here and now. Let them play before us, that we may make a mock at sin. But he is unworthy the name of a man, that can thus prophage of human blood, that can thus throw about fire-brands, arrows, and death, and say, Am not I a sport? Prov. 26. 18, 19. Joab, having been bred up under David, had so much wisdom as not to make such a proposal, yet had not resolution enough to resist and gainsay it when another made it. He did not think it wrong as a pastime before the house of honor, and thought it blemish to his reputation to refuse a challenge; and therefore said, Let them arise; not that he was fond of the sport, or expected that the duels would be decisive, but he would not be hectored by his antagonist. How many precious lives have thus been sacrificed to the caprice of proud men! Twelve of each side were accordingly called out as champions to enter the lists, a double jury of life and death, not of others, but their own; and Abner's champions on Abner's side seem to have been most forward, for they took the field first, (v. 15.) having, perhaps, been bred up in a fellowish ambition, thus to serve the humour of their commander-in-chief. But, [2.] However it began, it ended in blood; (v. 16.) they thrust every man his sword into his fellow's side, spurred on by honour, not by envy; so they fell down together, that is, all the twenty-four were slain; such an equal match were they for one another, and so resolute, that neither side would either beg or give quarter; they did it as were by agreement, (says Josephus,) despacth one another with mutual wounds. They strike at other men's lives, often throw away their own, and death only conquers and rides in triumph. The wonderful obduracy of both sides was remembered in the same given to the place, Hezolath-hazzuram, the field of swiftness, which was not only strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy, that stirred not at the sight of death. Yet the stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, Ps. 76. 5. Poor honour for men to purchase at so vast an expense: they that lose their lives for Christ shall find them. (4.)

The whole army, at length, engaged, and Abner's forces were routed, v. 17. The former was a drawn battle, in which all were killed on both sides, and therefore they must put it upon another trial, in which (as it often happens) they give the challenge went away with loss. David had God on his side; his side therefore was victorious.

12. And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abishai, and Asahel: and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. 

13. And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand nor to the left from following Abner. 20. Then Abner looked behind him, and said, Art thou Asahel? And he answered, I am. 21. And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22. And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? 23. Howbeit, he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner, with the hinder end of the spear, smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still. 24. Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that is the field before Giah, by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

We have here the contest between Abner and Asahel: Asahel, the brother of Joab, and cousin-german to David, was one of the principal commanders of David's forces, and on running in pursuit of Abner, was killed, as he ran, with the spear under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died. Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that is, before Giah, by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

We have here the contest between Abner and Asahel: Asahel, the brother of Joab, and cousin-german to David, was one of the principal commanders of David's forces, and on running in pursuit of Abner, was killed, as he ran, with the spear under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died. Joab also and Abishai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that is, before Giah, by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.
and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.

3. How fatal Asahel’s rashness was to him. He refused to turn aside, thinking that Abner spoke so kindly, because he feared him; but what came of it? Abner, as soon as he came up to him, gave him his death’s wound with a back stroke; (v. 25.) he smote him with the hinder end of his spear, from which he feared no danger. This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against; but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done execution with it; and here it did effectual execution, Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here, (1.) How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy, or the butt-end of a spear? Yet from these Asahel receives his death’s wound. (2.) How we are often betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel’s swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he ran upon his death, instead of running from it. Asahel’s fall was not only Abner’s security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror’s pursuit, and gave Abner time to rally again; for all that came to the place, stood still: only Joab and Abishai, instead of being over-ruled, were exasperated by it, pursued Abner with so much the more fury, (v. 24.) and overtook him at last about sunset, when the approaching night would oblige them to retire.

25. And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of a hill. 26. Then Abner called to Joa>, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27. And Joab said, As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28. So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29. And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahaim. 30. And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David’s servants nineteen men and Asahel. 31. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin, and of Abner’s men, so that three hundred and threescore men died. 32. And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Beth-lehem. And Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Here, 1. Abner being conquered, meanly begs for a cessation of arms: he rallied the remains of his forces on the top of a hill, (v. 25.) as if he would have made head again, but becomes a humble suppliant to Joab for a little breathing-time, v. 26. He that was most forward to fight, was the first that had enough of it. He that made a jest of bloodstream, v. 14. Let the young men arise and play before us, is now shocked at it, when he finds himself on the losing side; and the sword he made so light of drawing, threatening to touch himself. Observe how his note is changed: then, it was but playing with the sword; now, Shall the sword devour for ever? It had devoured but one day, yet Joab would not let him alone; this it went against him; and very willing he is now, that the sun should not go down upon his wrath. Now he can appeal to Joab himself concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? It will be reflected upon with regret, when the account comes to be made up; for whoever gets in a civil war, the community is sure: Perhaps it refers to the bitterness that was in the tribes of Israel hid at the end of their war with Benjamin, when they wept sore for the desolations which they themselves had made, Judg. 21. 2. Now he begs of Joab to sound a retreat, and pleads that they were brethren, who ought not thus to bite and devour one another: he that in the morning would have Joab bid the people fall upon their brethren, now would have bid them lay down their arms. See here, (1.) How it is for men to use reason, when it suits for them who would not use it if it made against them? If Abner had been the conqueror, we should not have had him complaining of the voraciousness of the sword, and the miseries of a civil war, nor pleading that both sides were brethren; but, finding himself beaten, all these reasons are mustered up and improved for the securing of his retreat, and the saving of his scattered troops from being cut off. (2.) How the issue of things alters men’s minds. The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal. These that are forward to enter into contention, will, perhaps, repent it before they have done with it, and therefore had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon advises. It is true of every sin, (O that men would consider it in time!) that it will be bitterness in the latter end. At the last, it bares, like a serpent, those on whom it travailed.

2. Joab, though a conqueror, generously grants it, and sounds a retreat, knowing very well his master’s mind, and how adverse he was to the shedding of blood. He does indeed justly upbraid Abner with his forwardness to engage; he lays the blame upon him, that there had been so much blood shed as there was; (v. 27.) Unles thou hast spoken, that is, "hadst given orders to fight, and then the young men arise and play before us, none of us had struck a stroke, nor drawn a sword against our brethren. Thou complainest that the sword devours: but who first unsheathed it? Who began? Now thou wouldst have the people parted, but remember who set them on to fight. We had retired in the morning, if thou hadst not given the challenge." Those that are forward to make mischief, and commonly the first to begin with it, might have served to excuse Joab, if he had pushed on his victory, and made a full end of Abner’s forces; but, like one that pitied the mistake of his adversaries, and scorned to make an army of Israelites pay dear for the folly of their commander, he very honourably, by sound of trumpet, put a stop to the pursuit, (v. 28.) and suffered Abner to make an orderly retreat. It is good for war to begin with an odds, and end with a misfortune. The elders were here very obsequious to the general’s orders, so he, no doubt, observed the instructions of his prince, who sought the welfare of all Israel, and therefore not the hurt of any. 3. The armies being separated, both retired to the places whence they came, and both marched in the night; Abner to Mahaim, on the other
side Jordan, (v. 29.) and Joab to Hebron, where David was, v. 32. The slain on both sides are computed. On David's side, only nineteen men were missing, and Asahel, (v. 30.) who was worth more than all; on Abner's side, three hundred and three score, v. 31. In civil wars formerly great slaughters had been made; (as Judg. 12. 6—20. 44.) in comparison with which, this was nothing. It is to be hoped that they were grown wiser and more moderate. Asahel's funeral is here mentioned; the rest they buried in the field of battle, but he was carried to Beth-lehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father, v. 32. Thus are distinctions made between the dust of some and that of others; but in the resurrection no other difference will be made, but that between godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

CHAP. III.

The battle between Joab and Abner did not end the controversy between the two houses of Saul, and David, but it is in this chapter working towards a period. Here is 1. The gradual advance of David's interest, v. 1. II. The building up of his family, v. 2—5. III. Abner's quarrel with Ish-bosheth, and his treaty with David, v. 6—12. IV. The preliminaries settled, v. 13—16. V. Abner's undertaking and attempt to lead Israel over to David, v. 17—21. VI. The treacherous murder of Abner, by Joab, when he was carrying on this matter, 22—27. VII. David's great concern and trouble for the death of Abner, v. 28—39.

1. NOW there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. 2. And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; 3. And his second, Chileab, of Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite; and the third, Absalom, the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur; 4. And the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Hagith; and the fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital; 5. And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah, David's wife. These were born to David in Hebron. 6. And it came to pass, while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul. Here is, 1. The struggle that David had with the house of Saul, before his settlement in the throne was completed, v. 1. (1.) Both sides contested; Saul's house, though beheaded and diminished, would not fail tamely. It is not strange that there was war between them; but one would wonder it should be a long war, when David's house had right on its side, and therefore God on its side; but though truth and equity will triumph at last, God may, for wise and holy ends, prolong the conflict. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his establishment at last the more welcome to him. (2.) David's side got ground. The house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, lost men, sunk in its reputation, grew less considerable, was foiled in every engagement; but the house of David grew stronger and stronger; many deserted the declining cause of Saul's house, and prudently came into David's interest, being convinced that he would certainly win the day. The contest between grace and corruption in the hearts of believers, who are sanctified but in part, may fitly be compared to this recorded here. There is a long war between them, the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; but as the work of sanctification is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of David, grows stronger and stronger, and will conquer in the person of Jesus, man, and judgment be brought forth unto victory. 2. The increase of his own house. Here is an account of six several wives, in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. Perhaps this is mentioned here, as that which strengthened David's interest; every child, whose welfare was embarked in the common safety, was a fresh security given to the commonwealth for his care of it. He that has his queer filled with arrows, shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. 127. 5. As the death of Saul's sons weakened his interest, so the birth of David's strengthened his. (1.) It was David's fault thus to multiply wives, contrary to the law, (Deut. 17. 17.) and it was a bad example to his successors. (2.) It does not appear, that in these seven years he had above one son by each of these wives; some have had as numerous a progeny, and with much more honour and comfort by one wife. (3.) We read not that any of these sons came to be famous, three of them were infamous, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; we have therefore reason to rejoice with trembling, in the building up of our families. (4.) His son by Abigail is called Chileab, v. 3; whereas, 1 Chron. 3. 1. he is called Daniel. Bishop Patrick tells the reason which the Hebrew doctors give for these names: that his first name was Daniel, God has judged me, namely, against Nabal; but David's enemies reproached him, and said, "It was Nabals son, and not David's;" to confute which calumny, Providence so ordered it, that, as he grew up, he became, in his countenance and features, extremely like David, and resembled him more than any of his children, upon which he gave him the name of Chileab, which signifies, like his father; or, the father's picture. (5.) Absalom's mother is said to be the daughter of Zeruiah, which, if this was Michal, as it probably is, and is said to be the daughter of Saul's brother, it is perhaps thus: David, perhaps did thereby hope to strengthen his interest, but the issue of the marriage was one that proved his grief and shame. (6.) The last is called David's wife, which therefore, some think, was Michal, his first and most rightful wife, called here by another name; and though she had no child after she mocked David, she might have had before. (7.) This was David's house strengthened; but it was Abner that made himself strong for the house of Saul, which is mentioned, (v. 6.) to show that if he failed them, they would fail of course. 7. And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? 8. Then was Abner very wroth, for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to-day with a fault concerning this woman? 9. So do God to Abner, and more also, except as the Lord hath sworn to David, even so I do to him; 10. To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the
thron of David over Israel, and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. 11. And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him. 12. And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. 13. And he said, Well; I will make a league with thee: but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face. 14. And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. 15. And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. 16. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned. 17. And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: 18. Now then do it: for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies. 19. And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin: and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. 20. So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him: and David made Abner, and the men that were with him, a feast. 21. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away; and he went in peace.

Here,

1. Abner breaks with Ish-bosheth, and deserts his interest, upon a little provocation which Ish-bosheth unadvisedly gave him. God can serve his own purposes by the sins and follies of men. 2. Ish-bosheth accused Abner of no less a crime than debauching one of his father's concubines, v. 7. Whether it was so or no, does not appear, nor what ground he had for the suspicion: but however it was, it had been Ish-bosheth's prudence to contrive at it, considering how much it was his interest to disable Abner. If the thing was false, and his jealous groundless, it was very dishonorable and ungrateful to entertain unjust surmises of one who had ventured his all for him, and was certainly the best friend he had in the world. 2. Abner resented the charge very deeply. Whether he was guilty of the fault concerning this woman, or no, he does not say, (v. 8.) but we suspect he was guilty, for he does not expressly deny it; and though he was, he lets Ish-bosheth know, (1.) that he scorned to be reproached with it by him, and would not take it at his hands. "What!" says Abner, "am I a dog's head, a vile and contemptible animal, that thou exposest me thus? v. 8. Is this my recompense for the kindness I have shown to thee and thy father's house, and that I have served thee?" He has done one. He magnifies the service with this: That if it was against Judah, the tribes on which the crown was settled, and which would certainly have it at last; so that, in supporting the house of Saul, he acted both against his conscience, and against his interest, for which he deserved a better requital than this: and yet, perhaps, he would not have been so zealous for the house of Saul, if he had not thereby gratified his own ambition, and hoped to find his own account in it. Note, Proud men will not bear to be proved, especially by those whom they think they have obliged. (2.) That he would certainly be avenged on him, v. 9, 10. With the utmost degree of arrogance and insolence, he lets him know, that, as he had raised him up, so he could pull him down again, and would do it. He knew that God had sworn to David to give him the kingdom, and yet he unsuspected his power so little, that he thought he could betray David with all his confidence: but now he complies with it from a principle of revenge, under colour of some regard to the will of God, which was but a pretence. They that are slaves to their lusts, have many masters, which drive, some one way, and some another, and according as they make head, men are violently hurried into self-contradictions. Abner's ambition made him zealous for Ish-bosheth, and now his revenge made him betray him, for he had sincerely regarded God's promise to David, and acted with an eye to that, he had been steady and uniform in his counsels, and acted in consistence with himself. But while Abner serves his own lusts, God, by him, serves his own purposes, makes even his wrath and revenge to praise him, and ordains strength to David by it. Lastly, See how Ish-bosheth was thunderstruck by Abner's insolence; he could not bear him against him. v. 11. If Ish-bosheth had had the spirit of a man, especially of a great prince, he might have answered him, that his merits were the aggravation of his crimes: that he would not be served by so b·d a man, and doubted not but to do well enough without him. But he was conscious to himself of his own weakness, and therefore said not a word, lest he should make bad worse. His heart failed him, and he now became the better phụcor of David had foretold, concerning his enemies, like a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, Ps. 62. 3.

II. Abner treats with David. We must suppose that he began to grow weary of Ish-bosheth's cause, and sought an opportunity to desert it; or else, however he might threaten Ish-bosheth with it, for the quashing of the charge against himself, he would not have made good his angry words so often, as he did, v. 11. He now, from a private David, to tell him that he was at his service. "Where is the land? Is it not thine? For thou hast the best title to the government, and the best interest in the people's affections." Note, God can find out ways to make those serviceable to the kingdom of Christ, who yet have no sincere affection for it, and who have vigorously set themselves against it. Enemies are sometimes made a footstool, not only to be trodden upon, but to ascend by. The earth helped the woman.

III. David enters into a treaty with Abner, but upon condition that he procure him the restitution of Michal his wife, v. 13. Hereby, 1. David showed the sincerity of his conjugal affection to his first and most rightful wife; neither her marrying an-
II. And they were not at enmity together, that he might be reconciled to them; and he was therefrom and from his family of his enemy. Abner sent him word, that he must apply himself to Ish-bosheth, which he did, v. 14. pleading, that he had purchased her at a dear rate, and she was unwillingly taken from him. Ish-bosheth durst not deny his demand, now that he had not Abner to stand by him, but took her from Phaltiel, to whom Saul had married her, v. 15. and Abner conducted her to David, not doubting, but that then she should be doubly welcome, when he brought him a wife in one hand, and a crown in the other. Her latter husband was loath to part with her, and followed her weeping; (v. 16.) but there was no remedy, he must thank himself; for when he took her, he knew that another had a right to her. Usurpers must expect to resign. Let no man therefore set his heart on that which he is not entitled to. It is a great snare to knot husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God, let them be reconciled, and come together again; let all former quarrels be forgotten, and let them live together in love, according to God's holy ordinance.

IV. Abner uses his interest with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David; knowing, that which ever way they went, the common people would follow of course. Now that it serves his own turn, he can plead in David's behalf, that he was, 1. Israel's choice, (v. 17.) Ye sought for him in times past to be king over you; when he had subsidized himself in so many engagements with the Philistines, and done you so much good service; no man can pretend to greater person. I merit than David, nor to less than Ish-bosheth: you have tried them both, Detur dignior—Give the crown to him that best deserves it. Let David be your king. 2. God's choice; (v. 18.) The Lord hath spoken of David. Compare v. 9. When God appointed Samuel to anoint him, he did, in effect, promise, that by his hand he would save Israel; for, for that end he was made king. God having promised by David's hand, to save Israel, it is both your duty, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to his choice, and set him up in the world to oppose him. Who would have expected such recompences as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know, and own, that he has loved them, Rev. 3. 9. He particularly applied himself to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul; he was the man that had drawn them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed.

V. David concludes the treaty with Abner; and he did wisely and well therein, for, whatever induced Abner to it, it was a good work to put an end to the war, and to settle the Lord's anointed on the throne; and it was as lawful for David to make use of his agency, as for a person to receive presents from a Pharisee, who gives it in pride and hypocrisy. Abner reported to David the sense of the people, and the success of his communications with them, v. 19. He came now, not, as at first, privately, but with a retinue of twenty men, and David entertained them with a feast, (v. 20.) in token of reconciliation and joy, and as a pledge of the agreement between them: it was a feast upon a covenant, like that, Gen. 26. 30, If thou enemy hunger, feed him; but if he submit, feast him. Abner, pleased with his entertainment, the prevention of his fall with Saul's house, (which would have been inevitable, if he had not taken this course,) and much more with the prospect he had of preferment under David, undertakes, in a little time, to perfect the revolution, and to bring all Israel into obedience to David, v. 21. He tells David he shall reign over all that his heart desired. He knew David's elevation took rise from God's appointment, yet he insinuates that it sprang from his own ambition and desire of rule; thus (as bad men often do) he measured that good man by himself. However, David and he parted very good friends, and the affair between them was well settled. This he believes all, who fear God and keep his commandments, to avoid strife, even with the wicked; to live at peace with all men, and to show the world that they are children of the light.

22. And, behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: (but Abner was not with David in Hebron; for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.) 23. When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace: 24. Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? Behold, Abner came unto thee; why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? 25. Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out, and thy coming in, and to know all that thou doest.

And when Joab was come out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah; but David knew it not. 27. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate to speak with him quietly, and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. 28. And afterward, when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the Lord for ever from the blood of Abner the son of Ner. 29. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not fall from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that leaveneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread. 30. So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibeon in the battle. 31. And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Render your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And King David himself followed the bier. 32. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and
all the people wept. 33. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool died? 34. Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man fallth before wicked men, so fallest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35. And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down. 36. And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. 37. For all the people, and all Israel understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39. And I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me: the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

We have here an account of the murder of Abner by Joab, and David's deep resentment of it.

1. Joab very insolently fell upon David for treating with Abner. He happened to be abroad on service, when Abner was with David, pursuing a troop, either of Philistines, or of Saul's party; but, upon his return, was informed that Abner was just gone, (p. 32. 23.) and, that great and very kind things had past between David and him. He had all the reason in the world to be satisfied of David's prudence, and to acquiesce in the measures he took, knowing him to be a wise and good man himself, and under a divine conduct in all his affairs; and yet, as if he had the same sway in David's cause that Abner had in Ish-bosheth's, he chides David, and reproaches him to his face, as if a poltroon; (v. 24. 25.) What hast thou done? (v. 24.) As if David were answerable to him for what he did: *Why hast thou sent him away, when thou mightest have made him a prisoner? He came as a spy, and will certainly betray thee.* I know not whether to wonder more, that Joab had impudence enough to give such an affront to his prince, or that David had patience enough to take it. He does, in effect, call David a fool, when he tells him he knew Abner came to declare to him, and yet he trusted him. We find no answer that David gave him, not because he feared him, as Ish-bosheth did Abner, (p. 11.) but because he despised him, or because Joab had not so much good manners as to stay for an answer.

II. He very treacherously sent for Abner back, and, under colour of a private conference with him, barbarously killed him with his own hand. That he made it under David's name, under pretence of giving him some further instructions, is intimated in that, but David knew it not, v. 26. Abner, designing no harm, feared none, but very innocently returned to Hebron, and when he found Joab waiting for him at the gate, turned aside with him to speak with him privately, forgetting what he himself had said, when he slew Asahel, *How shall I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?* (ch. 2. 22.) and there Joab murdered him; (v. 27.) and it is intimated, (p. 50.) that Abishai was privy to the design, and was siding and abetting, and would have come in to his brother's assistance, if there had been occasion; he is therefore charged as an accessory; Joab and Abishai slew Abner; though perhaps he only knew it, who is privy to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts.

Now in this, 1. It is certain that the Lord was righteous. Abner had maliciously, and against the convictions of his conscience, opposed David; he had now basely deserted Ish-bosheth, and betrayed him, under pretence of regard to God and Israel, but really from a principle of pride and revenge, and impatience of control; God will not therefore use so bad a man, though David might use so good a work, as the uniting of Israel. Judgments are prepared for such scorners as Abner was. But, 2. It is as certain that Joab was unrighteous, and, in what he did, did wickedly. David was a man after God's heart, but could not have those about him, no not in places of the greatest trust, after his own heart. Many a good prince, and a good master, has been so much forced to employ bad men. (1.) Even the pretence for doing this was very unjust. Joab had indeed slain his brother Asaiah, and Joab and Abishai pretended herein to be the avengers of his blood; (v. 27. 30.) but Abner slew Asaiah in an open war, wherein Abner indeed had given the challenge, but Joab himself had accepted it, and had slain many of Abner's friends; he did it likewise in his own defence, and not till he had given him fair warning, which he was sure to draw, by which he had (in the strict acceptation of the word) committed murder, and so was guilty of murder: but Joab here shed the blood of war in peace, I Kings 2. 5. (2.) That which we have reason to think was at the bottom of Joab's enmity to Abner, made it much worse. Joab was now general of David's forces; but if Abner should come into his interest, he would possibly be preferred before him, being a senior officer, and more experienced in the art of war. This Joab was jealous of, and could not bear it, nor could he hear the thought of the guilt of blood, than the thoughts of a rival. (3.) He did it treacherously, and under pretence of speaking peaceably to him, Deut. 27. 24. Had he challenged him, he had done like a soldier; but to assassinate him was done villainously, and like a coward. His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords. Ps. 53. 21. Thus he basely slew Asaiah, ch. 20. 9. 10. (4.) The doing of it was a great affront and injury to David, who was now in treaty with Abner, and his people; and Joab was now actually in his master's service, so that, through his side he struck at David himself. (5.) It was a great aggravation of the murder, that he did it in the gate, openly and avowedly, as one that was not ashamed, nor could blush. The gate was the place of judgment and the place of concourse; so that he did it in defiance of justice, both the just sentence of the magistrates, and the just sentiments of the crowd; as one that neither feared God, nor regarded man, but thought himself above all control; and Hebron was a Levites' city, and a city of refuge.

III. David laid it deeply to the heart, and many ways expressed his detestation of this execrable villain.

1. He washed his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood. Lest any should suspect that Joab had some secret intimacy from David to do as he did, (and the rather, because he went so long unpunished,) he here solemnly appeals to God concerning his innocence; I and my kingdom are guiltless (and my kingdom is so, because I am so) before the Lord for ever, v. 28. It is a comfort to be able to say, when any bad thing is done, that we had no hand in it; *We have not shed this blood,* Deut. 21. 7. (5.) We shall not beexpenses or suspected, our hearts shall not reproach us.

2. He entailed the curse for it upon Joah and his family; (v. 29.) *Let it rest on the head of Joab; let the blood cry against him,* and let divine ven-
II. SAMUEL, III.

372

gance follow him. Let the iniquity be visited upon his children, and children's children, in some hereditary disease of the punishment. The moment is dark, and the longer let it last when it does come. Let his posterity be stigmatized, blenched with an issue, or a leprosy, which will shut them out from society; let them be beggars, or cripples, or come to some untimely end, that it may be said, "Here is one of Jacob's race." This intimates that the guilt of blood brings a curse upon families; if men do not avenge it, God will, and will lay up the iniquity for the children. But, meantime, a resolution of the murderer himself would better have become David, than this passionate imprecation of God's judgments upon his posterity.

3. He called upon all about him, even Joab himself, to lament the death of Abner; (v. 31.) Read your clothes and mourn before Abner; that is, before the hearse of Abner; as Abraham is said to mourn before his dead; (Gen. 23. 2, 3,) and he gives a reason why they should attend his funeral with sincere and solemn mourning, (v. 38,) because there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel. His alliance to Saul, his place as general, his interest, and the great services he had formerly done, were enough to denominate him a prince and a great man. When he could not call him a saint and a good man, he said nothing of that, but what was true he gave him the praise of, though he had been his enemy, the death of a great man; such as Abner had fallen in Israel, and fallen this day, just when he was doing the best deed he ever did in his life; this day, when he was likely to be so serviceable to the public peace and welfare, and could so ill be spared.

1. Let them all lament it. The humbling change death puts all men under, is to be lamented, especially as affecting princes and great men. Thus, also, (a) (being to Rev. 18. 10) how mean, how little, are they made by death, who made themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living! But we are especially obliged to lament the fall of useful men in the midst of their usefulness, and when there is most need of them. A public loss must be every man's grief, for ever man shares in it. Thus David took care that honour should be done to the memory of a man of merit, to animate others.

2. Let Joab, in a particular manner, lament it, which he has less at heart, but more reason to do, than any of them. If he could be brought to do it sincerely, it would be an expression of repentance for his sin in slaying him. If he did it in show only, as it is likely he did, yet it was a sort of penance imposed upon him, and a present commutation of the punishment. If he do not as yet expiate the murder by the blood of his own flesh, he does repent towards it, with tears. This, perhaps, Joab submitted to with no great reluctancy, now he had gained his point. Now that he is on the bier, no matter in what pomp he lies. Sit divus modo non sit virus—Let him be canonized, so that he be but killed.

4. David himself followed the corpse as chief mourner, and made a funeral oration at the grave. He entered the bier, v. 31, and weighed the grave, v. 33. Though Abner had been his enemy, and might possibly have proved no fast friend, yet, because he had been a man of bravery in the field, and might have done service in the public counsels at this critical juncture, all former quarrels are forgotten, and David is the true mourner for his fall. What he said over the grave, fetched fresh floods of tears from the eyes of all that heard it, as a funeral oration, when they thought they had already paid the debt in full, v. 33, 34. Did Abner die as a fool dies? (1.) He speaks as one vexed that Abner was fooled out of his life; that so great a man as he, so famed for con-

duct and courage, should be imposed upon by a co-

lor of friendship, slain by surprise, and so, die as a fool dies! The wisest and strongest of men, not fence against treachery. To see Abner, who thought himself the main hinge on which the great affairs of Israel turned, so considerable as, himself, to be able to turn the scale of a trembling government, his head full of great projects, and great prospects, to see him made a fool of by a base rival, and falling, on a sudden, a sacrifice to his ambition and jealousy—his stains the pride of all glory, and would put one out of conceit with the rest of mankind. Put not your trust in princes, Ps. 146. 3, 4. And let us therefore make that sure, which we cannot befooled of. A man may have his life, and all that is dear to him, taken from him, and not be able to prevent it with all his wisdom, care, and integrity; but there is that which no chief can break through to steal. See here how much more we are beholden to God's providence, that he protects, for the continuance of our lives and comforts. Were it not for the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, how soon would the weak and innocent become an easy prey to the strong and merciless, and the wisest die as fools! Or, (2.) He speaks as one maintaining that Abner did not fool himself out of his life. "Did Abner die as a fool dies? No, he did not, as not a criminal, a traitor or felon, that forfeits his life into the hands of his rulers were not murdred, or his feet fettered, as those of a malefactor's are. Abner falls not before just men, by a judicial sentence, but as a man, an innocent man, falleth before wicked men, thieves and robbers, so fethell them." Did Abner as Nabal died? So the Seventy read it. Nabal died as he lived, like himself, like a sot; but Abner's fate was such as might have been the fate of the wisest and best men in the world. Abner did not, as Asahel did, who willfully ran upon the spear, after fair warning, but he was struck by surprise. Note, It is a sad thing to die like a fool, as they do, that any way shorten their own days, and much more they that make no provision for another world.

5. He fasted all that day, and would by no means be persuaded to eat any thing till night, v. 35. It was then the custom of great mourners to refrain from the table the whole day, and fast bodily till night. 1 Sam. 31. 13. How incongruous is it then to turn the house of mourning into a house of feasting! The respect which David paid to Abner, was very pleasing to the people, and satisfied them that he was not, in the least, accessory to the murder; (v. 36, 37,) he was solicitous to avoid the suspicion, lest Joab's villany should have made him odious, as that of Simeon and Levi did to our Lord. Gen. 49. 10, 11. for this occasion is said, Whoever the king did please all the people. Which bespeaks, (1.) His good a-

fection to them; he studied to please them in every thing, and carefully avoided what might be dis obliging. (2.) Their good opinion of him; they thought every thing he did, well done; such a mutual willingness to please, and easiness to be pleased, will make every relation comfortable.

6. He bade them that he could not, with safety, do justice on the murderers. v. 39. He was weak, his kingdom newly planted, and a little shake would overthrow it; Joab's family had a great interest, were bold and daring, and to make them his enemies now might be of bad consequence. These sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, too big for the law to lay hold of; and therefore, though by man, by the magistrate, the blood of a murderer would have been shed, by David bears the sorrow in vain, and contents himself, as a private person, to leave them to the judgment of God; The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness. Now this is a diminution, (1.) To David's
greatness; he is an object of king, and yet is kept in awe by his own subjects, and some of them are too hard for him. Who would be fond of power, when a man may have the name of it, and must be accountable for it, and yet be hampered in the use of it? (2.) To David's goodness; he ought to have done his duty, and trusted God with the issue. Flat justice, rod calumny — Let justice be done, though the heavens should fall upon it. If the law had led its course against Joab, perhaps the murder of Ish-bosheth, Amnon, and others, had been prevented. It was cannal policy and cruel pity that spared Jabs. Righteousness supports the throne, and will never shake it. Yet it was only a reproof that David gave to Joab; on his death-bed, he left it to Solomon (who could the better wield the sword of justice, because he had no occasion to draw the sword of war) to avenge the blood of Abner. Evil pursues sinners, and will overtake them at last. David preferred Abner's son Jaasiel, 1 Chron. 27. 21.

CHAP. IV.

When Abner was slain, David was at a loss for a friend to protect the tribes that were in Ish-bosheth's interest; which way to adopt for the accomplishment of it, he could not tell; but here Providence brings it about by the removal of Ish-bosheth. 1. Two of his own servants slew him, and brought his head to David, v. 1-8. II. David, instead of rewarding them, put them to death for what they had done, v. 9-12.

1. AND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. 2. And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin:) 3. And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day.) 4. And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet, and was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass, as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.

5. And the sons of Rimmon, the Beerothite, Rechab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon: 6. And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib: and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped.

7. For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bed-chamber; and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and got them away through the plain all night. 8. And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Here is,

1. The weakness of Saul's house; still it grew weaker and weaker. 1. As for Ish-bosheth, who was in possession of the throne, his hands were feeble; (v. 1.) all the strength they ever had, was from Abner's support, and now that he was dead, he had no spirit left in him. Though Abner had, in a passion, deserted his interest, yet the hope, his means, to have made good terms with David; but now even that hope fails him, and he sees himself forsaken by his friends, and at the mercy of his enemies. All the Israelites that adhered to him, were troubled, and at a loss what to do, whether to proceed in their treaty with David or no. 2. As for Mephibosheth, who, in the right of his father Jonathan, had a prior title, his feet were lame, and he was unfit for the war. But the child was heard old when his father and grandfather were killed; his nurse, hearing of the Philistines' victory, was apprehensive that, in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to it, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown. Under the apprehension of this, she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place, or they could not expect it in some strange place where he could not be come at; and, making more haste than good speed, she fell with the child, and by the fall some bone was broken or put out, and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp. See what sad accidents children are liable to in their infancy, the effect of which may be felt by them, to their great uneasiness, all their days: even the children of princes and great men, the children of good men, for such a one Jonathan was, children that are well tended, and have nurses of their own to take care of them, yet are not always safe. What reason have we to be thankful to God for the preservation of our limbs and senses to us, through the many perils of the weak and helpless state of infancy, and to own his go-d ness in giving his angels a charge concerning us, to bear us through all the stages of life, the knowledge of which there is no danger of failing. Ps. 91. 12.

II. The murder of Saul's son: we are here told,

1. Who were the murderers, Baanah and Rechab, v. 2, 3. They were own brothers, as Simeon and Levi, and partners in iniquity. They were, or had been, Ish-bosheth's own servants employed under him; so much the more base and treacherous was it in them to do him a mischief. They were Benjaminites, of his own tribe. They were of the city of Beeroth; for some reason which we cannot now account for, care is here taken to let us know (in a parenthesis) that the city belonged to the lot of Benjamin; (so we find Jos. 18. 25.) but that the inhabitants, upon some occasion or other, perhaps upon the death of Saul, retired to Gittaim, another city which lay not far off in the same tribe, but was better fortified by nature, being situate (if we may depend upon Mr. Fuller's map) between the two rocks Bozez and Senech; there the Beerothites were when this was written, and, probably, took root there, and never returned to Beeroth again, which made Beeroth, that had been one of the cities of the Gibeonites, (Josh. 9. 17.) to be forgotten, and Gittaim to be famous long after, as we find, Neh. 13.

2. How the murder was committed, v. 5-7. See here (1.) The slevethfulness of Ish-bosheth. He lay upon his bed at noon; it does not appear that the country was at any time of the year so hot, as to oblige the inhabitants to retire at noon, as we are...
told they do in Spain in the heat of summer; but
Ish-bosheth was a shabby man, loved his ease, and hated business; and when he should have been, at this critical juncture, at the head of his forces in the field, or at the head of his counsels in a treaty with David, he was lying upon his bed, and sleeping, for his hands were feeble, (v. 1.) and so were his head and heart. When those difificulties disposed of, which would rather infuriate us, and sharpen our endeavours, we betray both our crowns and lives. Love not sleep, lest thou come to folly, (v. 2.) The idle soul is an easy prey to the destroyer.

(2.) The treachery of Baanah and Rechab. They came into the house, under pretence of fetching wheat for the victualling of their regiments; and such was the plainness of these times, that the king's corn-chamber, and his bed-chamber, lay near together, which gave them an opportunity, when they were fetching wheat, to murder him as he lay on the bed. We know not when and where death will meet us; when we lie down to sleep, we are not sure but that we may sleep the sleep of death before we awake; nor do we know from what unsuspected hand a fatal stroke may come. Ish-bosheth's own men, who should have protected his life, took it away.

3. The murderers triumphed in what they had done. As if they had performed some very glorious action, and the object of it. For David's advantage was enough not only to justify it, but to sanctify it, they make a present of Ish-bosheth's head to David; (v. 8.) Behold the head of that enemy, whereof they thought nothing could be more acceptable to him; yea, and they make themselves instruments of God's justice, ministers to bear his sword, though they had no commission. The Lord hath avenged thee this day, Saul, and his seed, and of the head. Not that they had any regard either to God, or David's honour; they aimed at nothing but to make their own fortunes, (as we say,) and to get preferment in David's court; but, to ingratiate themselves with him, they pretend a concern for his life, a conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him in full possession of the throne. Jehu pretended zeal for the Lord of hosts, when an ambition to set up himself and his own family was the spring of his actions.

9. And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the Lord liveth, who hath reft me out of all adversity, 10. When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, (thinking to have brought good tidings,) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings; 11. How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed? shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?

12. And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the wall. But they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner in Hebron.

We have here justice done upon the murderers of Ish-bosheth.

1. Sentence passed upon them. There needed no evidence, their own tongues witnessed against them, and were so far from denying the fact, that they gloried in it; David therefore shows them the enormity of the crime, and that blood called for blood from his hand, who was now the chief magistrate, and was, by office, the avenger of blood. And, perhaps, he was the more rigorous in the prosecution, because, for reasons of state, he had spared Joab. Shall I not require the blood of the slain at the hand of the slayers, and since they can make substitution, take their's instead of it? Observe, 1. How he aggravates the crime. v. 11. Ish-bosheth was a righteous person; he had done them no wrong, nor designed them any. As to himself, David was satisfied that what opposition he gave him, was not from malice, but mistake, from an idea he had of his own title to the crown, and the influence of others upon him, who urged him to put in for it. Note, Charity teaches us to think the best, not only of our friends, but of our enemies, and to think those may be righteous persons, who yet, in some instances, do us wrong. I must not presently judge a man a bad man, because I think him so to me. David owns Ish-bosheth an honest man, though he had created him a deal of trouble unjustly. The manner of it much aggravated the crime. To slay him in his own house, which should have been his castle, and upon his bed, upon the bed of his head; this is treachery and barbarous, and all that is base, and that which every man's heart will rise with indignation at the thought of, that is not perfectly lost to all honour and humanity. Assassinating is confessedly the most odious and villainous way of murder. Curled is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. 2. He quotes a precedent; (v. 10.) he had put him to death, who had brought the tidings of the death of his father. He thought it would be good tidings to David. Nothing is here said of that Amalekite's helping Saul to kill himself, only of his bringing the tidings of it; by which it should seem that the story he told, was, even inquiry, found to be false, and that he lied against his own head. Now, (says David,) did I treat him as a criminal, and not a favourite, (as he expected,) *"who brought me Saul's crown, and Saul's head against the house of Jerubbaal,"* and treacherously murder Ish-bosheth's head? 3. He ratifies the sentence with an oath; (v. 9.) As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity. He expresses himself thus resolutely, to prevent the making of any intercession for the criminals by those about him: and thus piously, to intimate that his dependence was upon God for the putting of him in possession of the promised throne, and for the help of any man to help him to it, by any indirect or unlawful practices. God had redeemed him from all adversity hitherto, helped him over many a difficulty, and through many a danger, and therefore he would depend upon him to crown and complete his own work. He speaks of his redemption from all adversity, as a thing done, though he had many a storm yet before him, because he knew that he had done what he had to do, and delivered what he was to deliver, hence, he signs a warrant for the execution of these men; v. 12. This may seem severe, when they intended him a kindness in what they did; but, (1.) He would thus show his detestation of the villany. When he heard that the Lord smote Nahuel, he gave thanks, 1 Sam. 25. 38. 39. for he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth; if wicked men should do it, he desired of God to take up God's work out of his hands. 2. He would thus show his resentment of the great affront they put upon him, in expecting that he should paternalise and reward them; they could scarcely have done him a greater injury, than thus to think him altogether
such a one as themselves; one that cared not what blood he bled through to the crown. II. The execution done. The murderers were put to death according to law, and their hands and feet were hung up; not their whole bodies, the law forbade that, but only their hands and feet, in terrorem—to frighten others, and to be monuments of David's justice, to make that to be taken notice of, which would recommend him to the esteem of the people, as a man fit to rule, and that aimed not at his own preferment, nor had any enemy to the house of Saul. Those murderers, as they so deserved the public welfare. But what a confusion was this to the two murderers! What a horrid disappointment! And such they will meet with, who think to serve the interests of the Son of David, by any immoral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapine, who, under colour of religion, murder princes, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, hate their brethren, and cast them out, and say, Let the Lord be glorified; kill them, and think they do God good service. However men may canonize such methods of serving the church and the catholic cause, Christ will let them know, another day, that Christianity was not intended to destroy humanity; and they, who thus think to merit heaven, shall not escape the damnation of hell.

CHAP. V.

How far Abner's deserting the house of Saul, his murder, and the murder of Ish-bosheth, might contribute to the perishing of the revolution, and the establishing of David king over all Israel, do not appear; but, it should seem, that happy change followed presently thereupon, which in this chapter we have an account of. Here is, I. David anointed king by all the tribe, v. 1. 2. II. Making himself master of the strong hold of Zion, v. 5. 6. 10. III. Building himself a house, and strengthening himself in his kingdom, v. 11. 12. 14. IV. His children that were born after this, v. 13. 16. His victories over the Philistines, v. 17. 29.

1. THEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel; and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel; and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. 3. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord; and they anointed David king over Israel. 4. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

Here is,

1. The humble address of all the tribes of Israel to David, beseeching him to take upon him the government, (for they were now as sheep having no shepherd,) and owning him for their king. Though David might by no means approve the murder of Ish-bosheth, yet he might improve the advantages he gained thereby, and accept the applications made to him thereupon. Judah had submitted to David as their king, above seven years ago, and their ease and happiness, under his administration, encouraged the rest of the tribes to make their court to him.

What number came from each tribe, with what zeal and sincerity they came, and how they were entertained at Hebron, when they were all of one heart to make David king, we have a full account, 1 Chron. 12. 23-40. Here we have only the heads of their address, containing the grounds they went upon in making David king. 1. Their relation to him was some inducement. "We are thy bone, and thy flesh;" v. 1. Not only thou art our bone, and our flesh, not a stranger, unqualified by the law to be king, (Deut. 17. 15.) but we have proved thee a righteous king, and thy name is as good as the name of thy fathers, and we esteem us as thy bone and thy flesh, and hast a tender concern for us, as a man has for his own body, which Saul and his house had not. We are thy bone and thy flesh, and therefore thou wilt be as glad as we shall be, to put an end to this long civil war; and thou wilt take pity on us, protect us, and do thine utmost for our King. Those who take Christ for their King, let all nations try them, and see whether they be as good. "We are thy bone and thy flesh; thou hast made thyself in all things like unto thy brethren, (Heb. 2. 17.) therefore be thou our Ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand," Isa. 3. 6. 2. His former good services to the public were a further inducement; (v. 2.) "When Saul was king, he was but the crier, thou wast he that leddest out Israel to battle, and broughtest them in to battle." Here he was the person who could most effectually command and support them. "And thou shalt be not only a king to govern in peace, but a captain to preside in war, and be exposed to all the toils and perils of the camp." Since God has said so, now at length, when need drives them to it, they are persuaded to say so too.

II. The public and solemn inauguration of David. v. 3. A public proclamation of this, and of all the elders of Israel came to him; the contract was settled, the pacta conventa—covenants sworn to, and subscribed on both sides; he obliged himself to protect them as their judge in peace, and captain in war; and they obliged themselves to obey him, he made a league with them, to which God was a Witness; it was before the Lord. Hereupon he was, the third time, anointed king. His advances to a degree of grandeur, his ready acquiescence in, and that he might gain experience. And thus his kingdom typified that of the Messiah, which was to come to its height by degrees; for we see not yet all things put under him, (Heb. 2. 8.) but we shall see it, 1 Cor. 15. 25. 3. 4. About that age, the Son of David entered upon his public ministry, Luke 3. 23. Then men come to their full maturity of strength and judgment. He reigned, in all, forty years and six months; of which, seven years and a half in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, v. 5. Hebron had been famous; (Josh. 14. 15.) it was a _Urieris' _city, but Jerusalem was to be more so, and to be the holy city. Great kings attached to riches of their own; (Gen. 10. 11.—36. 32-35.) David did so, and Jerusalem was to be the city of David. It is a name famous to the end of the Bible, (Rev. 21.) where we read of a new Jerusalem in.
6. And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7. Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. And David said on that day, Whosoever getheth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the blind and the lame, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain: wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

8. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it The city of David: and David built round about, from Millo inward. And David went on, and grew great; and the Lord of hosts was with him.

If Salem, the place which Melchizedek was king of, was Jerusalem, (as seems probable from Ps. 76. 2.) it was famous in Abraham's time; Joshua, in his time, found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, Josh. 10. 1-3. It fell to Benjamin's lot, (Josh. 18. 28.) but joined close to Judah's, Josh. 15. 8. The children of Judah had taken it, (Judg. 1. 8.) but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them, (Judg. 1. 21.) and they grew so upon them, that it became a city of Jebusites, Judg. 19. 11. Now the very first exploit David did, after he was anointed king over all Israel, was, to gain Jerusalem out of the hand of the Jebusites, which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt, till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul's house, (1 Chron. 12. 25.) should be tided to him. Here we have,

I. The Jebusites' defiance of David, and his forces. They said, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither, v. 6. They sent David this provoking message, because, as it is said afterward, on another occasion, they could not believe that ever an enemy should enter into the gates of Jerusalem, Lam. 4. 12. They confided, either, 1. In the protection of their god, of which David, in contempt, had called the blind and the lame, for they have eyes and are not feet and walk not; "But," say they, "these are the guardians of our city, and except thou take those away, (which thou cannot do,) thou wilt not come in thither." Some think they were constellated images of brass, set up in the recess of the fort, and intrusted with the custody of the place. They called their idols their Mauzim, or strong hold, (Dan. 11. 38.) and as such relied on them; the name of the Lord is our strong tower, and our arm is strong, his eyes piercing, Or, 2. In the strength of their fortifications, which they thought were made so impregnable by nature or art, or both, that the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend them against the most powerful assailant. The strong hold of Zion they especially depended on, as that which could not be forced. Probably, the blind and the lame were espied by the trained soldiers, to make their appearance upon the walls in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for them. Though there remain but wounded men among them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers. Compare Jer. 57. 10.

II. David's success against the Jebusites. Their pride and insolence, instead of daunting him, animated him, and when he made a general assault, he gave this order to his men; "He that smiteth the Jebusites, let him also throw down in the ditch, or gutter, the lame and the blind, which are set upon the wall to affront us and our God. It is probable they had spoken blasphemous things, and were therefore hated of David's soul. This v. 6, may be read; we fetch our reading of it from 1 Chron. 11. 6. which speaks only of smiting the Jebusites, but nothing of the blind and the lame. The Jebusites had said, that if these images of their's did not protect them, the blind and the lame should not come into the house, that is, they would never again trust their palladium, (so Mr. Gregory understands it,) nor pay the respect they had paid to their images; and David, having gained the fort, said so, that these images, which could not protect their worshippers, should never have any place there more.

III. His fixing his royal seat in Zion; he himself dwelt in the fort, (the strength whereof, which had given him opposition, and was a terror to him, now contributed to his safety,) and he built houses round about for his attendants and guards, (v. 9.) from Millo (the town-hall, or state-house,) inward. He proceeded and prospered in all he set his hand to; grew great in honour, strength, and wealth; more and more honourable in the eyes of his subjects, and formidable in the eyes of his enemies; for the Lord of hosts was with him. God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes by them; and he was with him, to direct, preserve, and prosper him; those that have the Lord of hosts for them, need not fear what hosts of men or devils can do against them. Those who grow great, must ascribe it to the presence of God with them, and give him the glory of it. The church is called Zion, and the city of the living God; the Jebusites, Christ's enemies, must first be conquered and dispossessed, the blind and the lame taken away, and then Christ divides the spoil, sets up his throne there, and makes it his residence by the Spirit.

11. And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons; and they built David a house. 12. And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. 13. And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. 14. And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, 15. Ithar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 16. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet. Here is,

I. David's house built, a royal palace, fit for the reception of the court he kept, and the homage that was made to him, v. 11. The Jews were husbandmen and shepherds, and did not much addict themselves either to merchandise or manufactures; and therefore Hiram, king of Tyre, a wealthy prince, when he sent to congratulate David on his accession to the throne, offered him workmen to build him a house: David thankfully accepted the
offer, and Hiram's workmen built David a house to his mind. Many have excelled in arts and sciences, who were strangers to the covenants of promise; yet David's house was never the worse, nor the less fit to be dedicated to God, for being built by the sons of the strangers: it is prophesied of the church, *The sons of strangers shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall minister unto thee*, Isa. 60. 10.

II. David's government rooted and built up, v. 12. 1. His kingdom was established; there was nothing to shake it, none to disturb his possession, or question his title. He that made him king, established him, because he was to be a type of Christ, with whom God's hand should be established, and his covenant stand fast, Ps. 89. 20, 29. Saul was made king, but not established; so David, in innocency. David was established king, so is the Son of David, and all who, through him, are made to our God kings and priests. 2. It was exalted in the eyes both of its friends and enemies: neither had the nation of Israel looked so great or made such a figure, as it began now to do. Thus it is promised of Christ, that he shall be higher than the kings of the earth, Ps. 89. 27. God has highly exalted his kingdom among men, v. 3. David had established his kingdom by the wonderful concurrence of providences to his establishment and advancement; *By this I know that thou favourest me*, Ps. 41. 11. Many have the favour and love of God, and do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it: but to be exalted to that, and established in it, and to perceive it, is happiness enough. 3. He owned that it was *for his people Israel's sake*, that God had done such great things for him; that he might be a blessing to them, and they might be happy under his administration. God had not made Israel his subjects for his sake, that he might be great, and rich, and absolute; but he made him their king for their sake, that he might lead, and guide, and protect them. Kings are ministers of God to their people for good, Rom. 13. 4.

III. David's family multiplied and increased. All the sons that were born to him after he came to Jerusalem, are here mentioned together; eleven in all; beside the six that were born to him before in Hebron, ch. 3. 2-5. There the mothers are mentioned, not here; only, in general, that he took him more concubines and wives, v. 13. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; we justify him not; nor can scarce excuse him. The bad example of the patriarchs might make him think there was no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family. Happy is the man that has his quiver full of these arrows. But one vine by the side of the house, with the blessing of God, may send boughs to the sea, branches to the rivers. Adam, by one wife, peopled the world, and Noah repeopled it. David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbour's wife; and judging by their example, it is certain they have once broken the fence, will wander endlessly. Of David's concubines, see ch. 15. 16.—16. 22.—19. 3. Of his sons, see 1 Chron. 3. 5.

17. But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. 18. The Philistines also came, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 19. And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philis-
II. SAMUEL, VI.

The obscurity of the ark, during the reign of Saul, had been as great a grievance to Israel as the insults of the Philis-
times. David having humbled the Philistines and mortified them, in gratitude for that favour, and in pursuance of his design for the public welfare, is led by the addition of the ark to his own city, that it might be near him, and be an ornament and strength to his new foundation. Here is, 1. An attempt to do it, which failed and miscarried. The design was well laid, v. 1, 2. But, 1. They were guilty of an error in carrying it in a cart, v. 3-5. 2. They were punished for that error by the sudden death of Uzzah, (v. 6, 7,) which was a great terror to David, (v. 8, 9,) and put a stop to his proceedings, 10, 11. This was to David with whom the ark was brought, v. 12-15. And, 1. The good understanding between David and his people, v. 16-19. 2. The unc anxiousness between David and his wife, upon that occasion, v. 16-18. 3. The care David took that the ark should have both the token of God's presence, and a type of Christ, we shall see that this story is very instructive.

1. AGAIN, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of The Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims. 3. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart. 4. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark. 5. And David and all the house of Israel, played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

We have not heard a word of the ark, since it was lodged in Kerjath-jearim, immediately after its return out of its captivity among the Philistines, (1 Sam. 7. 1, 2,) except that, once, Saul called for it, 1 Sam. 14. 18. That which, in former days, they carried about in a figure, was now thrown aside, as a neglected thing, for many years. And if now the ark was for so many years in a house, let it not seem strange that we find the church so long in the wilderness, Rev. 12. 14. Perpetual visibility is no mark of the true church. God is graciously present with the souls of his people, when they want the external tokens of his presence. But now David is settled in the throne, the honour of the ark begins to rise, and it is allowed to flourish again, wherein also, no doubt, the good people among them had been careful, but they lacked opportunity, Phil. 4. 10.

I. Here is honorable mention made of the ark. Because it had not been spoken of a great while, now that it is spoken of, observe how it is described; (v. 2,) it is the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of The Lord of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims; or, at which name, even the name of the Lord of hosts, was called upon, or, upon which the name of the Lord of hosts was called: or, because of which the name is proclaimed, the name of the Lord of hosts; that is, God was greatly magnified in the miracles done before the ark. Or, the ark of God, who is called the name; (Lev. 24. 11. 16.) the name of the Lord of hosts, sitting on the cherubims upon it. Let us learn hence, 1. To think and speak highly of God. He is the name above every name; the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures in heaven and earth at his command, and receives homage from them all, and yet is pleased to dwell between the cherubims, over the prophetic or mercy seat, graciously manifesting himself to his people, readiness and readiness, to do them good. 2. To think and speak honourably of holy ordinances, which are to us, as the ark was to Israel, the tokens of God's presence, (Matt. 28. 20,) and the means of our communion with him, Ps. 27. 4. It is the honour of the ark, that it is the ark of God, he is jealous for it, is magnified in it, his name is called upon it. The divine institution of the ark sets a beacon, and grandeur upon holy ordinances, which otherwise we have no need of for itself, but Christ is our Ark, in and by him God manifests his favour, and communicates his grace to us, and accepts our adorations and addresses.

II. Here is an honourable attendance given to the ark upon the removal of it. Now, at length, it is inquired after; David made the motion, (1 Chron. 13. 1, 3,) and the heads of the congregation agreed to it; v. 4. All the chosen men of Israel are called together, to grace the solemnity, and respect the ark, and to testify their joy on its removal. The nobility and gentry, elders and officers, came, to the number of thirty thousand, (v. 1,) and the generality of the common people besides; (1 Chron. 13. 5,) for, some think, it was done at one of the three great festivals. This would make a noble cavalcade, and would help to inspire the young blood of the nation, who, perhaps, had scarcely heard of the ark, and a great many things said in respect to it, for this was certainly a treasure of inestimable value, which the king himself, and all the great men, waited upon, and were a guard to.

III. Here are great expressions of joy, upon the removal of the ark, v. 5. David himself, and all that were with him that were musically inclined, made use of such instruments as they had, to express their rejoicing upon this occasion. It might well put them into a transport of joy, to see the ark rise out of obscurity, and move towards a public station. It is better to have the ark in a house, than not at all, better in a house than a captive in Dagon's temple. But it is very desirable to have it in a tent pitched on purpose for it, where the resort to it may be more free and open. As secret worship is better the more secret it is, so public worship is better the more public. The cause to rejoice, when restraints are taken off, and the ark of God finds welcome in the city of David, and has not only the protection and support, but the countenance and encouragement, of the civil powers; for joy of this, they played before the Lord. Note, Public joy must always be as before the Lord, with an eye to him, and terminating in him; and must not degenerate into that which is carnal and sensual. David proposes it to the citizens of Jerusalem, on this occasion, David penned the 68th Psalm, because it begins with that ancient prayer of Moses, at the removing of the ark, Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and notice is taken there (v. 25.) of the singers and players on instruments that attended, and (v. 27.) of the princes of several of the tribes; and perhaps those words in the last verse, the Lord of hosts, God thou art terrible out of thy holy places, were added, upon occasion, to suit the taste of the Ark.

IV. Here is an error that they were guilty of in this matter, that they carried the ark in a cart or carriage, whereas the priests should have carried it upon their shoulders, v. 5. The Kohathites that had the charge of the ark, had no waggons assigned them, because their service was to bear it on their shoulders, Num. 7. 9. The ark was no such heavy burden, but that they might, among others, have carried it as Jezreel. Zier upon their
II. SAMUEL, VI.

shoulders, they needed not put it in a cart like a common thing. It was no excuse for them, that the Philistines had done so, and were not punished for it; they knew better, nor had they any priests or Levites with them to undertake the carrying of it; better carry it in a cart, than that any of Dagon's priests should carry it. Philistines may cart the ark with impunity; but if Israelites do, it is at their peril. And it mended the matter very little, that it was now carried old or new, it was not what God had appointed. I wonder how so wise and good a man as David was, that conversed so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight. We will charitably hope that it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service, that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.

6. And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. 7. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. 8. And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day. 9. And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? 10. So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David; but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

We have here Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark, when it was upon its journey toward the city of David, a sad providence, which demanded no such penalty, stopped the progress of the ark, and for the present, dispersed this great assembly, which was come together to attend it, and sent them home in a fright.

I. Uzzah's offence seemed very small. He and his brother Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had long been lodged, having been used to attend it, to show their willingness to prefer the public benefit to their own private honour and advantage, undertook to drive the cart, in which the ark was carried; this being, perhaps, the last service they were likely to do it, for others would be employed about it when it came to the city of David. Ahio went before, to clear the way, and, if need were, to lead the oxen; Uzzah followed close to the side of the cart; it happened that the oxen shook it, v. 6. The oxen's spurs are honourable and advantage, undertook to drive the cart, in which the ark was carried; this being, perhaps, the last service they were likely to do it, for others would be employed about it when it came to the city of David. Ahio went before, to clear the way, and, if need were, to lead the oxen; Uzzah followed close to the side of the cart; it happened that the oxen shook it, v. 6. This seems to be an allusion to the original word: They stumbled; so our margin: They kicked; so some; perhaps, against the goad with which Uzzah drove them. They stuck in the mire, so some. By some accident or other, the ark was in danger of being overthrown. Uzzah thereupon laid hold on it, to save it from falling: we have reason to think, with a very good intention, to preserve the reputation of the court, and to prevent a bad omen. Yet this was his crime: Uzzah was a Levite, but priests only might touch the ark. The law was express concerning the Cohalities, that though they were to carry the ark by the staves, yet they must not touch any holy thing, lest they die, Num. 4. 15. Uzzah's long familiarity with the ark, and the constant attendance he had given to it, might occasion his presumption, but would not excuse it.

II. His punishment for this offence seems very great; (v. 7.) The anger of the Lord was kindled against him, (for in sacred things he is a jealous God,) and he smote him there for his rashness, as the word is, and struck him dead upon the spot. There he sinned, and there he died, by the ark of God, even the mercy-seat would not save him. Why was God so severe with him? 1. The touching of the ark was forbidden to the Levites, expressly under pain of death, lest they die; and God, by this instance of severity, would show how he might justly have dealt with our first parents, when they had eaten that which was forbidden under the same penalty, lest ye die. 2. God saw the presumption and irreverence of Uzzah's heart. Perhaps he affected to do a great and holy thing, but he knew not how bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity, even with that which is most awful, is apt to breed contempt. 3. David afterward owned that Uzzah died for an error they were all guilty of, which was carrying the ark in a cart; because it was not carried on the Levites' shoulders, The Lord made that breach upon us, 1 Chron. 15. 13. But Uzzah was singled out to be the example, because he had been most forward in advising that way of conveyance; however, he had fallen into another error, which was occasioned by that. Perhaps, the ark was not covered, as it should have been, with the covering of badgers' skins, (Num. 4. 6.) and that was a further provocation. 4. God would hereby strike an awe upon the thousands of Israel, would convince them that the ark was never the less venerable for the venerable being before them in his circumstances; and thus he would teach them to rejoice with trembling, and always to treat holy things with reverence and holy fear. 5. God would hereby teach us that a good intention would not justify a bad action; it will not suffice to say of that which is ill done, that it was well meant. He will let us know that he can and will secure his ark, and needs not any man's aid to help him. If he will do it for himself, it is a great punishment for him to lay hold on the ark of the covenant, that had no right to do so, what is it for those to lay claim to the privileges of the covenant, that come not up to the terms of it? To the wicked, God says, What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth? Ps. 50. 16. Friend, how camest thou in hither? If the ark was so sacred, and not to be touched irreverently, what is the blood of the covenant? Heb. 10. 13.

III. David's feelings on the infliction of this stroke, were keen, and perhaps not altogether as they should have been. He should have humbled himself under God's hand, confessed the error, acknowledged God's righteousness, and deprecated the further tokens of his displeasure, and then have gone on with the good work he had in hand. But we find,

1. He was displeased; it is not said because Uzzah had affronted God, but because God had made a breach upon Uzzah, v. 8. David's anger was kindled. It is the same word that is used for God's displeasure, v. 7. Because God was angry, David was angry and out of humour. As if God might not assert the honour of his ark, and frown upon one that touched it rudely, without asking David's leave. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just in God; shall his proceedings, or charges, his with iniquity? David did not now act like himself, like a man after God's own heart. It is not for us to be displeased at any thing that God does, how displeasing soever it is to us. The death of Uzzah
was indeed an eclipse to the glory of a solemnity, which David valued himself upon more than any thing else, and might give birth to some speculations among those that were disaffected to him, as if God were departing from him too; but, however, he ought to have subscribed to the righteousness and wisdom of God in it, and not to have been displeased at it. When we lie under God's anger, we must keep under our own all.

2. He was afraid, v. 9. It should seem he was afraid with amazement; for he said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? As if God sought advantages against all that were about him, and was so extremely tender of his ark, that there was no dealing with it; and therefore better for him to keep it at a distance. Qui procul a Jove, procul a fulmine. To retire from Jove, is to retire from a thunder-bolt.

He should rather have said, "Let the ark come to me, and I will take warning by this to treat it with more reverence." Provoce me not, (says God, Jer. 25.6.) and I will do you no hurt. Or, this may be looked upon as a good use which David made of this tremendous judgment; he did not say, "Surely, Uzzaaz was a sinner above all men, because he suffered such things," but is concerned for himself, as one conscious, not only of his own unworthiness of God's favours, but of the extraor-
dinous to God's displeasure; "God might justly strike me dead, as he did Uzzaaz; my flesh trembles for fear of thee," Ps. 119.120. This God intends in his judgments, that others may hear and fear. David therefore will not bring the ark into his own city, (v. 10.) till he is better prepared for its reception.

3. He took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this stroke by a new name he gave to the place, Perez-uzzah, the breach of Uzzaaz, v. 8. He had been lately triumphing in the breach made upon his enemies, and called the place Baal-Perazim, a place of breaches. But here is a breach upon his friends. When we see one breach, we should consider, that we know not where the next will be. The memorial of this stroke would be a warning to posterity, to take heed of all rashness and irreverence in dealing about holy things; and all will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him.

4. He lodged the ark in a good house, the house of Obed-edom a Levite, which happened to be near the place where this disaster happened, and there, (1.) It was kindly entertained and bid welcome, and continued there three months, v. 10, 11. Obed-edom knew what slaughter the ark had made among the Philistines that imprisoned it, and the Bethshemites that looked into it. He saw Uzzaaz struck dead for touching it, and perceived that Da-

vid himself was afraid of meddling with it; yet he cheerfully invites it to his own house, and opens his doors to it without fear, knowing it was a savour of death unto death, to these only that treated it ill. "O the courage," says Bishop Hall, "of an honest and faithful heart; nothing can make God otherwise than amiable to him, for his love to him is rooted in justice is lovely." (2.) It paid well for his entertainment. The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household. The same hand that punished Uzzaaz's proud presumption, rewarded Obed-edom's humble boldness, and made the ark unto him a savour of life unto life. Let none think the worse of the gospel for the judgments inflicted on those that reject it, but set in opposition to them the blessings it brings to those that duly receive it. None ever had, or ever shall have reason to say that it is in vain to serve God.

Let masters of families be encouraged to keep up religion in their families, and to serve God and the interests of his kingdom, with their houses and es-

tates, for that is the way to bring a blessing upon all they have. The ark is a guest which none shall lose by, that bid it welcome. Josephus says, that whereas, before Obed-edom was poor on a sudden, in these three months, his estate increased, to the envy of his neighbours. Piety is the best friend to prosperity. In wisdom's left hand are riches and honour. His household shared in the blessing: it's good living in a family that entertains the ark, for all about it will fare the better for it.

12. And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. 13. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 14. And David danced before the Lord with all his might: and David was girded with a linen ephod. 15. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart. 17. And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord. 18. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. 19. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed every one to his house.

We have here the second attempt to bring the ark home to the city of David; and this succeeded, though the former miscarried. It should seem, the blessing with which the house of Obed-edom was blessed for the ark's sake, was a great inducement to David to bring it forward; for when that was told him, (v. 12.) he hastened to fetch it to him. For, 1. It was an evidence that God was reconciled to them, and his anger was turned away. As David could read God's frowns upon them all in Uzzaaz's breast, so he could read God's favour to them all in Obed-edom's prosperity; and if God be at peace with them, they can cheerfully go on with their design.

2. It was an evidence that the ark was not such a burthensome stone, as it was taken to be, but, on the contrary, happy was the man that had it near him. Christ is indeed a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, to them that are disobedient; but to them whom believe, he is a Corner-stone, elect, precious, 1 Pet. 2.6-8. When David heard that Obed-edom had such joy of the ark, then he would have it in his own city. Note, The experience others have had of the gains of godliness, should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to other's houses? Let us bid it welcome.
II. SAMUEL, VII.

11. time; and done supplication would nister put official, to and highest we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss.

II. At their first setting out, he offered sacrifices to God, (v. 13.) by way of atonement for their former errors, and in a thankful acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on the house of Obed-edom. Then we are likely to speed in our enterprises, when we begin with God, and give diligence to me to serve him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great Sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God, Ps. 50. 5.

III. He himself attended the solemnity with the highest expressions of joy that could be, (v. 14.) he danced before the Lord with all his might; he leaped fourteen times, one for every heifer offered. The occasion was peculiar, and the more, because of the disappointment he met with the last time. It is a pleasure to a good man to see his errors rectified, and himself in the way of his duty. His dancing, I suppose, was not artificial, by any certain rule or measure, nor do we find that any danced with him; but it was a natural expression of his great joy and exultation of mind.

He did it with all his might; so we should perform all our religious services, as those that are intent upon them, and desire to do them in the best manner: all our might is little enough to be employed in holy duties; the work deserves it all. On this occasion, David laid aside his imperial purple, and put on a plain ephod, which was light and convenient for dancing, and was used in religious exercises by those who were no priests, for Samuel wore one, 1 Sm. 2. 18. That great prince thought it no disparagement to him to appear in the habit of a minister of the church.

IV. All the people triumphed in this advancement of the ark; (v. 15.) They brought it up into the city with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, so expressing their own joy in loud acclamations, and giving notice to all about them to rejoice with them. The public and free administration of ordinances, not only under the protection, but under the care, of the civil powers, is just matter of rejoicing to any people.

V. The ark was safely brought to, and honourably deposited in, the place prepared for it, v. 17. They set it in the midst of the tabernacle, or tent, which David had pitched for it; not the tabernacle which Moses reared, that was at Gibeon, (2 Chron. 1. 13.) and we may suppose, being made of cloth, in so many hundred years, it was gone to decay, and not fit but this was a tent set up on purpose to receive the ark. He would not bring it into a private house, no, not his own, lest it should seem to be too much engrossed, and people's resort to it, to pray before it, should be less free; yet he would not build a house for it, lest that should supersede the building of a more stately temple in due time; and therefore, for the present, he placed it within curtins, under a tabernacle, as Moses' tabernacle. As soon as ever it was lodged, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, in thankfulness to God, that the business was now done without any more errors or breaches; and in supplication to God for the continuance of his favour. Note, All our joys must be sanctified both with praises and prayers; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Now, it should seem, he penned Ps. 132.

VI. The people were then dismissed with great satisfaction. He sent them away, 1. With a gracious prayer; he blessed them in the name of the Lord of hosts, (v. 18.) having not only a particular interest in them, as a prophet, but an authority to them as a prince, for this was blessed of the better, Heb. 7. 7. He prayed to God to bless them, and particularly to reward them for the honour and respect they had now shewn to his ark; assuring them they should be no losers by their journey, but the blessing of God upon their affairs at home would more than bear their charges. He testified his desire for their welfare by this prayer for them, and led them to know they had a king that loved them. 2. With a generous treat; for so it was, rather than a distribution of alms; the great men, it is probable, he entertained at his own house, but to the multitude of Israel, men and women, and children, says Josephus, he dealt, to each, a cake of bread; (a spice-cake, so some;) a good piece of flesh; (a handsome, decent piece, so some;) a part of the peace-offerings, so Josephus; that they might feast with him, and receive from him the great bottle, of wine, v. 19. Probably, he ordered this provision to be made for them at their respective quarters, and this he did, (1.) In token of his joy and gratitude to God. When the heart is enlarged by cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality. The feast of Purim was observed with sending portions one to another, Esth. 9. 22. As these to whom God is merciful, ought to show mercy in forgiving; so those to whom God is bountiful, ought to exercise bounty in giving. (2.) To recommend himself to the people, and to confirm his interest in them; for every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts. They that care not for his prayers, would love him for his generosity; and this would encourage them to attend him another time, if he saw cause to call them together.

20. Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! 21. And David said unto Michal, It was before the Lord, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel: therefore will I play before the Lord. 22. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants, which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. 23. Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death.

David, having dismissed the congregation with a blessing, returned to bless his household; (v. 20.) and talked with them, and for them, and to offer up his family-thanksgiving for this national mercy. Ministers must not think that their public performances will excite them from their family-worship; but when they have, with their instructions and prayers, blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless their households, for with them they are in a particular
manner charged. David, though he had prophets, and priests, and Levites, about him, to be his chaplains, yet did not devolve the work upon them, but himself blessed his household. It is angel's work to worship God, and therefore surely that can be no disparagement to the greatest men.

When she came to his house with so much pleasure and satisfaction, as he did now that he had got the ark into his neighbourhood, and yet even this joyful day concluded with some uneasiness, occasioned by the pride and peevishness of his wife. Even the palaces of princes are not exempt from domestic troubles. David had pleased all the multitude of Israel, but Michael was not pleased with his dancing before the ark: For this, when he came home, she scolded him. She was not displeased at his generosity to the people, nor did she grudge the entertainment he gave them, but she thought he demeaned himself too much in dancing before the ark. It was not her covetousness, but her pride, that made her fret.

I. When she saw David in the street dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart, v. 16. She thought this mighty zeal of his for the ark of God, and the transport of joy he was in, upon its coming home to him, was but a foolish thing, and unbecoming so great a soldier, and statesman, and monarch, as he was; it had been enough for him to encourage the devotions of others, but she looked upon it as a thing below him to appear so devout himself. "What a fool" (thinks she) "does this man make of himself! How fast is he of this ark, that might as well have lain still where it had lain for so many years! Much devotion has almost made him mad." Note, The exercises of religion appear very mean in the eyes of those that have little or no religion themselves.

II. When he came home in the very best disposition, she began to upbraid him, and was so full of disdain and indignation, that she could not hold her peace till she had him in private, and went out to meet him with her reproaches.

Observe, 1. How she taunted him; (v. 20.) "How glorious was the King of Israel to-day! What a figure didst thou make to-day in the midst of the mob; how unbecoming thy post and character!" Her contempt of him and his devotion began in the heart, but out of the abundance of that the mouth spoke. That which displeased her was, his affection to the ark, she could wish he had a greater kindness for than she had, but she basely reproaches his conduct, in dancing before the ark, as levish and immodest; and, while really she was displeased at it, as a diminution to his honour, she pretended to dislike it, as a reproach to his virtue, that he uncovered himself in the eyes of his maidservants, so as no man would have done, but one of his own family. This reproach is justly resisted; he does not answer not how much and how shamefully himself. We have no reason to think that this was true in fact: David, no doubt, observed decorum, and governed his zeal with discretion; but it is common for those that reproach religion, thus to put false colours upon it, and lay it under the most odious characters. To have abused any man thus, for his pious zeal, had been very profane; but to reproach God's anointed husband, as this woman would do, was true contempt.

2. How he replied to her reproach. He does not upbraid her with her treacherous departure from him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. He had forgiven that, and therefore had forgotten it, though, it may be, his own conscience, on this occasion, upbraided him with his folly in receiving her again, (for that is said to pollute the land, Jer. 3:1;) but he justifies himself in what he did.

(1.) He designed thereby to humble himself; (v. 21.) "It was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. Whatever invidious construction she was pleased to put upon it, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he sincerely aimed at the glory of God, for whom he thought he could never do enough. Here he reminds her indeed of the setting aside of her father's house, to make way for him to make himself to be the most proper judge of propriety; "God chose me before thy father, and appointed me to be ruler over Israel, and now I am the fountain of honour; and if the expressions of a warm devotion to God were looked upon as mean and unfashionable in thy father's court, yet will I play before the Lord, and thereby bring them into reputation again. And if this be to be vile, (v. 22.) I will yet be more vile." Note, [1.] We must not be afraid of censuring the devotion of others, though it may not agree with our sentiments, for because we dare not be upright in it, and who are we that we should despise those whom God has accepted? [2.] If we can approve ourselves to God in what we do in religion, and do it as before the Lord, we need not value the censures and reproaches of men. If we appear right in God's eyes, no matter how much we may be afraid of censuring the devotion of others, we must not be afraid of being afraid of censuring the devotion of others.

The more we are vitiated for well doing, the more resolute we should be in it, and hold our religion the fonder, and bind it the closer to us, for the endeavours of Satan's agents to shake us, and to shame us out of it. I will be yet more vile.

(2.) He designed thereby to humble himself; "I will be base in my own sight, and will think nothing mean to speak of the honour of God." In the throne of judgment, and in the field of battle, none shall do more to support the grandeur and authority of a prince than David shall; but in acts of devotion he lays aside the thoughts of majesty, humbles himself to the dust before the Lord, joins in with the meanest services done in honour of the ark, and yet thinks it no diminution to him. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

(3.) He doubted not but even this would turn to his reputation among those whose reproaches he feared; Of the maidservants shall I be had in honour. The common people would be so far from thinking the worse of him for these pious confessions, that they would esteem and honour him so much the more. Those that are truly pious, are sometimes manifested in the consciences even of these very men who speak ill of us in time to come, v. 11. Let us not be driven from our duty by the fear of reproach, for to be steady and resolute in it, will perhaps, turn to our reputation more than we think it will. Piety will have its praise: let us not then be indifferent in it, nor afraid or ashamed to own it.

David was contented thus to justify himself, and did not any further animadvert upon Michael's insolence, but God punished her for it, writing her for every chiding from this time forward. v. 23. She was unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. They that honour God, he will honour; but those that despise him, and his servants and service, shall be lightly esteemed.
about building a house for it: he signifies his purpose to do it. (v. 1, 5) and Nathan approves his purpose, v. 3.

II. His communion with God about it. 1. A gracious message God sent him about it, accepting his purpose, countermanding the performance, and promising him an end of blessings upon his family, v. 4, 17. A humble prayer which David offered up to God, in return to that gracious message: thankfully accepting God's promises to him, and earnestly praying for the performance of them, v. 18–29. And in both these, there is an eye to the Messiah, and his kingdom.

1. And it came to pass, when the king had sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, 2. That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. 3. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the Lord is with thee.

Here is,

I. David at rest. He sat in his house, (v. 1.) quiet and undisturbed, having no occasion to take the field; The Lord had given him rest round about, from all his enemies. He was then settled in the throne, and he sets himself to enjoy that rest; though he was a man of war, he was for peace, (Ps. 120. 7) and did not delight in war. He had not been long at rest, nor was it long before he was again engaged in war; but, at present, he enjoyed a calm, and he was in his element when he was sitting in his house, meditating on the law of God.

II. David's thoughts of building a temple for the honour of his God was justly his own thought, and as such, God knew it, and he approved of it, v. 2. But he was not called out to serve God and Israel in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God, in his providence, gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David when he sat in his palace, from Nebuchadnezzar's, when he walked in his! Dan. 4. 29, 30. That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him; and how God resisted the proud, and gave grace and glory to the humble, the event showed. David considered (v. 2.) the stateliness of his own habitation: (I dwell in a house of cedar,) and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark, (that dwells within curtains,) and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace, and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out a place for the ark; (Ps. 132. 4, 5,) and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious, grateful souls, (1.) never think they can do enough for God, nor have done enough, nor be projected to do more, and devising liberal thoughts, (2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations, while they see the church of God in distress and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who stretched themselves upon beds of ivory, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's music, had not David's spirit; (Amos 6. 4, 6) nor they who dwelt in their cedared houses, while God's house lay waste, Hag. 1. 4.

III. His communicating of his thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confidant (as he was) to advice him: Could not David have gone about it himself? Was it not therefore to work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety. David told him that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

IV. Nathan's approbation of it. Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee, v. 3. We do not find that David told him that he proposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him that there was not one built; from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bade him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can, to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work. Nathan takes this, not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as a wise and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion and the service of God, though, it seems, the secret will was otherwise that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew; other prophets spoke it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but if in any thing they mistook, (as Samuel, 1 Sam. 16. 6. and Nathan here,) God soon rectified the mistake.

4. And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, 5. Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shaft thou build me a house for me to dwell in? 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, speak I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me a house of cedar? 8. Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and hath cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. (10. Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, 11. And as since the time that I com-
manded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.) Also the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee a house. 12. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David, and the kind intentions of that favour; the notices and assurances of which, God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he intrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him off from his purpose of building the temple, and was therefore sent. 1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it: lest, if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should have been despised and insulted, and David should have been perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet, and discouraged by another. 2. The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error, nor David have his head any further filled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan, to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them: though he be the head, they must be the eyes by which he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivered the message to Nathan, assisted by memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully, (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully,) as he received it of the Lord.

Now in this message we have,

1. David's purpose to build God a house superceded. God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in men, and he was well pleased with it, as appears, 1 Kings 8. 18. Thou didst well that thou gavest thy heart, yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose, ver. 5, "Shalt thou build me a house? No. Thou shalt not," as it is explained in the parallel place, 1 Chron. 22. 4. "There is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first." David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquests. David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, though the courses of the Levites, but his son's genius will better suit for building the house, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. As every man hath received the gift, let him minister.

The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him, 1. That hitherto he never had had a house built for him; (v. 6.) a tabernacle had served hitherto, and it might serve a while longer. God values not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as surely with his people when the ark was in a tent, as when it was in a temple; David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains, (a mean place movedly, by so many) but God considered of it as any uncensurableness to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet fanted not, nor was weary, Christ, like the ark, when here on earth, walked in a tent and tabernacle, for he went about doing good, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his Father's house, and there he sat down. The church, like the ark, in this world, is ambulatory, dwells in tents, because it is not a house of its own; and yet, as his house on high, its continuing city is to come. David, in his Psalms, often calls the tabernacle a temple, (as Ps. 5. 7.—27. 4. 29. 9. 65. 4. 158. 2.) because it answered the intent of a temple, though it was made but of curtains: wise and good men value not the show, while they have the substance. David perhaps had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God, in a house of the tabernacle, than any other, and he knew this was to be his success; his house of God. 2. This may have had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the scriptures of Israel, that is, to any of the judges, 1 Chron. 17. 6. (for rulers are called sceptres, Ezek. 19. 14. the great Ruler is called so, Numb. 24. 17.) concerning the building of the temple, ver. 7. That worship only is acceptable, which is instituted: why should David therefore design what God never ordained? Let David wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing, than a temple of his own inventing.

II. David is reminded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of Heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in this service: as also that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions; but, whatever he did for God's honour, God was before-hand with him, ver. 8. 9. 1. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition; he took him from the sheep-cote. It is good for those who are come to great preferment, to be often reminded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful. 2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies; (ver. 9.) "I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, to protect thee when pursued, to prepare thee with an arm; I have blotted off all thine enemies, that stood in the way of thine advancement and settlement." 3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about, I have made thee a great name. He was become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what they who have great reason to be thankful for, and may improve to good purposes; but what they that have not, have no reason to be ambitious of: a great name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely, and yet very comfortably.

III. A happy establishment is promised to God's Israel, ver. 10. 11. This comes in in a parenthesis, before the promises made to David himself, to let him understand, that whatever God had promised him, was for Israel's sake, that they might be happy under his administration, and to give him the satisfaction of foreseeing peace upon Israel, when it was promised him that he should see his children's children, Ps. 128. 6. A good king cannot think himself happy unless his kingdom be so. The promises that follow, relate to his family and posterity,
these, therefore, which speak of the settlement of Israel, into the happiness of his own reign. Two things are promised. 1. A quiet place; I will appoint a place for my people Israel. It was appointed long ago, yet they were disappointed, but now that appointment should be made good. Canaan should be clearly their own, without any ejection or molestation. 2. A quiet enjoyment of that place, the children of wickedness, meaning especially the Philistines, who had been so long a plague to them, shall not afflict them any more; but, in the time that I caused judges to be over my people Israel, I cause thee to rest from all thine enemies; so v. 11. may be read; that is, "I will continue and complete that rest; the land shall rest from war, as it did under the judges."

IV. Blessings are entailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promises to build his son a house, v. 11. Whatever he do for God, or sincerely design to do, though Providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name, v. 9. here he promises to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise, that his family should flourish when he is gone. Next to the happiness of our own persons, there is no wish of God shall desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us, may be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah. (1.) That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, intimate that David himself should come to his grave; and then I will set up thy seed. This favour was so much the greater, because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges, whom he called to feed his people. David’s government was the first that was entailed; for the promise made to Christ, of the kingdom, was to reach to his spiritual seed: if children, then heirs. (2.) That he would settle him in the throne. He shall set himself in the throne of his kingdom. v. 12. His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed, and his administration steady. 3. That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing. He shall build a house for my name, v. 13. The work shall be done, though David shall not have the doing of it. (4.) That he would take him into the covenant more and more; v. 14. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son. We need no more to make us and ours happy, than to have God to be a Father to us and them: and all those to whom God is a Father, he by his grace makes his sons, by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful Father to us, we must be obedient, tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks us into sons. [1.] That his Father would be with him, when there was occasion; for what son is whom the Father chasteneth not? Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from, God’s Fatherly love. "If he commit iniquity," (as it proved he did, 1 Kings 11. 1.) "I will chasten him to bring him to repentance; but it shall be with the rod of men, such a rod as men may wield; I will not behead against him, nor a sword over a God," Josh. 23. 5. Or rather, such a rod as men may bear. "I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion, when there is need, and no more than there is need of; it shall be with the stripes, the touches," (so the word is), "of the children of men; not a stroke, or wound, but a gentle touch." [2.] That yet he would not disinherit him; (v. 15.) My mercy (and that is the inheritance of sons) shall not depart from him. The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to what promise that the family was cut short, yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family swayed the sceptre of Judah, than that of David. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated Ps. 89. 3, &c. as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called David, and the Son of David: that son of David to whom these promises principally belong: and in them they had their full accomplishment. He was of the seed of David, Acts 13. 23. To him God gave the throne of his father David, Luke 1. 32. All power, both in heaven and earth, and authority to execute judgment. He was to build the grcal temple, a house for God’s name, Zech. 6. 12, 13. That promise, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, Heb. 1. 5. But the establishing of his house, and that he God honour and exalt for ever, (v. 13.) and again, and a third time, (v. 16.) for ever, can be applied to no other than Christ and his kingdom; David’s house and kingdom are long since come to an end, it is only the Messiah’s kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The supposition of committing iniquity cannot indeed be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very consistent with) to his spiritual seed: true believers have their infirmities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

Now, (1.) This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David, v. 17. Though, in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward to do what he had before informed concerning the mind of God. (2.) These promises God faithfully performed to David, and his seed, in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God’s house, yet he did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the term of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances, there are none in God’s.

18. Then went king David in, and sat before the Lord; and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hither? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord God, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy word’s sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. 22. Wherefore thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our
ears. 23. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou deliveredst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods!

24. For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel, to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, Lord, art become their God. 25. And now, O Lord God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee.

27. For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee a house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. 28. And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: 29. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou, O Lord God, hast spoken it; and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan; no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully, as his messenger, but his answer to God he took himself, and did not send by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message, than while the impressions of it were fresh, he retired to return an answer. Observe,

I. The place he retired to; he went in before the Lord, that is, into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is, that men pray everywhere; but wherever we pray, we must set ourselves as before the Lord, and set him before us.

II. The posture he put himself into; he sat before the Lord. 1. It denotes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing is certainly the most proper gesture to use in prayer; but the Jews, from this instance, say, "It was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other." But this will by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. David went in, and took his place before the Lord, so it may be read; but when he prayed, he stood up as the manner was. Or, he went in and continued before the Lord; stated some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. Or, 2. It may denote the frame of his spirit at this time. He went in and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God: "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.

III. The prayer itself, which is full of the breath of prayer and devotion, a direction toward God that:

1. He speaks very humbly of himself, and his own merits. So he begins thus astonished, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house? v. 18. God had reminded him of the meanness of his original, (v. 8.) and he submitted to it; he had low thoughts, (1.) Of his personal merits, Who am I? He was, upon all accounts, a very considerable and considerable man. His endowments, both of body and mind, were such as might, without the grace of God, have been eminent. He was a man of honour, success, and usefulness, the darling of his country, and the dread of its enemies; yet he says, when he comes to speak of himself before God, "Who am I? A man not worth taking notice of." (2.) Of the merits of his family. What is my house? His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet, like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah, and himself the least in his father's house, Judg. 6. 15. David thus humbled himself, when Saul's daughter was mentioned to him for a wife, (1 Sam. 18. 16.) but now with much more reason. Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advancements, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For the greatest men of the earth are sinners, and these are that highest advanced, have nothing but what they have received; "Who am I, that thou hast brought me hither? brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all mine enemies?" It intimates that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vestures.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him. (1.) In what he had done for him. "Thou hast brought me hither, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me." Though we should be left at uncertainty concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that which has been done for us hitherto.

Acts 26. 21. (2.) In what he had yet further promised him. God had done that he was already, and yet, as if those had been nothing, he had promised to do much more, v. 19. Note, What God has laid out upon his people is much, but what he has laid out for them is infinitely more, Ps. 31. 19. The present graces and comforts of the saints are invaluable gifts; and yet, as if these were too little for God to bestow upon his children, he has spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity itself reaches. Of this we must own, as David here, [1.] That it is far beyond what we could expect. Is this the manner of men? That is, First, Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? Is this the law of Adam? Note, Considering what the character and condition of men are, it is very surprising and amusing that God should deal with them on such terms. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance; unapproachable to God, and therefore under a law of disesteem and disregard; guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation. But how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam! He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate; taken into covenant and communion with God; sold this ever have been thought of? Second, Do men usually deal with one another? No; the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high, he has respect to the lowly; and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled,
waits to be gracious, multitudes his pardons; and is this the manner of men? Some give another sense of this, reading it thus: And this is the law of man, the Lord Jehovah: that is, "This promise of one whose kingdom shall be established for ever, must be understood of one that is a man, and yet the Lord Jehovah, this must be the law of such a one. A Messiah from my loins must be born, and, reigning for ever, must be God." [2] That be the case, there is nothing we can do; and what can we say more unto thee? v. 20. What can I ask, or wish for more? Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant, knowest what will make me happy, and what thou hast promised is enough to do." The promise of Christ includes all; if that man, the Lord God, be ours, what can we ask, or think of, more? Eph. 3. 20. The promises of the covenant of grace are framed by him that knows us, and therefore knowest what's adapt them to every branch of our necessity. He knows us better than we know ourselves; and therefore let us be satisfied with the provision he has made for us; what can we say more for ourselves in our prayers, than he has said for us in his promises? 3. He ascribes all to the free grace of God; (v. 21.) both the great things he had done for him, and the great things he had made him promises of. He was a father to his people, that is, for the sake of Christ the eternal Word; it is all owing to his merit. Or, "That thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and store-house of thy people." (2.) A cord to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, ex morto mortuis—of thy own good pleasure. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thee eyes. All that God does for his people in his kingdom, that secures to them good promises, is for his pleasure, and for his praise; the pleasure of his will, and the praise of his word. 4. He adores the greatness and glory of God; (v. 22.) Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee. God's gracious condescension to him, and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful reverence for the Divine Majesty; for the nearer any are brought to God, the more they see of his glory; and the dearer we are in his eyes, the greater he should be in ours. And this we acknowledg concerning God, that there is no being like him, nor any God beside him; and that what we have seen with our eyes of his power and goodness, is according to all we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us. 5. He expresses a great esteem for the Israel of God; v. 23, 24. how there were none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel; considering, (1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnly, jubilant solemnly, di ierunt—The gods went. As if there were the same consideration and concurrence of all the persons in the celebrated Trinity, about a work of redemption, that there were about the work of creation, when God said, Let us make man. When they that were sent of God, went to redeem; so the Chaldee, meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of our redemption by Christ, in that, [1.] They were redeemed from the nations and their gods; so are we from all iniquity, and all pride of the present world; Christ came to save his people from their sins. [2.] They were redeemed to be a people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself, that he might make himself a great name, and do for them great things; the honour of God, and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption. (2.) The covenant he had made with them, v. 24. It was, [1.] Mutual: "They to be a people to thee, and thou to be a God to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thine attributes engaged for them." [2.] Immutable: "Thou hast confirmed them." He that makes the covenant, makes it sure, and will make it good. 6. He concludes with humble petitions to God. (1.) He varies his petitions upon the message which God had sent him; (v. 27.) Thou hast revealed this to thy servant; that is, "Thou hast of thine own will given me the promise, that thou wilt build me a house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this; I durst not have asked such great things, if I had not been directed and encouraged by thy promise to ask them: they are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for God: We to God. Thy servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer," so it is in the original, and the Septuagint. Many, when they go to pray, have their hearts to seek, but David's heart was found, that is, it was fixed; gathered in from its wanderings, and entirely engaged to the duty, and employed in it. That prayer which is found in the tongue only, will not please God; it must be found in the heart; that must be lifted up toward God. 7. He concludes with a prayer to God, to give him a name. [1.] He prays for the performance of his promise; (v. 25.) "Let the word be made good to me, on which thou hast caused me to hope, (Ps. 119. 49.) and do as thou hast said; I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm." Thus we must turn God's promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men; God will do as he has said. [2.] He prays for the glorifying of God's name: (v. 26.) Let thy name be magnified for ever; that ought to be the summary and centre of all our prayers, the Alpha and the Omega of them; begin with Hallowed be thy name, and end with Thee. Thus: "We thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast made thy name to be magnified or not, let thy name be magnified." And he reckons that nothing magnifies God's name more than this, to say, with suitable affections, The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel. This bespeaks the God of Israel gloriously great, that he is the Lord of hosts; and this bespeaks the Lord of angels magnified, that he is God over Israel; in both, let his name be magnified for ever. Let the Lord of hosts give him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God's promise for the honour, not of his own name but of God's. Thus the Son of David praved, Father, glorify thy name; (John 12. 28.—17.) Glorify thy Son, that the Son may also glorify thee. [3.] He prays for house, for that the promise has special reference to: (2.) "Thy might be happy;" (v. 29.) Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant; and again, with thy blessing, let the house of the servant be truly and eternally blessed. Those whom thou blessest are blessed indeed. The care of good men is very much concerning their families; and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the
value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family. Secondly, That the happiness of it might remain. Let it be established before thee, v. 26. Let it continue for ever before thee, v. 29. He prays, 1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family; that none of his might ever get it, but that it might walk before God, and that would be their establishment. 2. That kingdom might have its perfection and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God, (Heb. 10. 12.) and received all possible assurance that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven, this prayer of David the son of Jesse for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might continue before God for ever. See Ps. 72. 17. The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom is the desire and faith of all good people.

CHAP. VIII.

David having sought first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, setting the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all things were added to him. Here is an account, 1. Of his conquests. He triumphed. 1. Over the Philistines, v. 1. 2. Over the Moabites, v. 2. 3. Over the king of Zobah, v. 3. 4. Over the Syrians, v. 5. 5. 8. 13. 5. Over the Edomites, v. 14. II. Of the presents that were brought him, and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God, v. 9. 12. III. Of his court; the administration of his government, (v. 13.) and his chief officers, v. 16. 18. This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.

1. AND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metha- ammah out of the hand of the Philistines. 2. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive: and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. 3. David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: and David houghed all the chariot horses, but reserved of them for a hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David, and brought gifts. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. And from Betah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him; and he, having made a good use of that rest, has now commissioned given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the avenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights, for as yet they were not in full possession of that country, which by the promise of God they were entitled to.

1. He quite subdued the Philistines, v. 1. They had attacked him when they thought him weak, (ch. 5. 17.) and went by the worse then; but when he found himself strong, he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had been brave, and allowed very brave of their country; but David was not afraid to get no ground against them, but David completed Israel's deliverance, which Samson had begun long before, Judg. 13. 5. Methug-ammah was Gath, (the chief and royal city of the Philistines,) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah, (ch. 2. 24.) which was Methug, a bride (so it signifies,) and that as the people of Israel, through David, took out of their hand, and used it as a curb upon them. Thus when the strong man is disarmed, the armour wherein he trusted, is taken from him, and used against him, Luke 11. 22. And after the long and frequent struggles which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, the Son of David shall tread them all under their feet, and make the saints' morn than ever.

II. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, v. 2. He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared, to till the ground, and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot says, he held them on the ground, and measured them with a cord, who should be slain, and who should live, and this is called measuring with cords, Jer. 19. 4. But the word meaning of the Hebrew was, he measured them all, and took them for his prisoners. He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strong holds, and putting all to the sword; the third part he spared, to till the ground, and be servants to Israel.

The Jews say, he used this severity with the Moabites, because that they had slain his parents, and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab during his exile. 1 Sam. 22. 3. 4. He did it in justice, because they had been, and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been, danger us enemies to the Israel of God. But observe, though it was necessary that two methods should be used, in the case that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line. Be sure to give that length enough; let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost, in favorum vitae—so as to favour life; acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Balaam's prophecy was fulfilled, Aser eifer shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corner of Moab, to the utmost of which Israel shall be extended. Num. 24. 17. The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab. (2 Kings 3. 4. 5.) then they rebelled and were never reduced.

III. He smote the Syrians, or Aramites; of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the 60th Psalm. Aram Naharaim, Syria of the rivers, whose head city Damascus was, (v. 1. over the Philistines,) and Aram Zobah, (ch. 12.) and Aram Zobah, which joined to it, but extended toiphites. These were the two northern crowns. 1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, v. 3. 4. As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates, (for so far the land conveyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, Gen. 15. 18.) the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, and took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be seven hundred, but 1 Chron. 18. 4. seven thousand. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were 700, but the horsemen were 7000. David houghed the
II. 1. David reserved only one hundred chariots out of one thousand for his own use; for he placed his strength, not in chariots or horses, but in the living God, (Ps 20:7,) and wrote it from his own observation, that a horse is a vain thing for safety, Ps 33:16. The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah, fell with him; 22,000 were slain in the field; (v. 5.) so that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, v. 6. The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove, in the end, to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other.

II. 2. The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. It seems, he went in person, and, in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardized his own life in the high places of the field; but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he often speaks of, in his Psalm, to the glory of God. (2.) He was enriched. He took the spoil of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody, (v. 7.) and much brass from several cities of Syria, (v. 8.) which he was entitled to not only jure belli—but the uncontrollable right of the longest sword, (‘Get it, and take it,’) but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

9. When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10. Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David, to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him, (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi:) and Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and vessels of brass; 11. Which also king David did dedicate unto the Lord, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued; 12. Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer, son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13. And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of Salt, being eighteen thousand men. 14. And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons: and all they of Edom became David's servants. And the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went.

Here is,

1. The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems, was at this time at war with the king of Zobah. He, hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own s^n ambassador to him, (v. 9, 10.) to congratulate him on his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him, in breaking the power of his enemy, and in his defence and safety, in fear of his life; thus he not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, any more than the old Romans did by the like policy; for the wealth he hid from the enemies he conquered by way of spoil, he had from this by way of present or gratuity: Vessels of silver and gold. Better get by composition than by compulsion.

2. The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations, and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord, v. 11. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to outshine Alexander's, or Caesar's, that they should be the glory of God, and that his name should be as the name of God. All the precious things he was master of, were dedicated things; that is, they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations. In allusion to which, we find the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem; Rev. 21:24. Their gods of gold David burnt; (ch. 5. 21.) but their vessels of gold he dedicated; thus, in the conquest of a soul, by the grace of the Son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but what may glorify him must be dedicated, and the property of it altered; even the merchandise and the hire must be holiness to the Lord, (Isa. 57:17.) all that is dedicated is consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth, (Mic. 4. 13.) and then it is truly own, and that most comfortably.

3. The reputation he got, in a particular manner, by his victory over the Syrians, and their allies the Edomites, who acted in conjunction with them; as appears by comparing the title of the 60th Psalm, which was penned on this occasion, with v. 13, he gat him a name, for all that conduct and courage which are the praise of a great and distinguished general. Something extraordinary, it is likely, there was in that action, which turned very much to his honour, yet he is careful to transfer the honour to God, as appears by the psalm he penned on this occasion, v. 12. It is through God, that we do valiantly.

4. His success against the Edomites; they all became David's servants, v. 14. Now, and not till now, Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's lord; (Gen. 27. 37, 40.) and the Edomites continued long tributaries to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till, in Joram's time, they revolted, (2 Chron. 21. 8.) as Isaac had foretold that Esau should, in process of time, break the yoke from off his neck. Thus David, by his conquests, (v. 13.) secured Edom to himself; and, by the time to build the temple. And (2.) Prerogative wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously; some in one employment, others in another; some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories were typical of the same work of the present day. The kings of the Gentiles, in which the Son of God rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and he shall reign, till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality, and power; and he has, (v. 2.) a line to kill, and a line to save; for the same gospel is to some a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death.

15. And David reigned over all Israel: and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 16. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17. And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests; and
Seraiah was the scribe; 13. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

David was not so engag'd in his wars abroad, as to neglect the administration of the government at home.

1. His care extended itself to all parts of his dominion. He reigned over all Israel; (v. 15.) not only he had a right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and chiefly the fruit of his good government.

2. He did justice with an unbiassed unshaken hand; he executed judgment unto all his people; neither did wrong, nor denied or delayed right to any. It bespeaks, (1.) His industry, and close application to business; also his easiness of access, and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him. All his people, even the meanest, and those two of the meanest classes, were welcome to his council-board. (2.) His impartiality and the equity of his proceedings, in administering justice; he never perverted justice for favour or affection, nor had respect of persons, in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth in righteousness both judge and make war, Rev. 19. 11. See Ps. 72. 1, 2.

3. He kept good order, and good officers, in his court. David this eye, the first king that had an established government, (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled,) he had the modelling of the administration: in Saul's time, we read of no other great officer than Abner, that was captain of the host; but David instituted more officers. Here are, (1.) Two military officers; Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Benaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city train-bands, archers and slingers, so the Chaldee, or rather the life-guard, or standing force, that attended the king's person; the Persian band, the militia. They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administering of justice, and to preserve the public peace: we find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1 Kings 1. 38. (2.) Two ecclesiastical officers: Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, that is, they were most employed in the public worship, the high priest. (3.) Two civil officers; one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season; he was prime minister of state, yet not intrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our lord chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business, and he would do it himself. Another that was scrivener, or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and despatches, and rendered judgements given. Lastly, David's sons, as they grew up to be fit for business, were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, either in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them. They were chief about the king; (so it is explained, 1 Chron. 18. 17.) employed near him, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community: when he ascended on high, he gave these gifts, (Eph. 4. 8. 11.) to every man his work, Mark 15. 34. David made his sons chief rulers: but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests, Rev. 1. 6.

CHAP. IX.

The only thing recorded in this chapter, is, the kindness David showed to Jonathan's seed for his sake. 1. The kind inquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth, v. 1. 4. II. The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him, v. 5. 8. III. The kind provision he made for him and his, v. 9. 13.

1. And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba; and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lodebar. 5. Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar. 6. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence, and David said, Mephibosheth! And he answered, Behold thy servant. 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Here is,

1. David's inquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, v. 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul and Jonathan died, had now a son born. 9. 12. David had too long forgotten his obligations to Jonathan; but now, at length, they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to be a link ourselves, whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The compendium which Paul gives us of the life of David, is this, (Acts 13. 39.) that he served his generation according to the will of God, that is, he was a man that made it his business to do good: witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan, if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he does more; he inquires of those about him first, (v. 13.) and when he met with a person that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, '*Is there any yet left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness?* v. 3. Is there any, not only to whom I may do justice, (Numb. 5. 8.) but to whom I may show kindness?* Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. The liberal contribute liberal things,.Isa. 32. 8. For the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are
II. SAMUEL, IX.

such as was not frequently met with without inquisi-
tion. The most necessitous are the least cla-
morous.

II. Those he inquired after, were the remains of the
house of Saul, to whom he would show kindness
for Jonathan's sake; Is there any left of the house of
Saul? Saul had a very numerous family, (1 Chron.
8. 33.) enough to replenish a country, and yet so
cempted, that none of it appeared; but it was come
to this inquiry, Is there any left? See how the pro-
vidence of God can empty full families; see how the
sin of man will do it! Saul's was a bloody house, no
marvel it was thus reduced, ch. 21. 1. But though
God visited the iniquity of the father upon the chil-
dren, David would not, "Is there any left that I
should show kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but
for Jonathan's?"

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he
would show kindness to his house with all his heart,
and was forward to do it. He does not say, "Is
there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find
some way to take them off, and prevent them giv-
ing disturbance to me or my successor." It was
against Abimelech's mind, that any one was left of
the house of Gideon, (Judg. 9. 5.) and against
Athaliah's mind, that any one was left of the seed
royal; (2 Chron. 22. 10, 11.) these were usurped
governments. David's need of such vile sup-
ports; he was desirous to show kindness to the house
of Saul, not only because he trusted in God and feared
that he could do hurt by them, but because he
was of a charitable disposition, and forgave what
they had done to him. Note, We must ev-
idence the sincerity of our forgiving those that have
been any way unjust or injurious to us, by being
ready, as we have opportunity, to show kindness
both to them and theirs. We must not only
avert ourselves upon them, but we must love them,
and do them good, (Matt. 5. 44.) and not be back-
ward to do them office of love and good-will to them
that have done us many an injury, (1 Pet. 3. 9.)
but contrariwise, blessing, This is the way to a
come evil, and to find mercy for ourselves and ours,
when we or they need it.

(2.) Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and
therefore he would show kindness to his house.
This teaches us, [1.] To be mindful of our cov-
enant. The kindness we have promised, we must con-
stantly press and persist in, it should not be
claimed. God is faithful to us, let us not be un-
faithful to one another. [2.] To be mindful of our
friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness
to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of
the laws of our holy religion. He that has friends,
must show himself friendly, Prov. 18. 24. If Pro-
vidence has raised us, and our friends and their
families are brought low, yet we must not forget
former acquaintances, (Job 22. 28.) but it is our
advantage that as giving us so much the fairer opportunity of being
kind to them; then our friends have most need of us,
and we are in the best capacity to help them.

Though there be not a solemn league of friendship
tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a sa-
cred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him
that is in misery, pity should be shown by his friends
(Job 22. 28.) and perhaps no law obliges us to take
cognizance of the families and surviving relations of
those we have loved, who, when they left us, left behind them
their bodies, their names, and their posterity, to be
kind to.

3. The kindness he promised to show them, he
calls the kindness of God; not only great kindness,
but kind and generous, in pursuance of the covenant
that was between him and Jonathan, to which God
was a witness. See 1 Sam. 20. 42. (2.) Kindness,
after God's example; for we must be merciful as he
is. 1. He spares those whom he has advantage
against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to
David was, (1 Sam. 20. 14.) "Show me the kind-
ness of the Lord, that I die not, and the same to my
seed." The kindness of God is in some instances
kindness of one than can ordinarily expect from
men. (3.) It is kindness done after a godly sort,
and with an eye to God, and his honour and
favour.

II. Information given him concerning Mephibos-
ethoven, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an uncle to
Saul's family, and knew the state of it; he is sent
for and examined, and acquaints the king that
Jonathan's son was living, but was come to be so, we read before, (ch. 4. 4.) and that
he lived obscure, probably, among his mother's
relations in Lo-debar, in Gilead, on the other side
Jordan, where he was forgotten as a dead man out
of mind, but here it the more easily, because he
could remember little of the honour he fell from.

III. The bringing of him to court. The king sent
(Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem with
all convenient speed, v. 5. Thus he eased Machir
of his trouble, and, perhaps, recompensed him for
what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account.
This Machir appears to have been a very generous
free-hearted man, and to have entertained Mephi-
boseeth, not out of any disaffection to David, or his
government, but in compassion to the reduced son
of a prince, for afterward we find him to kind to
David himself in the ungratef ulness of his invi-
tation (ch. 17. 27.) among those that furnished the
king with what he wanted at Mahanaim: though
when David sent for Mephibosheth from him, he
little thought that the time would come, when he
himself would gladly be beholden to him: and per-
haps Machir was then the more ready to help Da-
vid, in recompence for his kindness to Mephibo-
neath; therefore we should be forward to give,
because we know not but we ourselves may some-
time be in want; (EccL 11. 2.) And he that wateeth,
shall be watered also himself. Prov. 11. 25.

Now, 1. Mephibosheth presents himself to David
with all the respect that was owing to his character.
Lame as he was, he fell on his face, and did rever-
ence, v. 6. David had thus made his honours to
Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan, when he was next
to the throne; (1 Sam. 20. 41.) he bowed himself to
him three times, as Lamech did to his father.
On the like manner, addresses him, when affairs are so com-
pletely reversed. Those who, when they are in
inferior relations, show respect, when they come to
be advanced, shall have respect shown them.

2. David received him with all the kindness that
could be. (1.) He spoke to him as one surprised,
but pleased to see him. "Mephibosheth, Why is
there such a man living but Jonathan, his family,
that so lately as the day before you were born
the time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan.
(2.) He bade him not be afraid. Fear not, v. 7.
It is probable that the sight of David put him into
some confusion: to free him from which, he assures
him that he sent for him, not out of my jealousy but
had he of him, or with any bad design upon him, but
to show him kindness. Great men should not take
pleasure in being over-scrupulous in their infer-
riorities, (for the great God does not,) but should en-
courage them. (3.) He gives him, by grant from
the crown, all the land of Saul his father, that
is, his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Ish-
bo sheath's rebellion, and added to his own revenue.
This was a real favour, and more than giving him a
kind word. True friendship will be generous. (4.)
Though he now was given sufficient to maintain
him, yet, for Jonathan's sake, (whom perhaps he saw some resemblance of in
Mephibosheth's face,) he will take him to be a
constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and does not appear to have any great fitness for business, yet, for his good father's sake, David will take him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was none of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing done for them, and their friends do, too. On the contrary, he prays, when his own king and master, who has so far to look after, his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself a dead dog before David. Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences: If, when Divine Providence turns our condition downward, divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy and those who thus humble themselves, shall be exalted. How does he magnify David's kindness! It had been easy to lessen it, if he had been so disposed. Had David restored him his father's estate, it was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table? That was policy, that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth thinks all kind, that David said and did, and himself less than the least of his favours. See 1 Sam. 18. 18.

9. Then the king called unto Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house. 10. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruit thereof, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master's son, shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons, and twenty servants. 11. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table; as one of the king's sons. 12. And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micah. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. 13. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem; for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it; (v. 9.) and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, for his father was a mighty man of war (1 Sam. 9. 1.) and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, 1 Sam. 22. 7. Be it ever so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2. The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was, and how to make the most of it, whom having been his father's servant, he might confide in, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, v. 10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich; having much coming in, and little occasion to spend, him or being kept at David's table. Yet he must have food to eat bar his own head, provisions for his son and servants, and Ziba's; his sons and servants would come in for their share of his revenue; for much reason, perhaps, their number is here mentioned, fifteen sons and twenty servants, who would require nearly all there was; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the belching of his belly? Eccl. 5. 11. All that dwelt in the house of Ziba, were servants of Mephibosheth; (v. 12.) that is, they all lived upon him, and made a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him, and doing him service. The Jews have a saying, "He that multiplies servants, multiplies thieves." Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have abundance: As the king has commanded, so shall thy servant do; (v. 11.) let me alone with the estate: and as for Mephibosheth, (they seem to be Ziba's words,) if the king please, he need not trouble the court, he shall eat at my table, and be as well treated as one of the king's sons." But David will have him to his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post, as Ziba with his; how unfaithful Ziba was to him, we shall find afterward, ch. 16. 3.

Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and Son, his Root and Offspring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to illustrate the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan. Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall: the son of God inquires after this degenerate race, that he may not only recover them to himself, but also embolden those that humble themselves before him, and commit themselves to him, he restores the forfeited inheritance, he entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus magnify him!

CHAP. X.

This chapter gives us an account of a war David had with the Ammonites, and the Syrians their allies, with the occasion and success of it. 1. David sends a friendly embassy to Hanun king of the Ammonites, v. 1. 2. He, upon a base surmise that it was ill-intended, abused David's ambassadors, v. 3. 4. III. David receiving it, (v. 5.) the Ammonites prepared for war against him, v. 6. IV. David meets the war in good order, v. 11. V. The Ammonites, and the Syrians their allies, were totally routed, v. 12. VI. The king of the Syrian, which rallied again, were a second time defeated, v. 15. 18. Thus did David advance his own reputation for gratitude, in returning kindnesses; and justice, in repaying injuries.

1. And it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. 2. Then said David, I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father showed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him, by the hand of his servants, for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. 3. And the princes of the children of Ammon
said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee to search the city, and to spy it out, and to over-throw it? 4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. 5 When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

Here is,

I. The great respect David paid to his neighbour, the king of the Ammonites, v. 1, 2. 1. The inducement to it was, some kindnesses he had formerly received from Nahash, the deceased king. He showed kindness to me, says David; (v. 2.) and therefore (having lately had satisfaction in showing kindness to Mephibosheth, for his father's sake) he resolves to show kindness to his son, and to keep up a friendly correspondence with him. Thus the pleasure of doing one kind and generous action, should excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, a cruel enemy, (1 Sam. 11. 2.) and yet had showed kindness to David, perhaps only in contradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him: however, if David received kindness, he is not nice in examining the grounds and principles of it, but resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharaoh give alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet he that receives the alms, ought to return thanks for it: God knows the heart, but we do not. 2. The particular instance of respect was, sending an embassy to condescend with him on his father's death, as is common among princes in alliance with each other. David sent to comfort him. Note, It is a comfort to children, when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners, to find that there are those who mourn with them, and are sensible of their loss, and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honouring the memory of their deceased relations, to find there are others who likewise honour it, and had a value for those they valued.

II. The great affront which Hanun the king of the Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors. 1. He heartened to the spiteful suggestions of his princes, who insinuated that David's ambassadors, under pretence of bringing comforters, were come to spy, v. 3. False men are ready to think others as false as themselves; and they that bear ill-will to their neighbours, are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good-will to them. They would not thus have imagined that David considered, but that they were conscious to themselves of that they could have disseminated, to serve a turn. Ill-suspected suspicions argues ill-will. But perhaps on this, is, that there is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill-interpreted, and is wont to be so by men who love nobody but themselves. Men of the greatest honour and virtue must not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented, Charity thinketh no evil. 2. Entertaining this vile suggestion, he basely abused David's ambassadors, like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was iter- to mock a kind man than to wear a crown. If he had any reason to suspect that David's messengers came on a bad design, he had done prudently enough to be upon the reserve with them, and to dismiss them as soon as he could; but it is plain he only sought an occasion to put the utmost disgrace he could upon them, out of an anticipity to their king and country. They were themselves men of honour, and much more so, as they represented the prince that sent them; they and their reputation were under the special protection of the law of nations; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and came among them unarmed; yet Hanun used them like rogues and vagabonds, and would shave off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the midst, to expose them to the contempt and ridicule of his servants, that they might make sport with them, and that they might seem vile.

III. David's tender concern for his servants that were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and to let them know how much he interested himself in their quarrel, and how soon he would avenge it, and directed them to stay at Jericho, a private place, where they would not have occasion to come into company, till that half of their beards, which was shaved off, was grown to such a length that the other half might be decently cut to it, v. 5. The Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour to appear aged and grave; and therefore it was not fit that persons of their rank and figure should appear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of countenance, it is likely, they had had with them, to put on, for the time being, the countenance on which they were cut off; but the loss of their beards would not be so soon repaired: yet, in time, those would grow again, and all would be well. Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust reproaches: after a while, they will wear off of themselves, and turn only to the shame of their authors, while the injured reputation in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will bring forth righteous judgment as the light, therefore wicl patience for him, Ps. 37. 6, 7.

Some have thought that David, in the indignity he received from the king of Ammon, was but well enough served for courting and complimenting that pagan prince, whom he knew to be an invertebrate enemy to Israel, and might now remember how, when he would have put out the right eye of the men of Jabesh-gilead, he designed that, as he did this, he might reproach upon them. What better usage could he expect from such a spiteful family and people? Why should he cover the friendship of a people, which Israel must have so little to do with, that an Ammonite might not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, Deut. 23. 3.

6. And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Beth-rehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-toh twelve thousand men. 7. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 8. And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Beth-rehob, and Ish-toh, and Maacah, were by themselves in the field. 9. When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the chief men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians: 10. And the rest of the people he delivered
into the hand of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Amnon. 11. And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me; but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. 12. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the Lord do that which seemeth him good. 13. And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. 14. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city. So Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.  

Here is,  
I. The preparation which the Ammonites make for war, ver. 6. They saw they had made themselves very odious to David, and offensive to his just displeasure; this they might easily foresee, when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a public affront to him, and a daring presumptuous attack on his person. Yet, it seems, they had not considered how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet him; for, now they found themselves an unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service. Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath; and never consider that he is stronger than they, 1 Cor. 10. 22. The Ammonites gave the affront first, and they were the first that raised forces to justify them. They are, as it were, the secon- 
ded themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But when they were thus desper-ately resolved to stand by what they had done, they counted their own ruin.  
II. The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, ver. 7. When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab with a great army to attack them, ver. 7. Then they are in war with the Son of David, not only give the provocation, but begin the war; for he visits to be gracious, but they strengthen themselves against him, and therefore, if they turn not, he will whet his sword, Ps. 7. 12. God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance, (Isa. 5. 19.) which will convince them, when it is too late, that none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. It was David's prudence to carry the war into their own country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, Rabbah, as some think, or Medeba, a city in their borders, before which they pitched to guard their coast, 1 Chron. 19. 7. "Such are the terrors and desolations of war, that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it, as much as may be, at a distance from them,  
III. Preparations made on both sides for an engagement. 1. The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of Syrians, whom they had taken into their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, ver. 8. 2. Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own com-
mand, to fight the Syrians, whom, probably, he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the art of war, ver. 9. The rest of the forces he left under the command of Abishai his brother, to engage the Ammonites, ver. 10. It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them, that his conduct and courage were never so tried as now.  
IV. Joah's speech before the battle, ver. 11, 12. It is not long, but pertinent and brave. 1. He prudently conceives the matter with Abishai his broth-
er, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakening of them; but that, which put a sword, was borne hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposes the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back; and, in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve it. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, thou shalt help me, and I will help thee. Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. They that through grace are conquerors over temptation, must counsel, and comfort, and pray for, those that are tempted: When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren, Luke 22. 32. 2. The members of the natural body help one another, 1 Cor. 12. 21. 2. He bravely encourages himself, and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put us on edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animates his men to charge so much the more courageously: Be of good courage, and let us play the men, not for pay and preferment, for hono-
ur and fame, but for our people, and the cities of our God; for the public safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested. God and our country, was the word. "Let us be valiant, from a principle of love to Israel, that are our peo-
ple, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace; and from a principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of." The relation which any person or thing stands in to God, should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its support. 3. He piously leaves the issue with God: "When we have done our best, according to the duty of our place, let the Lord do that which seemeth him good." Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty, we may, with the greatest satisfaction, leave the event with God; not thinking that our valour bids them come to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleases, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.  
V. The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, ver. 13, 14. He pro-
vided for the worst, and put the case that the Sy-
rians or Ammonites might prove too strong for him; (ver. 11.) but he proved too strong for them both. We do not hinder our success by preparing for dis-
appointment. The Ammonites were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai; the latter seem not to have fought at all, but, upon the re-
treat of the Syrians, to have fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly, when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly; and another thing when they must either fight or die.  
15. And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16. And Hador-
sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach, the captain of the host of Hadarezer, went before them. 17. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam. And the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. 18. And the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there. 19. And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were shitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them: So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

Here is,
1. A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour, and to check the progress of David's victories. The forces that were lately dispersed, rallied again, and gathered themselves together, v. 15. Even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the Son of David do so, Matth. 22. 34. Rev. 19. 19. These, being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies and dependencies on the other side the river, (v. 16.) and, being thus recruited, they hoped to make their part good against Israel; but then they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathered them as ashamed into the floor; see Mic. 4. 11.-13. The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan, (v. 17.) and in a pitched battle routed the Syrians; (v. 18.) slew 7000 men, who belonged to 700 chariots, and 20,000 other soldiers, horse and foot, as appears by comparing 1 Chron. 19. 18. Their general was killed in the battle, and David came home in triumph, no doubt.
2. The consequence of this victory over the Syrians. (1.) David gained several tributaries, v. 19. The kings, or petty princes, that had been subject to Hadarezer, when they saw how powerful David was, very wisely made peace with Israel, which they found they could not make war with, and served them who were able to give them protection. Thus the promise made to Abraham, (Gen. 15. 18.) and repeated to Joshua, (ch. 1. 4.) that the borders of Israel should extend to the river Euphrates, was performed at length. (2.) The Ammonites lost their old allies. The Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon, not because they had an unrighteous cause, (justifying a crime which was a breach of the law of nations,) but because they found it was an unsuccessful cause. It is dangerous helping those that have God against them; for when they fail, their helpers will fall with them.

Jesus Christ, the son of David, sent his ambassadors, his apostles and ministers, after all his servants the prophets, to the Jewish Church and nation; but they treated them shamefully, as Hanan did David's ambassadors; mocked them, abused them, slew them; and this was it that filled the measure of their iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy; (Matth. 21. 35. 41. -22. 7. compare 2 Chron. 36. 16.) for Christ takes the affronts and injuries done to his ministers, as done to himself, and will avenge them accordingly.  

CHAP. XI.

What David said of the mournful report of Saul's death, may more fitly be applied to the sad story of this chapter, the adultery and murder David was guilty of—Tell it not in Gath, Publish it not in the streets of Ekron. We wish we could draw a veil over, and that might never be known, might never be said, that David did such things as are here recorded of him; but it cannot, it must not, be concealed: the scripture is faithful in relating the faults even of those whom it most applauds; which is an instance of the sincerity of the penmen, and an evidence that it was not written to serve any party; and even such stories as these were written for our learning, that he that readeth may stand in awe of his Lord, and keep himself from all such acts, and may be admonished by them, lest he fall; and that others' harms may be our warnings. Many, no doubt, have been imbodiled to sin, and hardened in it, by this story, and to them it is a savour of death unto death; but many have by it been awakened to a holy jealousy over themselves, and constant watchfulness against sin, and to them it is a savour of life unto life. They are very great sins, and greatly aggravated, which here we find David guilty of.

1. He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, v. 1.-5. He endeavoured to futher the spurious brood upon Uriah, v. 6.-13. 11. When that project failed, he plotted the death of Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon, and effected it, v. 14. -35. 14. He married Bath-sheba, v. 26. 27. Is this David? Is this the man after God's own heart? How is his behaviour changed, worse than it was before Abimelech? How is this gold become dim? Let him that readeth, understand what the best of men are, when God leaves them to themselves.

1. AND it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2. And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house; and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 3. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bath-sheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 4. And David sent messengers, and took her: and she came in unto him, and he lay with her, (for she was purified from her uncleanness,) and she returned unto her house. 5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

Here is,
1. David's glory in pursing the war against the Ammonites, v. 1. We cannot take that pleasure in viewing this great action, which either we have taken in observing David's achievements, because the beauty of it was stained and sullied by sin; otherwise we might take notice of David's wisdom and bravery in following his blow. Having routed the army of the Ammonites in the field, as soon as ever the season of the year permitted, he sent more forces to waste the country, and further to avenge the quarrel of his ambassadors. Rabbah, their metropolis, made a stand, and held out a great while; that city Joab laid close siege to, and it was at the time of that siege, that David fell into this sin. 2. David's shame, in being himself coquered.
and led captive, by his own lust. The sin he was guilty of, was adultery, against the letter of the seventh commandment, and (in the judgment of the patriarchal age) a heinous crime, and an iniquity to be punished by the judges; (Job 31. 11.) a sin which takes away the heart, and gets a man a round and dishonour, more than any other, and that in proportion as he is at any particular time. 

1. Observe the occasions of this sin, which led to it.

1. Neglect of his business. When he should have been abroad with his army in the field, fighting the battles of the Lord, he devoted the care upon others, and he himself tarried still at Jerusalem, v. 1. To the war with the Syrians David went in person, ch. 10. 17. Had he been now at his post at the head of his forces, he had been out of the way of this temptation. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptation.

2. Love of ease, and the indulgence of a slothful temper. He came off his bed at evening-tide; (v. 2.) there he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness, which he should have spent in some exercise, for his own improvement, or the good of others. He used to pray, not only morning and evening, but at noon, in the day of his trouble: it is to be feared he had, this noon, omitted prayer, and that idleness gives great advantage to the tempter. Standing waters gather filth. The bed of sloth often provokes the bed of lust.

3. A wandering eye. He saw a woman washing herself, probably from some ceremonial pollution, according to the law. This sin came in at the eye, as Eve's did. Perhaps, he sought to see her; at least, he did not practice according to his own prayer. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and his son's caution in a like case, Look not thou on the wine when it is red. Either he had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or, at this time, he had forgotten it.

2. The steps of the sin. When he saw her, lust immediately conceived, and, (1.) He inquired who she was, (v. 3.) perhaps, intending only, if she were unmarried, to take her to wife, as he had taken several; but if she were a wife, having no design upon her. (2.) The corrupt desire growing more violent; though he was told she was a wife, and whose wife she was, yet he sent messengers for her, and then, it may be, intended only to please himself with her company and conversation. But, (3.) When she came, he lay with her, she too easily consenting, because he was a great man, and favored for his goodness too; surely (thinks he) that can be no sin, which such a man as David is the mover of. See how the way of sin is down-hill; when men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop themselves. The beginning of lust, as of strife is like the letting forth of water; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with. The foolish fly fires her wings, and fools away her life, at last, by playing about the candle.

3. The consequences of the sin. (1.) He was now in years, fifty at least, some think more, when those lusts, which are more properly youthful, one would think, should not have been violent in him. (2.) He had many wives and concubines of his own; this is insisted on, ch. 12. 8. (3.) Uriah, whom he wronged, was one of his own worthies; a person of honour and virtue, one that was now abroad in his service, jeopardizing his life in the high places of the field for the benefit of both honour and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been. (4.) Bath-sheba, whom he debauched, was a lady of good reputation, and, till she was drawn by him and his influence into this wickedness, no doubt, had preserved her purity: little did she think that ever she could have done so bad a thing, as to forsake the guide of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God; nor perhaps could any one in the world, but David, have prevailed against her. The adulterer not only wrongs and ruins his own soul, but as much as he can, another's soul too. (5.) David was a king, whom God had intrusted with the sword of justice, and the execution of the law upon other criminals, particularly upon adulterers, who were, by the law, to be put to death; for him therefore to be guilty of these crimes himself, was to make himself a pattern, when he should have been a terror, to evil doers. With what face could he rebuke or punish that in others, which he was conscious to himself of being guilty of? See Rom. 2. 22.

Much more might be said to aggravate the sin; and I can think but of one excuse for it, which is, that it was a sin, but one, it was far from being his practice; it was by the surprise of a temptation that he was drawn into it. He was none of these, of whom the prophet complains, that they were as fidd horses, neighing every one after his neighbour's wife; (Jer. 5. 8.) but, this once, God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart, 2 Chron. 32. 31. Had he been told of it before, he would have said, as Hab. 3. 16. Why is this my adversity, when by this instance we are taught, what need we have to pray every day, Father, in heaven, lead us not into temptation, and to watch, that we enter not into it.

6. And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. 8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thine house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. 9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. 10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? 11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields: shall I then go into mine house, to eat, and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. 12. And David said to Uriah, Tarry here to-day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day and the morrow. 13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

Uriah, we may suppose, had now been absent from his wife for some weeks, making the campaign in the country of the Ammonites, and not intending to return till the end of it: the situation of his wife would bring to light the hidden works of darkness; and when Uriah, at his return, should
find how he had been abused, and by whom, it might well be expected, 1. That he would prosecute his wife, according to law, and have her stoned to death; for jealousy is the rage of a man, especially a man of honour; and he that is thus injured, will not share in the day of vengeance, Prov. 6. 34. This was Uriah's present apprehension; but when she sent to let David know she was with child, intimating that he was concerned to protect her, which, it is likely, if he had not promised her so to do, (so wretchedly abusing his royal power,) she would not have consented to him. Hope of impunity is a great encouragement to iniquity. 2. It might also be expected that since he could not prosecute David by law for the offence of this nature, he would take his revenge another way, and raise a rebellion against him. There have been instances of kings, who, by provocations of this nature, given to some of their powerful subjects, have lost their crowns.

To prevent this double mischief, David endeavours to father the child which should be born, upon Uriah himself, and therefore sends for him home, to stay a night or two in his own house. Observe, 1. How the plot was laid. Uriah must come home from the army, under pretence of bringing David an account how the war prospered, and how they went on with the siege of Rabbah, v. 7. Thus does he pretend a more than ordinary concern for his army, when that was, at present, the least thing in his thoughts; if he had not another turn to serve, an express, of much less figure than Uriah, might have sufficient to bring him a report of the state of the war. David, being then in a much conference with Uriah as he thought requisite to cover the design, sent him to his house, and, that he might be the more pleasant there, sent a dish of meat for the entertainment of himself and his wife, v. 8. When that project failed the first night, and Uriah, being weary of his journey, and more desirous of sleep than meat, lay all night in the guard-chamber, the next night, he went into a different sort of a place, and that away from court, v. 13. or made him merry; tempted him to drink more than was fit, that he might forget his vow, (v. 11.) and might be disposed to go home to his own bed; to which, perhaps, if David could have made him dead drunk, he would have ordered him to be carried. It is a very wicked thing, upon any design whatsoever, to make a person drunk; Woe to him that doth so, Hab. 2. 15, 16. God will pour down more than drunkenness upon such as worketh in the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason, is worse than robbing him of his money; and drawing him into sin, worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever. Every good man, especially every magistrate, should endeavour to prevent this sin, by admonishing, restraining, and denying the glass to those whom they see falling into excess; but to further it, is to do the Devil's work, to act as factotum for him.

2. How this plot was defeated by Uriah's firm resolution not to lie in his own bed; both nights, he slept with the life-guard, and went not down to his house, though, it is probable, his wife pressed him to do it as much as David, v. 9, 12. Now, 1. Some think he suspected what was done, being informed of his wife's attendance at court, and therefore he would not go near her. But if he had had any suspicion of this kind, surely he might have opposed the letter that David sent by him to Joab. 2. Whether he suspected any thing or no, Providence put this resolution into his heart, and kept him to it, for the discovering of David's sin, and that the baffling of his design to conceal it might awaken David's conscience to confess it, and repent of it. 3. The reason he gave to David of this strange instance of self-denial and mortification, was very

brave, v. 11. That while the army was encamped in the field, he would not lie at ease in his own house. The ark is in a tent, whether at home, in the tent David had pitched for it, or abroad, with Joab in the camp, is not certain. 14. And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21. Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 22. So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for. 23. And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the
field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. 24. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon them, and some of the king's servants were shot dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 25. Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee; for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it; and encourage thou him. 26. And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

When David's project of fathering the child upon Uriah himself failed, so that, in process of time, Uriah would certainly know the wrong that had been done him; to prevent the fruits of his revenge, the king set his thoughts. Who should take him off, and then neither he nor Bath-sheba would be in any danger; what prosecution could there be when there was no prosecutor? And suggesting further, that when he was out of the way, Bath-sheba might, if he pleased, be his own for ever. Adulteries have often occasioned murders, and one wickedness must be covered and secured with another. The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded; for who knows what the end will be? It is resolved, in David's breast, (which one would think could never possibly have harboured so vile a thought,) that Uriah must die; that innocent, valiant, gallant man, who was ready to die for his prince's honour, must die by his prince's hand. David has sinned, and Bath-sheba has sinned, and both against him, and therefore he must die; David determines he must. Is this the man whose heart smote him, because he had cut off the head of the king of the Hittites? Quantum mutatus ab illo!—But ah, how changed! Is this he that executed judgment and justice to all his people? How can he now do so unjust a thing? See how fleshly lusts war against the soul, and what devastations they make in that war; how they blind the eyes, harden the heart, sear the conscience, and deprive men of all sense of honour and justice. Who so committeth adultery with a woman, lacketh understanding, and quite loses it; he doth it, destroys his own soul, Prov. 6. 32.

But as the eye of the adulterer, so the hand of the murderer, seeks concealment, Job 24. 14, 15. Works of darkness hate the light. When David bravely slew Goliath, it was done publicly, and he gloried in it; but when he basely slew Uriah, it must be done clandestinely, for he is ashamed of it, and well he may. Who would do a thing that he dared not own? The Devil having, as a poisonous serpent, put it into David's heart to murder Uriah, as a subtle serpent, he puts it into his head how to do it. Not as Absalom slew Amnon, by commanding his servants to assassinate him, or as Ahab slew Naboth, by suborning witnesses to accuse him, but by exposing him to the enemy; a way of doing it, which, perhaps, would not seem so odious to conscience as this, because soldiers expose themselves, of course: if Uriah had not been in that dangerous post, another must; he has (as we say) a chance for his life; if he fight stoutly, he may, perhaps, come off; and if he die, it is in the field of honour, where a soldier would choose to die; and yet this will not save it from being a wilful murder, of malice prepense.

I. Orders are sent to Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and then to desert him, and abandon him to the enemy, v. 14, 15. This was David's project to take off Uriah, and it succeeded, as he designed. Many were the aggravations of this murder. 1. It was deliberate. He took time to consider of it; and though he had time to consider it, for he wrote a letter about it, and though he had time to have communicated it to Joab afterward, before it could be put in execution, yet he did not do it. 2. He sent the letter by Uriah himself; than which nothing could be more base and barbarous, to make him accessory to his own death. And what a paradox was it, that he could bear such a malice against him, in whom yet he could repose such a confidence, as that he would carry a letter which he must not know the purport of. 3. Advantage must be taken of Uriah's own courage and zeal for his king and country, which deserves the greatest praise and recompense, to betray him the more easily to his fate. If he had not been forward to expose himself, perhaps he was a man of such importance, that Joab could not have exposed him; and that his noble fire should be designedly turned upon himself, was a most wretched and woful exhibition. Such an one must be involved in the guilt; Joab, the general, to whom the blood of his soldiers, especially the worthies, ought to be precious, must do it; he, and all that retire from Uriah, when they ought in conscience to support and second him, become guilty of his death. 3. Uriah cannot thus die alone, the party he commands is in danger of being cut off with him; and it proved so, some of the people, even the servants of David, were carried away with ingratitude. (This was a part of David's sin, in being so prodigal of their lives,) fell with him, v. 17. Nay, this wilful misconduct by which Uriah must be betrayed, might be of fatal consequence to the whole army, and, having obliged them to raise the siege, 6. It will be the triumph and joy of the Ammonites, the sworn enemies of God and Israel; it will gratify them exceedingly. David prayed for himself, that he might not fall into the hands of the enemy, but yet he closed with Joab, 24. 15, 14.) yet he sells his servant Uriah to the Ammonites, and not for any iniquity in his hand.

II. Joab executes these orders. In the next assault that was made upon the city, Uriah was the most dangerous post assigned him; he was encouraged to hope, that if he be repulsed by the besieged, he shall be relieved by Joab, in dependence on which, he marches on with resolution, but, surceeds not coming on, the service proved too hot, and he was slain in it, v. 16, 17. It was strange that Joab would do such a thing merely upon a letter, without knowing the reason. But, I. Perhaps he supposed Uriah had been guilty of some great crime, to inquire into which, David had sent for him, and that, because he would not punish him openly, he took this course with him to put him to death. 2. Joab had been guilty of blood, and we may say, it pleased him very well, to see David himself falling into the same guilt, and he was willing enough to serve him in it, that he might continue to be favourable to him. It is common for these who have done ill themselves, to desire to be compensated therein by others doing ill likewise, especially by the sins of those that are eminent in the profession of religion. Or, perhaps, David knew that Joab had a plague against him, (as he was wont to call, to aggravate his case,) otherwise Joab, when he saw cause, knew how to dispute the king's orders, as ch. 24. 5. 19. 5. III. He sends an account of it to David. An express is despatched away immediately, with a report
of this last disgrace and loss which they had sustained, v. 18. And, to disguise the affair, 1. He supposes that David would appear to be angry at his bad conduct, would ask why they came so near the wall, v. 20. Did they not know that Abimelech lost his life by doing so? v. 21. We had the story, Judg. 9. 53. which book, it is likely, was published as part of the sacred history: Samuel's time: and (by it noted to their praise, and for imitation) even the soldiers were conversant with their Bibles, and could readily quote the scripture-story, and make use of it for admonition to themselves, not to run upon the same attempts which there they found to be fatal. 2. He sily orders the messenger to soothe it with telling him that Uriah the Hitite was dead also, which gave too broad an intimation to the messenger, and by him to others, that David would be pleased with orders, and their order will out. And when men do such base things, they must expect to be bantered and upbraided with them, even by their inferiors. The messenger delivered his message agreeably to orders, v. 22. 24. He makes the besieged to sally out first upon the besiegers, They came out unto us, into the field: represents the besiegers as doing their parts with great bravery, We were upon them, even to the entering of the gate, we forced them to retire from the city, with precipitation; and so concludes with a slight mention of the slain, later made among them by some shot from the wall, Some of the king's servants are dead; and particularly Uriah the Hitite, an officer of note, stood first in the list of the slain.

IV. David receives the account with a secret satisfaction, v. 25. Let not Joab be displeased, for David is not; he blames not his conduct, nor thinks they acted ill, in approaching so near the wall; all is well, now that Uriah is got out of the way. This point being gained, he can make light of the loss, and turn it off easily with an excuse, The sword devours one as well as another; it was a chance of war, nothing more common. He orders Joab to make the battle more strong next time, while he, by his sin, was weakening it, and provoking God to blast the undertaking.

Lastly, He married the widow, in a little time. She submitted to the ceremony of mourning for her husband, as little time as custom would admit, (v. 26.) and then David took her to his house as his wife, and she bare him a son. Uriah's revenge was prevented by his death, but the birth of the child, so soon after the marriage, published the crime; sin will have shame; yet that was not the worst of it, The thing that David did was but a flea in the bosom, the whole matter of Uriah, (as it is called, 1 Kings 15. 5.) the adultery, falsehood, murder, and this marriage, at last, was all disapproving to the Lord. He had pleased himself, but displeased God. Note, God sees and hates sin in his own people. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, the more disapproving to him their sins are; for in them there is more ingratitude, treachery, and repugnance to the sins of the Lord. Let us therefore encourage ourselves in sin by the example of David; for they that sin as he did, will fall under the displeasure of God as he did. Let us therefore stand in awe, and sin not; sin not after the transgression.

CHAP. XII.
The foregoing chapter gave us the account of David's sin, this of his repentance; though he fell, he was not utterly cast down, but by the grace of God, recovered himself, and found mercy with God. Here is, I. His conviction, by a messenger. Nathan brought him from God, which was a parable that obliged him to condemn himself, v. 1. 6. And the interpretation of the parable, in which Nathan charged him with the sin, (v. 7. 9.) and pronouned sentence upon him, v. 10. 12. II. His repentance and remission, with a reserve of judgment, v. 13. 14. III. The sickness and death of the child, and his behaviour, while it was sick, and when it was dead; which, both which, David gave evidences of his repentance. IV. The birth of Solomon, and God's gracious message concerning him, in which God gave an evidence of his reconciliation to David, v. 24. 25. V. The taking of Rabbah, (v. 26. 31.) which is mentioned as a further instance, that God did not deal with David according to his sins.

1. AND the Lord sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3. But the poor man had no thing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children: it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 4. And there came a traveller unto the rich man; and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 6. And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: 8. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would, moreover, have given unto thee such and such things. 9. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hitite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 10. Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hitite to be thy wife. 11. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord
also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

It seems to have been a great while after David had been guilty of adultery with Bath-sheba, before he was brought to repentance for it. For, when Nathan was sent to him, the child was born, v. 14. So that it was about nine months that David lay under the guilt of that sin, and, for that duration it seems, he was not conscious of it, or repented of it before God. He was not aware of it, and God had not yet told him. The rich man had an inexhaustible store of wealth, and goodness made the distribution, that the rich may learn charity, and the poor contentment. This poor man had but one lamb, a ewe-lamb, a little ewe-lamb, having not wherewithal to buy or keep more. But it was a eare-lamb, (as we shall call it) it grew up with his children, (v. 3.) he was fond of it, and it was familiar with him at all times. Therefore, when the rich man had a design for a lamb to entertain a friend with, took the poor man's lamb from him by violence, and made use of that; (v. 4.) either out of covetousness, because he grudged to make use of his own, or rather out of luxury, because he fancied the lamb was thus tenderly kept, and ate and drank like a child; must needs be more delicate food than any of his own, and have a better relish.

(2.) In this, he showed him the evil of the sin he had been guilty of, in defiling Bath-sheba. He had many wives and concubines, when he kept at a distance, as rich men keep their flocks in their fields; had he had but one, and had she been dear to him, as the ewe-lamb was to its owner, had she been dear to him, as the loving kind and the pleasant rose; her breasts would have satisfied him at all times, and he would have looked no further, Prov. 31. 10. Men will generally be hard against faithfulness, but marrying many is not; for the law of love is not a law of unity is transgressed, the indulged lust will hardly stint itself. Uriah, like the poor man, had only one wife, who was to him as his own soul, and always lay in his own bosom, for he had no other, he desired no other to lie there. The traveller or wayfarer was, as Bishop Patrick explains it from the Jewish writers, evil imagination, disposition, or desire, and desire came into David's heart, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling. They observe that this evil disposition is called a traveller, for in the beginning it is only so, but, in time, it becomes a guest, and in conclusion, is master of the house. For he that is called a traveller, in the beginning of the verse, is called a man, (ish, husband,) in the close of it. Yet some observe, that in David's heart there was a seed, like as a wayfarer man that tarryeth only for a night, it did not constantly dwell and rule there.

(3.) By this parable, he drew from David a sentence against himself. For David, supposing it to be a case in fact, and not doubting the truth of it, when he had it from Nathan himself, gave judgment immediately against the offender, and condemned him with an oath, v. 5. [1.] That, for his injustice in taking away the lamb, he should restore four-fold, according to the law, (Exod. 22. 1.) four sheep, for a sheep. [2.] That for his tyranny and cruelty, and the pleasure he took in abusing a poor man, he should be put to death. If a poor man steal from a rich man, to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, he shall make restitution, though he cost him all the substance of his house, Prov. 6. 30. 31. and Solomon there compares the thief to him that steals with that, v. 32. But if a rich man steal for stealing sake, not for want but wantsomeness, merely that he may be impersious and vexations, he deserves to die for it; for to him restitution is no punishment, or next to none. If the sentence he thought too severe, it must be imputed to the present roughness of David's temper, being under guilt, and not having himself as yet received mercy.

2. He closed in with him, at length, in the application of the parable. In beginning with the parable, he showed his prudence; and great need is there of
prudence in giving reproofs; it is well-managed, if, as here, the offender can be brought, ere he is aware, to convict and condemn himself; but here, in his application, he shows his faithfulness, and deals as plainly and roundly with king David himself, as if he had been a common person. In plain terms, "Thou art the man, who hast done this wrong, and a much greater, to thy neighbour; and therefore, by thine own sentence, thou deservest to die, and shalt be judged out of thine own mouth. Did he deserve to die, who took his neighbour's lamb, and for not, who had taken thy neighbour's wife? Though he took the lamb, he did not cause the owner thereof to lose his life, as thou hast done, and therefore much more art thou worthy to die."

Now he speaks immediately from God, and, in his name, begins with, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, a name sacred and venerable to David, and which commanded him, and I will [not] consecrate to himself, but as an ambassador for a poor man, but as an ambassador from the great God, with whom is no respect of persons.

(1.) God, by Nathan, reminds David of the great things he had done and designed for him, anointing him to be king, and preserving him to the kingdom; (2. 7.) giving him power over the house and household of his predecessor, and of others that had been his masters, Nabal for example; he had given him the heart and soul of the twelve tribes of Judah; the wealth of the kingdom was at his service; every body was willing to oblige him; and ready to bestow any thing upon him, to make him easy: I would have given thee such and such things, v. 8. See how liberal God is in his gifts; we are not straitened in him. Where he has given much, yet he gives more. And God's bounty to us is a great aggravation of our discontent, and desire of what is not. God is ungrateful to covet what God has prohibited, while we have liberty to pray for what God has promised, and that is enough.

(2.) He charges him with a high contempt of the divine authority, in the sins he had been guilty of. Wherefore hast thou (presuming upon the royal dignity and power) despised the commandment of the Lord? v. 9. This is the great aggravation of what he had done. He was deluding himself with the light of the divine law, and the Law-maker; as if the obligation of it were weak, the precepts of it trifling, and the threats not at all formidable. Though no man ever wrote more honourably of the law of God than David did, yea, in this instance, he is justly charged with a contempt of it. His adultery with Bath-sheba, which began the mischief, is not mentioned, perhaps, because he was already convicted of that; but, [1.] The murder of Uriah is twice mentioned. Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword; though not by sword, yet the sword of the children of Ammon, by ordering him to be set in the forefront of the battle. They that contrive wickedness and command it, are as truly guilty of it as those that execute it. It is repeated, with an aggravation, Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon, and of Israel. [2.] The marrying of Bath-sheba is likewise twice mentioned, because he thought there was no harm in that; (v. 9.) Thou hast taken his wife to be thy wife; and again, v. 10. To marry her whom he had before defiled, and whose husband he had slain, was an affront upon the ordinance of marriage, making that not only to pollute, but in a manner to deface, such marriages. In all this, he despised the word of the Lord, so it is in the Hebrew, not only his commandment in general, which forbids such things, but the particular word of promise, which God had, by Nathan, sent to him some time before, that he would build him a house; which sacred promise, if he had had a due value and consideration for, he would not thus have polluted his house with lust and blood.

(3.) He threatens an entail of judgments upon his family for this sin; (v. 10.) "The sword shall never depart from thy house, not in thy time, nor afterward; but, for the most part, thou and thy posterity shall be engaged in war." Or, it points at the slaughters that should be among his children, Ammon, Benolom, and Adonijah, falling by the sword. God had promised him, that the sword should not depart from him and his house, (ch. 7. 15.) yet here threatens that the sword should not depart. Can the mercy and the sword consist with each other? Yes, those may lie under great and long afflictions, who yet shall not be excluded from the grace of the covenant. The reason given is, because thou hast despised me. Note, Those who use the thunder hand of God, despise God himself, and shall be lightly esteemed.

It is particularly threatened, [1.] That his children should be his grief; I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. Sin brings trouble into a family, and one sin is often made the punishment of another. [2.] That his wives should be his shame; that by an unparalleled piece of villany they should be publicly debunked before all Israel, and made a public speculation. 16. It was not said, that his wife who was not, or his son that was not, or his own son, lest the accomplishment should have been hindered by the prediction being too plain; but it was done by Absalom, at the counsel of Ahithophel; (ch. 16. 21, 22.) He that defiled his neighbour's wife, should have his own defiled, for thus that sin used to be punished, as appears by Job's impriscation, (Job 31. 10.) Then let my wife grind unto another, and that threatening, Hos. 4. 14. The sin was secret, otherwise God would have shown how the punishment should be open and industriously proclaimed; to the shame of David, whose sin in the matter of Uriah, though committed many years before, would then be called to mind, and commonly talked of upon that occasion. As face answers to face in a glass, so does the punishment often answer to the sin; here is blood, for blood, and uncleanness for uncleanness. And thus God would show how he punishes sin, even in his own people, and that, wherever he finds it, he will not let it go unpunished.

3. David's penitent confession of his sin, hereupon. He says not a word to excuse himself or extenuate his sin, but freely owns it, I have sinned against the Lord, v. 13. It is probable that he said more to this purport; but this is enough to show that he was truly humbled by what Nathan said, andIce in a deep sense of his condition. He owns his guilt, I have sinned; and aggravates it. It was against the Lord: on this string he harps in the Psalm he penned on this occasion; (Ps. 51. 4.) Against thee, the only, have I sinned.

4. His pardon declared, upon this penitent confession, but with a reserve of judgment. When David said, I have sinned, and Nathan perceived that he was truly penitent, who else could have believed him that his sin was forgiven, "The Lord also has put away thy sin out of the sight of his avenging eyes; thou shalt not die," that is, "not die eternally, nor be for ever put away from God, as thou wouldest have been, if he had not put away the sin." The obligation to punishment is hereby cancelled and vacated. He shall not come into condemnation; that is the nature should be done by him, and will not be his everlasting ruin, The sword shall not depart from thy house, but, [1.] It shall not cut thee off, thou shalt come to thy grave in peace. David deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer, but God would not cut him off, as he might justly have done. [2.] Though thou shalt all thy days be chastened of the Lord, yet thou shalt
II. SAMUEL, XII.

not to be condemned with the world." See how ready God is to forgive sin. To this instance, perhaps, David refers, Ps. 32. 5, I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. Let not great sinners despair of finding mercy with God, if they truly repent; for who is a God like unto him, pardoning iniquity? (2.) Yet he pronounces a sentence of death upon the child, v. 14. Behold the sovereignty of God! The guilty parent lives, and the guiltless infant dies; but all souls are his, and he may, in what way he pleases, glorify himself in his creatures. [1.] David had, by his sin, wronged God in his honour; he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The wicked people of that generation, the infidel, idolaters, and profane, would triumph in David's fall, and speak ill of God and of his law, when they saw one guilty of such foul enormities, that profess'd such an honour both for him and it. "These are your professors! This is he that takes upon him, and sings psalms, and is so very devout! What good can there be in such exercises, if they will not restrain men from adultery and murder?" They would say, "Was not Saul rejected for a less matter? Why then must David live and reign still?" Not considering that God sees not as men see, but searches the heart. To this day, there are those who reproach God, and are hardened in sin, through the example of David. Now, though it is true that none have any just reason to speak ill of God, or of his word and ways, for David's sake, and it is their sin that does, yet he shall be reckoned with, that laid the stumbling-block in their way, and gave, though not cause, yet colour for the reproach.

Note, There is this great evil in the scandalous sins of those that profess religion, and relation to God, that they furnish the enemies of God and religion with reproach and blasphemy, Rom. 2. 24. [2.] God will therefore vindicate his honour, by showing his displeasure against David for this sin, and letting the world see that though he loves David, he hates his sin; and he chooses to do it by the death of the child. The landlady may distrain in any part of the premises where he pleases. Perhaps, the diseases and deaths of infants were not so common in those days as they are now, which might make this, as an unusual thing, the more evident token of God's displeasure; according to the word he had often said, that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

15. And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

16. David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth. 17. And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18. And it came to pass on the seventh day that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice; how will he then vex himself if we tell him that the child is dead? 19. But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 24. And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon; and the Lord loved him. ... And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the Lord.

Nathan having delivered his message, stayed not at court but went home, probably, to pray for David, to whom he had been preaching. God, in making use of him as an instrument to bring David to repentance, and as the herald both of mercy and judgment, put an honour upon the ministry, and magnifies his word above all his name. David named one of his sons by Bath-sheba, Nathan, in honour of this prophet, (1 Chron. 3. 5.) and it was that son, of whom Christ, the great Prophet, lineally descended, Luke 3. 31. When Nathan retired, David, it is probable, retired likewise, and penned the 51st Psalm, in which (though he had been assured that his sin was pardoned) he prays earnestly for pardon, and greatly laments his sin; for then and there true penitents be ashamed of what they have done, when God is pacified toward them, Ezek. 16. 63.

Here is,

I. The child's illness. The Lord struck it, and it was very sick; perhaps with convulsions, or some other dreadful distemper, v. 15. The diseases and death of infants, that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, especially as they are sometimes sadly circumstance, are sensible proofs of the original sin in which they are conceived.

II. David's humiliation under this token of God's displeasure, and the intercession he made with God for the life of the child; (v. 16, 17.) He fasted, and lay all night upon the earth, and would not suffer any of his attendants either to feed him, or help him up. This was an evidence of the truth of his repentance. For, 1. Hereby it appeared that he was willing to bear the shame of his sin, to have it ever before him, and to be continually upbraided with it; for this child would be a continual memorandum of it, both to himself and others, if he lived; and therefore, he was so far from desiring its death, as most, in such circumstances, do, that he prayed earnestly for its life. True penitents patiently bear the reproaches of their youth and of their youthful lusts, Jer. 31. 19. 2. A very tender commission, the spirit appeared in this, and great humanity, above what is commonly found in men, especially men of war, toward little children, even their own; and
II. SAMUEL, XII.

this was another sign of a broken contrite spirit: they that are penitent, will be pitiful. 5. He discovered, in this, a great concern for another world, which is an evidence of repentance. Nathan had told him that certainly the child should die; yet, while it is in the reach of prayer, he earnestly intercedes with God for it. Child says we may suppose that its soul might be safe and happy in another world, and that his sin might not come against the child, and that it might not fare the worse for that in the future state.* 4. He discovered, in this, a holy dread of God and of his displeasure. He deprecated the death of the child, chiefly as it was a token of God's anger against him and his house, and was inflicted in performance of a threat. There was forehe proved thus exceedingly, that if it were the will of God, the child might live, because that would be to him a token of God's being reconciled to him. *Lord, chasten me not in thy hot displeasure, Ps. 6. 1.

III. The death of the child; it died on the seventh day, (v. 18.) when it was seven days old, and therefore not circumcised, which David might, perhaps, interpret as a further proof of God's displeasure that his sin was brought under the seed of the covenant; yet he does not therefore doubt of its being happy, for the benefits of the covenant do not depend upon the seals. David's servants, judges of him by themselves, were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, concluding that then he would disquiet himself most of all; so that he knew not till he asked, v. 19.

IV. David's wonderful calmness, when he understood the child was dead. Observe, 1. What he did. (1.) He laid aside the expressions of his sorrow, washed and anointed himself, and called for clean linen, that he might decently appear before God in his house. (2.) He went up to the tabernacle, and worshipped like Job when he heard of the death of his children. He went to acknowledge the hand of God in the affliction, and to humble himself under it, and to submit to his holy will in it; to thank God that he himself was spared, and his sin pardoned; and to pray that God would not proceed in his controversy with him, nor stir up all his wrath. Is any afflicted? Let him pray. Weeping must never hinder worshiping. (3.) Then he went to his own house, and refreshed himself, as one who found benefit by his religion in the day of his affliction; for, having worshipped, he did not continue to be more sad.

2. The reason he gave for what he did. His servants thought it strange that he should afflict himself so for the sickness of the child, and yet take the death of it so easily; and asked him the reason of it, v. 21. In answer to which, he gives this plain account of his conduct. (1.) That while the child was alive, he thought it his duty to importune the divine favor for it; and when he had said the child should die, but, for aught that he knew, the threatening might be conditional, as that concerning Hezekiah: upon his great humiliation and earnest prayer, that he had so often heard the voice of his weeping, might be pleased to reverse the sentence, and spare the child; *Who can tell whether God will yet be gracious to me? God gives us leave to be earnest with him in every case, and in largely blessings, from a confidence in his power and general mercy, though we have no particular promise to build upon: we cannot be sure, yet let us pray, for who can tell but God will be gracious to us, in this or that particular? When our relations and friends have fallen sick, the prayer of faith has prevailed much; while there is life, there is hope, and while there is hope, there is room for prayer. (2.) That, the child being dead, he thought it as much his duty to be satisfied in the divine disposal concerning it; (v. 23.) Now, wherefore should I fast? Two things checked his grief: [1.] I cannot bring him back again; and again, He shall not return to me. Those that are dead, are out of the reach of prayer; and even we that are left, cannot weep, nor pray them back to this life. Wherefore then should we fast? To what purpose is this waste? Yet David fasted and wept for Jonathan when he was dead, in honour to him. [2.] I shall go to him; First, To him, to the grave. Note, The consideration of our own death should moderate our sorrow at the death of our relations. It is the common lot; instead of mourning for their death, they should think of our own, and whatever losses we have of them now, we shall die shortly, and go to them. Secondly, To him, to heaven, to a state of blessedness, which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy, that it is well with their souls in the other world; for the promise is to us and to our seed, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own way, nor in the way of others such as amphilands—Favours received should produce the hope of more. God calls them his children, that are born unto him; and if they be his, he will save them. This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death; they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could be in this world. We shall be with them shortly, to part no more.

V. The birth of Solomon. Though David's marrying Bath-sheba had displeased the Lord, yet he was not therefore commanded to divorce her; so far from this, that God gave him that son by her; on whom the covenant of royalty should be entailed. Bath-sheba, no doubt, was greatly afflicted with the sense of her sin and the tokens of God's displeasure. But God having restored to David the joys of his salvation, he comforted her with the same comforts with which he himself was comforted of God, v. 24. He comforted Bath-sheba. And both he and she had reason to be comforted in the tokens of God's reconciliation to them.

1. Inasmuch as, by his providence, he gave them a son, not as the former, who was given in anger and taken away in wrath, but a child graciously given, and written among the living in Jerusalem. They called him Solomon, because his birth was a token of God's being at peace with them, because of the prosperity which was entailed upon him, and because he was to be a type of Christ, the Prince of Peace. God had removed one son from them, but now gave them another, instead of him, like Seth, instead of Abel, Gen. 4. 25. Thus God often balances the griefs of his people with comforts, in the same thing, and the comforts and griefs, set one over against the other. David had very patiently submitted to the will of God in the death of the other child, and now God made up the loss of that, abundantly to his advantage in the birth of this. The way to have our creature-comforts either continued or restored, or the loss of them made up in some other way, is, cheerfully to resign them to God.

2. Inasmuch as, by his grace, he particularly owned and favoured that son; The Lord loved him, (v. 24.) and (v. 25.) ordered him, by the prophet Nathan, to be called Jedidiah, beloved of the Lord; though a seed of evil-doers, (for such David and Bath-sheba were,) yet so well ordered was the covenant, and the crown entailed by it, that it took away all attainders, and corruption of blood, signifying, that those who were by nature children of wrath and disobedience, should, by the covenant
of grace, not only be reconciled, but made favourable. And in this name, he typified Jesus Christ, that blessed Jehovah, the Son of God's love, concerning whom God declared again and again, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

26. And Joab fought against Rabba of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. 27. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabba, and have taken the city of waters. 28. Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. 29. And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabba, and fought against it, and took it. 30. And he took their king's crown from off his head, (the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones,) and it was set on David's head: and he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. 31. And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

We have here an account of the conquest of Rabba, and other cities of the Ammonites. Though this comes in here, after the birth of David's child, yet it is most probable that it was effected a good while before, and soon after the death of Uriah, perhaps during the days of Bath-sheba's mourning for him.

Observe, 1. That God was very gracious in giving David this great success against his enemies, notwithstanding the sin he had been guilty of, (just at that time when he was engaged in this war,) and the wicked use he had made of the sword of the children of Ammon in the murder of Uriah. Justly might he have made that sword, from thenceforward, a plague to David and his kingdom; yet he bare with it, and makes David's sword victorious even before he repented; that this goodness of God might lead him to repentance. Good reason had David to own, that God dealt not with him according to his sins, Ps. 103. 10.

2. That Joab acted very honestly and honourably; for when he had taken the city of waters, the royal city, where the palace was, and from which the name of Ammon is derived, with the royal treasures and riches, therefore, upon the cutting off of that, would be obliged speedily to surrender, he sent to David to come in person to complete this great action, that he might have the praise of it, v. 26. 28. Herein, he showed himself a faithful servant, that sought his master's honour, and his own only in subordination to his, and left an example to the servants of the Lord Jesus, in every thing they do, to consult his honour, Not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory. 3. That David was both too haughty, and too severe, upon this occasion, and neither so humble nor so tender as he should have been. (1.) He seems to have been too fond of the crown of the king of Ammon, v. 30. because it was of extraordinary value, by reason of the precious stones with which it was set. David will have it set upon his head, though it would have been better to have cast it at God's feet, and, at this time, to have put his own mouth in the dust, under guilt. The heart that is truly humble for sin, is filled with holy awe, and abhorrence of it, and with a holy contempt. (2.) He seems to have been too harsh with his prisoners of war, (v. 31.) taking the city by storm, after it had obstinately held out against a long and expensive siege: if he had put all to the sword in the heat of battle, whom he found in arms, it had been severe enough; but to kill them afterward, in cold blood, and by cruel tortures, with saws and harrows, tearing them to pieces, did not become him, who, when he entered upon the government, promised to sing of mercy as well as judgment, Ps. 101. 1. Had he made examples of those only, who had abused his ambassadors, advised or assisted in it, that being a violation of the law of nations, it might be looked upon as a piece of necessary justice for terror to other nations; but to be thus severe with all the cities of the children of Ammon, (that is, the garrisons or soldiers of the cities,) was extremely rigorous, and a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance, else the bowels of his compassion would not have been thus shut up; a sign that he had not yet found mercy, else he would have been more ready to show mercy.

CHAP. XIII.

The righteous God had lately told David, by Nathan the prophet, that, to chastise him for his sin, in the matter of Uriah, he would raise up evil against him, out of his own house and from his own hand, v. 1. And now, following his promise, we find the evil beginning to rise; from henceforward, he was followed with one trouble after another, which made the latter part of his reign less glorious and pleasant than the former part. Thus God chastened him with the rod of men, yet assured him that his tender-kindness he would not utterly take away. Adultery and murder were David's sins, and those sins, among his children, (Ammon defiling his sister Tamar, and Absalom murdering his brother Amnon,) were the beginnings of his punishment, and the more grievous, because he had reason to fear that his bad example might help to bring them to these wickednesses. In this chapter, we have, I. Amnon revenging Tamar; assisted in his plot to do it by Jonadab his kinsman, and villainously executing it, v. 1. 10. II. Absalom murdering Amnon for it, v. 21. 39. Both, great grief to David, and the more, because he was unwittingly the cause of both, by sending Tamar to Amnon, and Amnon to Absalom.

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom, the son of David, had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. 3. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtle man. 4. And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lew from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. 5. And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand. 6. So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick: and when the king was
come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat at her hand. 7. Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon’s house, and dress him meat. 8. So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house; and he was laid down. And she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes. 9. And she took a pan, and poured them out before him; but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me: and they went out every man from him. 10. And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand. 11. And when she had brought them unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come, lie with me, my sister. 12. And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly. 13. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. 14. Howbeit, he would not hearken unto her voice; but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her. 15. Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her: and Amnon said unto her, Arise, begone. 16. And she said unto him, there is no cause: this evil in sending me away is greater than the other that thou didst unto me. But he would not hearken unto her. 17. Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her. 18. And she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king’s daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. 19. And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying. 20. And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister; he is thy brother; regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom’s house.

We have here a particular account of the abominable wickedness of Amnon, in ravishing his sister; a subject not fit to be enlarged upon, nor indeed to be mentioned without blushing, that ever any man should be so vile, especially that a son of David should be so. Amnon’s character, we have reason to think, was bad in other things: if he had not forsaken God, he had never been given up to these vile affections. Other parents have been often afflicted with wicked children, whose conduct does run in the blood, but corruption does. We do not find that David’s children imitated him in his vices; but his false steps they trod in, and in those did much worse, and repented not. Parents know not how fatal the consequences may be, if, in any instance, they give their children bad examples. Observe the steps of Amnon’s sin.

1. The Devil, an unclean spirit, put it into his heart to lust after his sister Tamar. Beauty is a snare to many, it was so to her, she was fair, and therefore Amnon coveted her, v. 1. That they are peculiarly handsome, have no reason, on that account, to be proud, but great reason to stand upon their watch. Amnon’s lust was, v. 1. Unnatural in itself; to lust after his sister, which even natural conscience would have condemned, and the law and religion did stand against. Such a spirit of contradiction there is in man’s corrupt nature, that still it desires forbidden fruit, and the more strongly it is forbidden, the more greedily it is desired. Can he entertain the thought of betraying that virtue and honour, of which, as a brother, he ought to have been the protector? But what wickedness so vile, as not to find admittance into an unsanctified ungodly heart, left to itself? 2. It was very uneasy put into him. He was so vexed that he could not gain an opportunity to solicit her chastity, (for innocent converse with her was not denied him,) that he fell sick, v. 2. Fleshy lusts are their own punishment, and not only war against the soul, but against the body too, and are the rottenness of the bones. See what a hard master sinners serve, and how heavy his yoke is.

3. The Devil, as a subtle serpent, put it in his head how to compass this wicked design. Amnon had a friend, (so he called him, but he was really an enemy to him,) a kinsman that had in him more of David’s blood (for he was his nephew) than of David’s spirit, for he was a subtle man, cunning to carry on any bad design, especially in intrigue of this nature, v. 3.

1. He takes notice that Amnon looked ill, and being a subtle man, concludes that he was love-sick, (v. 4) and asks him, “Why art thou, being the king’s son, lean from day to day? Why dost thou pine, being the king’s eldest son, and heir to the crown? Being the king’s son,” (1) “Thou hast the pleasure of the court to divert thee; take those pleasures then, and with them drive away the sorrow, whatever it is.” Content and comfort are not always to be found in royal palaces. With much more reason may we ask dejected and disconsolate saints, why they that are the children of the king of kings, and heirs of the crown of life, are thus lean from day to day. (2) “Thou hast the power of a prince to command what thou wast and wishest for; use that power therefore, and gratify thyself. Pine not away for that which, lawful or unlawful, thou, being the king’s son, may have. Give quittance to thine inward spirit.” Thus Jezebel to Ahab in a like case, (1 Kings 21. 7.) “Dost not thou govern Israel? The abuse of power is the most dangerous temptation of the great. 2. Amnon having the impudence to own his wicked lust, misquailing it love, (I love Tamar,) for he put him in a way to compass his design, v. 5. Had he been what he pretended, (Amnon’s friend,) he would have startled at the mention of such horrid wickedness, would have had before him the evil of it, what an offence it was to God, and
what a wrong to his own soul, to entertain such a vile thought; of what fatal consequence it would be to him to cherish and prosecute it; he would have used his subtlety to divert Amnon from it, by recommending some other person to him, whom he might lawfully marry. But he seems not at all surprised at it; objects not either the unlawfulness, or the difficulty, the reproach, or so much as his father's displeasure; but puts him in the way to get Tamar to his bed-side, and then he might do as he pleased. Note, The case of those is very miserable, whose friends, instead of admonishing and reproving them, flatter them and forward them in their sinful ways, and are their counsellors and contrivers to do wickedly. Amnon is already sick, but goes about; he must take upon him to be sick, (1 Ki. 21. 19.) and that looks as if it were through the father's device, as not to be able to get up, and to have no pretence to anything but just that which pleases his fancy. Dainty meat is abhorred; (Job 33. 20.) the best dish from the king's table cannot please him; but if he can eat any thing, it must be from his sister Tamar's fair hand. This is what he is advised to.

3. Amnon follows these directions, and thus gets Tamar to his bed-side. 6. Thus he lieth in wait secretly, as a lion in his den, to catch the fowl, and to draw them into his net, Ps. 10. 8. 10. David was always fond of his children, and concerned if any thing ailed them; he so soon hears that Amnon is sick, than he comes himself to visit him. Let parents learn hence to be tender of their children, and compassionate toward them. The sick child commonly the mother comforteth, (Isa. 66. 13.) but let not the father be unconcerned. We may suppose that when David came to see his sick son, he gave him good counsel to make a right use of his affliction, and prayed with him, which did not alter his wicked purpose. At parting, the indulgent father asks, "Is there any thing thou hast a mind to, that I can procure for thee?" "Yes, Sir," says the dissembling son, "my stomach is weak, and I know not of any thing I can eat, unless it be a cake of my sister Tamar's making, and I cannot be satisfied that it is so, unless I see her make it, and it will do me the more good, if I eat it at her hand." David saw no reason to suspect any mischief intended, God hid his heart from understanding in this matter; he therefore immediately orders Tamar to go and attend her sick brother, v. 7. He does it very innocently, but afterward, no doubt, reflected upon it with great regret, and could not help considering it as an imposition upon the case of a child, and as a dish of dishonor to her; and as such he represents it to his father, v. 8. He shall be looked upon as an atrocious debauche, the worst of men; thou wilt lose thine interest in the esteem of all that are wise and good, and so wilt be set aside as unfit to rule, though the first-born; for Israel will never submit to the government of such a fool. Prospect of shame, especially everlasting shame, should deter us from sin.

To divert him from his wicked purpose at this time, and (if possible) to get clear of him, she intimates to him, that, probably, the king, rather than he should die for love of her, would dispense with the divine law, and let him marry her; not as if she thought he had such a dispensing power, or would pretend to it; she was confident that, upon notice given to the king by himself, of this wicked desire, which he would scarcely have believed from any one else, he would take an effectual course to protect her from him.

But all her arts and all her arguments availed not. His proud spirit cannot bear a denial; but her comfort, and honour, and all that was dear to her, must be sacrificed to his brutish and outrageous lust, v. 14. It is to be feared that Amnon, though young, had long lived a lewd life, which his father either knew not, or punished not; for a man could not, of a
21. But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth. 22. And Absalom spake unto his brother Ammon neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Ammon, because he had forced his sister Tamar. 23. And it came to pass, after two full years, that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24. And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now, thy servant hath sheep-shearers; let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants, go with thy servant. 25. And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him. 26. Then said Absalom, If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee? 27. But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28. Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine; and when I say unto you, Smite him, then kill him: his heart shall be merry, and he shall be soft, and he shall be as one of the people. 29. And the servants of Absalom did unto Absalom as he had commanded them. 30. Then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him up upon his mule and fled.

What Solomon says of the beginning of strife, is as true of the beginning of all sin; it is as the letting forth of water; when once the flood-gates are plucked up, an inundation follows; one mischief begets another, and it is hard to say, what shall be in the end the damage.

I. We are here told, how David resented the tidings of Amnon's sin; he was very wroth, v. 21. So he had reason to be, that his own son should do such a wicked thing, and draw him to be accessory to it. It would be a reproach to him, for not giving him a better education; it would be a blot upon his family, the ruin of his daughter, a bad example to his kingdom, and a wrong to his son's soul. It was not enough for him to be angry, he ought to have punished his son for it, and to have put him to open shame; both as a father, and as a king, he had power to do it. But the Septuagint here adds these words: But he saddened not the spirit of his son Amnon, because he loved him, because he was his first-born. He fell into Eli's error, whose sons made themselves vile, and he frowned not on them. If Amnon was dear to him, his punishing of him would have been so much the greater punishment to himself for his own uncleanness. But he cannot bear the shame those must submit to, who correct in others, which they are conscious of in themselves, and therefore his anger must serve instead of his justice; this burdens sinners, Eccl. 8. 11.

II. How Absalom resented it. He resolves already to do the part of a judge in Israel; and since his father will not punish Amnon, he will, from a

sudden, arrive at such a pitch of wickedness as this: Is this the love to Tamar? Is this the recompense he gives her for her readiness to attend him in his sickness? Will he deal with his sister as with a harlot? Base villain! God deliver all that are ungodly and virtuous from such wicked and unreasonable natures.

IV. The Devil, as a tormentor and betrayer, immediately turns his love of her into hatred; (v. 15.) He hated her with great hatred, greatly, so it is in the margin, and grew as outrageous in his malice, as he had been in his lust; he basely turned her out of doors by force, may, as if he now disdained to touch her with his own hands, he ordered his servants, his servants, men, and men, to lead the door after her, v. 17. Now, 1. The innocent injured lady had reason to resent this as a great affront, and in some respects, (as she says, v. 16.) worse than the former; for nothing could have been done more barbarous, or more disgraceful to her. Had he taken care to conceal what was done, her honour had been lost to herself only. Had he gone down on his knees, and begged her pardon, it might have been some little reparation. But this was soon to be made. She sat down when the horror confounded her was put into, she might have kept her countenance when she went out, and so have kept her counsel. But to dismiss her thus hurried, thus rudely, as if she had done some wicked thing, obliged her, in her own defence, to proclaim the wrong that had been done her. 2. We may learn from it, both the malignity of sin, unbridled passions are as bad as unbridled appetites, and the mischief of consequences of sin, at last, it bites like a serpent; for here we find, (1.) That sins, sweet in the commission, afterward become odious and p. inful, and the sinner's own conscience makes them so to himself. Amnon hated Tamar, because she would not consent to his wickedness, and so took part of the blame upon herself, but, to the last, resisted it, and reasoned against it, and so threw it up on him. Had he bribed the sin, and loathed himself for it, we might have hoped he was penitent: Godly sorrow works ing and indication. (2 Cor. 7. 11.) but to hate the person he had abused, showed that his conscience was terrified, but his heart not at all humbled. See what deceitful pleasures those of the flesh are, how soon they pass away, and turn into loathing; see Ezek. 23. 17. (2.) That sins, secret in the commission, afterward become open and public, and the sinners themselves often make them so. Their own tongues full upon them. The Jewish doctors say, that, upon the occasion of this wickedness of Amnon, a law was made, that a young man and a young woman should never be alone together; for, said they, if the king's daughter be so used, what will become of the children of private men? We must now hear the criminal to the terrors of his own guilty conscience, and inquire what becomes of him.

[1.] She bitterly lamented the injury she had received; as it was a stain to her honour, though no real blemish to her virtue. She tore her fine clothes in token of her grief, and put ashes upon her head, to deform herself, loathing her own beauty and ornaments, because they had occasioned Amnon's unlawful love; and she went on crying for another's sin. [2.] She retired to her brother Absalom's house, because he was her own brother, and there she lived in solitude and sorrow, in token of her modesty, and detestation of uncleanness. Absalom spoke kindly to her, bid her pass by the injury, for the present, designing himself to revenge it, v. 20. It should seem, by Absalom's question, (Has Amnon been with thee?) that Amnon was notorious for such lewd practices, so that it was dangerous for a most woman to be with him; this Absalom might know, and yet Tamar be wholly ignorant of it.
principle, not of justice, or zeal for virtue, but of revenge, because he reckons himself affronted in the abuse done to his sister. Their mother was daughter to a heathen prince, (ch. 3. 3,) which perhaps they were upbraided with sometimes by their brethren, as children of a stranger; as such a one Absalom thought his sister was now treated; and if Amnon thought her fit to be made his harlot, he would think him fit to be made his slave; this enraged him, and nothing less than the blood of Amnon will quench his rage. Here we have,

1. The design conceived. Absalom hated Amnon, (v. 22.) and he that hateth his brother, is a murderer already, and, like Cain, is of that wicked one, 1 John 3. 12-15. Absalom's hatred of his brother's crime had been commendable, and he might justly have prosecuted him for it by a due course of law, for example to others, and the making of some compensation to his injured sister; but to hate him, and design his death by assassination, was to put a great affront upon God, by offering to rep in the breach of his seventh commandment by the violation of his sixth, as if they were not all alike sacred; But he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill, James 2. 11.

2. The design conceived. He said nothing to Amnon of this matter, either good or bad, appeared as his brother, and never habited near him, such as his usual civility, only waiting for a fair opportunity to do him a mischief. That malice is the worst, (1.) Which is hidden close, and has no vent given to it. If Absalom had reasoned the matter with Amnon, he might have convinced him of his sin, and brought him to repentance; but saying nothing, Amnon's heart was hardened, and his own more and more imbibed against him; therefore he waited for opportunity, and design his death by assassination, v. 15-17. Let passion have vent, and it will spend itself. (2.) Which is gilded over with a show of friendship; so Absalom's was, his words smoother than butter, but war in his heart. See Prov. 26. 26. (3.) Which is harboured long; two full years Absalom nursed this root of bitterness, v. 23. It may be, at first, he did not intend to kill his brother, (for if he had, he might have had a better opportunity, and one to do it, as he had at last,) but only waited for an occasion to disgrace him, or do him some other mischief; but, in time, his hatred ripened to this, that he would be no less than the death of him. If the sun going down once upon the wrath, gives such a place to the Devil as is intimated, Eph. 4. 26. 27. what would the sun-sets of two full years do?

3. The design laid. (1.) Absalom has a feast at his house in the country, as Nahash had, on occasion of his sheep-shearing, v. 23. Attentive as Absalom was to his person, (ch. 14. 26.) and as high as he looked, he knew the state of his flocks, and looked well to his herds. Those that have no other care about their estates in the country, than how to spend them in the town, take a ready way to see the end of them. When Absalom had sheep-shearers, he would himself be with them. (2.) To this feast he inviting all, his friends, and all the princes of the blood, v. 24. Not only that he might have this opportunity to pay his respects to them, but that he might make himself the more respected among his neighbours. Those that are akin to great folks, are apt to value themselves too much on their kindred. (3.) The king would not go himself, because he would not put him to the expense of his entertainment, v. 23. He could not spare his hands on which he lived like himself; the king had given it him, but would have him to be a good husband of it; in both these, he is an example to parents, when their children are grown up, to give them a competency to live upon, according to their rank, and then to take care that they do not live above it, especially that they be no way necessary to their doing so. It is prudent for young house-keepers to begin as they can hold out, and not to spend the wood upon the shearing of it. (4.) Absalom got leave for Amnon, and all the rest of the king's sons, to come and grace his table in the country, v. 26. 27. Absalom had so effectually concealed his enmity to Amnon, that David saw no reason to suspect any design upon him in that peculiar invitation, "Let my brother Amnon go;" but this would make the stroke more cutting to David, that he was himself drawn in to consent to that which gave him the opportunity for it, as before, v. 7. It seems, David's sons, though grown up, continued to pay that deference to their father, as not to go such a small journey as this, without his leave. Thus eight children, even when they are become men and women, to honor their parents, advice with them, and do nothing material without their consent, much less against their mind.

4. The design executed, v. 28. 29. (1.) Absalom's entertainment was very plentiful; for he resolves that they shall all be merry with wine; at least, concludes that Amnon will be so, for he knew that he was apt to drink to excess. But, (2.) The orders he gave to his servants concerning Amnon, that he might be killed, shows how neither Amnon, nor those that were very barbarous. Had he challenged him, and, in reliance upon the goodness of his cause, and the justice of God, fought him himself, though that had been had enough, yet it had been more honourable and excusable; (our ancient laws, in some cases, allowed trial by battle;) but to murder him, as he did, was to copy Cain's example, only that the reason made a difference; Abel was slain for righteousness, Absalom for his own advantage, and the avenger of the agitations of this sin: [1] he would have Amnon slain, when his heart was merry with wine, and he was, consequently, least apprehensive of danger, least able to resist it, and also least fit to go out of the world; as if his malice aimed to destroy both soul and body, not giving him time to say, Lord have mercy upon me. What a dreadful surprise has death been to many, whose hearts have been prejudged, and whose lives have been directed to it! [2] His servants must be employed to do it, and so involved in the guilt. He was to give the word of command, Smite Amnon; and then they, in obedience to him, and, upon presumption that his authority would bear them out, must kill him. What an impious defiance does he bid to the divine law, when, though the command of God is express, Thou shalt not kill, he bids them kill Amnon, with a new warrant, "Have not I commanded you?" [3] This is enough; Be courageous, and fear neither God nor man." These servants are ill-taught, and have wicked masters, others, who obey, in contradiction to God. These are too obsequious, that will damn their souls to please their masters, whose big words cannot secure them from God's wrath. Masters must always command their servants, as those that know they have also a Master in heaven. [5] He did it in the presence of all the king's sons, of whom it is said, (ch. 8. 18.) that they were chief rulers; so that it was an affront to public justice, which they had the administration of, and to the king's father whom they represented, and a contempt of that sword which should have been a terror to his evil deeds; while his evil deeds, on the contrary, were a terror to him that bare it. [4] There is reason to suspect that Absalom would have to his sister's Quebec, but to make way for himself to the throne, which he was ambitious of, and which he would stand fair for, if Amnon the eldest son was taken off.

When the word of command was given, Absa
II. SAMUEL.

30. And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons; and there is not one of them left. 31. Then the king arose, and tore his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. 32. And Jonadab the son of Shimneah, David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons; for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. 33. Now therefore let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead; for Amnon only is dead. 34. But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there came much people by the way of the hill side behind him. 35. And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is. 36. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that, behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice, and wept: and the king also and all his servants wept very sore. 37. But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day. 38. So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39. And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Here is,

I. The fright that David was put into by a false report brought to Jerusalem, that Absalom had slain all the king's sons, v. 30. It is common for fame to make evil worse: and the first news of such a thing as this, represents it more dreadful than afterward it proves. Let us not therefore be afraid of evil tidings, while they want confirmation, but when we hear the worst, hope the best, at least, hope better. However, this false news gave as much affliction to David, for the present, as if it had been true; he tore his garments, and lay on the earth, while, as yet, it was only a flying story, v. 31. It was well that David had grace; he had need enough of it, for he had strong passions.

II. The rectifying of the mistake, two ways. 1.

By the sly suggestions of Juddah, David's nephew, who could tell him, Amnon only is dead, and it shall the king's sons? (v. 32, 33.) and could tell him too that it was done by the appointment of Absalom, David was satisfied with the conclusion, and returned to the charge against Amnon, as the prime object of his sorrow.

What a wicked man was he, if he knew all this, or had any cause to suspect it, that he did not make David acquainted with it sooner, that means might have been used to make up the quarrel, (such was Jonadab's duty had he acted as an honest man,) or, at least, that David might not have thrown Amnon into the mouth of danger, by letting him go to Absalom's house. If we do not our utmost to prevent mischief, we make ourselves accessory to it. If we say, Behold, we know it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart, consider whether we did or no? See Prov. 24. 11, 12. It is well, if Jonadab was not as guilty of Amnon's death, as he was of his sin; such friends do not prove who are heartenked to us counsellors to do wickedly: he that would not be so kind as to prevent Amnon's sin, neither would he be so kind as to prevent his death; and therefore, when it should seem, he might have done both. 2. By the safe return of all the king's sons, except Amnon. They, and their attendants, were speedily discovered by the watch, (v. 34, 35.) and soon arrived, to show themselves alive, but to bring the certain sad news that Absalom had murdered their brother Amnon. The grief David had been in for that which was not, made him the better able to bear that which was, of giving him up. This was occasion, when he was undiverted, to thank God, that all his sons were not dead; yet, that Amnon was dead, and slain by his own brother, in such a treacherous barbarous manner, was enough to put the king and court, the king and kingdom, into real mourning. Sorrow is never more reasonable, than when there is sin in the case.

III. Absalom's flight from justice. Absalom immediately fled from the city of Jerusalem, and his father David, his son and successor. He was now as much afraid of the king's sons, as they were of him; they fled from his malediction, he from their justice; no part of the land of Israel could shelter him, the cities of refuge gave no protection to a willful murderer; though David had let Amnon's incest go unpunished, Absalom could not promise himself his pardon for this murder; so express was the law in this case, and so well known David's justice, and his dread of bloody sin in his family, that the law made the best of his way to his mother's relations, and was entertained by his grandfather, Talmah, king of Geshur, (v. 37.) and there he was protected three years; (v. 38.) David not demanding him, and Talmah not thinking himself obliged to send him back, unless they were demanded.

IV. David's unmeasurableness for his absence. He mourned for Amnon a great while, (v. 37.) but at last time seemed to wear off that grief; he was comforted concerning Amnon: it also was off too much his detestation of Absalom's sin; instead of loathing him, as a murderer, he longed to go forth to him, v. 39. At first, he could not find in his heart to do justice on him, now he can almost find in his heart to take him into his favour again. This was David's infirmity; something God saw in his heart that made a difference, else we should have thought that he, as much as Eli, honoured his sons more than God.

CHAP. XV.

How Absalom threw himself out of his royal father's protection at first, we read in the foregoing chapter, which left him an exile, outlawed, and proscribed; in this chapter, we have the arts that were used to bring him and his father together again, and how, at last, it was done; Absalom is here recorded, to show the folly of David, in sparing him, and indulging him in his wicked-
I. Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom. 2. And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wise woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that hath a long time mourned for the dead; 3. And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him. So Joab put the words in her mouth. 4. And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help, o king. 5. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and my husband is dead. 6. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. 7. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth. 8. And the king said unto the woman, Go thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee. 9. And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, o king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house; and the king and his throne be guiltless. 10. And the king said, Whosoever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more. 11. Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the Lord thy God, that thou wouldst not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth. 12. Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on. 13. And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. 14. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means that his banished be not expelled from him. 15. Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king, it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid. 16. For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God. 17. Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad; therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee. 18. Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee. And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. 19. And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from aught that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab, he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid: 20. To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.

Here is.

1. Joab's design to get Absalom recalled out of banishment, his crime pardoned, and his attainder reversed, v. 1. Joab made himself very busy in this affair. 1. As a courtier, that was studious, by all ways possible, to ingratiates himself with his master's heart, and improve his interest in his favour. He perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom, and that, the heart of his displeasure being over, he still retained his old affection for him, and only wanted a friend to court him to be reconciled, and to contrive for him how he might do it, without impeaching the honour of his justice. Joab, finding how David stood affected, undertook this good office. 2. As a statesman, and one concerned for the public welfare. He knew how much Absalom was the darling of the people, and if David should die while he was in banishment, it might occasion a civil war between those that were for him and those that were against him; for it is probable that though all Israel loved his person, yet they were much divided upon his case. 4. As one who was himself a delinquent, for which he was soon after, severely corrected by his unnatural rebellion. 1. Joab, by bringing a feigned issue (as the lawyers speak) to be tried before him, in the case of a poor widow of Tekoah, gains from him a judgment in general, That the case might he so, as that the putting of a murderer to death ought to be dispensed with, v. 1. 20. II. Upon the application of this, he gains from him an order to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, while he was forbidden the court, v. 21. 24. III. After an account of Absalom, his person, and family, we are told how, at length, he was introduced by Joab into the king's presence, and the king was thoroughly reconciled to him, v. 25. 33.
II. SAMUEL, XIV.

quent, by the murder of Abner; he was conscious to himself of the guilt of blood, and that he was himself obnoxious to public justice, and therefore, whatever favour he could procure to be shown to Absalom, would corroborate his reprove.

If his introduction to the king was somewhat of a parallel case before the king, which was done so dexterously by the person he employed, that the king took it for a real case, and gave judgment upon it, as he had done upon Nathan's parable; and the judgment being in favour of the criminal, the manager might, by that, discover his sentiments so far, as to venture upon the application of it, and to show that it was the case of his own family, which it was not practicable, she was instructed not to proceed to, if the king's judgment upon her case had been severe.

1. The person he employed, is not named, but is said to be a woman of Tekoa, one whom he knew to be fit for such an undertaking: and it was requisite that the scene should be laid at a distance, that David might not think it strange that he had not heard of it before. It is said, she was a wise woman, she had a quicker wit, and a readier tongue, than most of her neighbours, v. 2. The truth of the story would be the less suspected, when it came, as was supposed, from the person's own mouth.

2. The character she put on, was, that of a disconsolate widow, v. 2. Jacob knew such a one would have an easy access to the king, who was always ready to comfort the parentless; and therefore, the manager himself mentioned it among the titles of God's honour, that he is a Judge of the widows, Ps. 68. 5. God's ear, no doubt, is more open to the cries of the afflicted, and his heart too, than that of the most merciful princes on earth could be.

3. It was a case of compassion which she had to represent to the king, and a case in which she could have no relief but from the chancery in the royal breast; the law (and, consequently, the judgment of all the inferior courts) being against her. She tells the king that she had buried her husband; (v. 5.) that she had two sons that were the support and comfort of her widowed state; that these two (is young men are apt to do) fell out and fought, and one of them unhappily killed the other; (v. 6.) that, for her part, she was desirous of the peace of her family, and would not hear any mention concerning her two sons, Thy should she be deprived of them both in one day? Gen. 27. 46. But though she, who was nearest of kin to the slain, was willing to let fall the demands of an avenger of blood, yet the other relations insisted upon it, that the surviving brother should be put to death according to law, not out of any affection, either to justice or to the memory of this slain brother; but that, by avenging the death (which they had the impudence to own was the thing they aimed at,) the inheritances might be theirs; and thus they would cut off (1.) Her comfort; "They shall quarrel my coal, deprive me of the only support of my old age, and put a period to all my joy in this world, which is reduced to this one coal." (2.) Her husband's memory: "His family will be quite extinct, and all will leave him neither mourning nor reproach." v. 7

4. The king promised her his favour, and a protection for her son. Observe how she grew upon the king's compassionate concessions. (1.) Upon the representation of her case, he promised to consider of it, and to give orders about it, v. 8. This was encouraging, that he did not dismiss her petition with "Currat, let—Let the law take its course; blood calls for blood, and let it have what it calls for" but he will take time to inquire whether the allegations of her petition be true. (2.) The woman is not content with this, but begs that he would immediately give judgment in her favour; and, if the matter of fact were not as she represented it, and consequently a wrong judgment given upon it, let her bear the blame, and free the king and his throne from the injurious calumny; v. 9. David, saying this, not to acquit the king, if he should pass sentence without taking due cognizance of the case. (3.) Being thus pressed, he makes a further promise, that she should not be injured or insulted by her adversaries, but he would protect her from all molestation, v. 10. Magistrates ought to be the patrons of oppressed widows. (4.) Yet this does not content her, unless she can get the son's pardon, and protection for him too. Parents are not necessary, unless children can be safe, safe for both worlds, v. 11. "Let not the avenger of blood destroy my son, for I am undone if I lose him; as good take my life as his. Therefore let the king remember the Lord thy God," that is: (1.) "Let him confirm this merciful sentence with an oath, making mention of the Lord our God, by way of appeal to him, that the sentence may be indissoluble, and irreversibly; and then I shall be easy." See Heb. 6. 17, 18. (2.) "Let him consider what good reason there is for this merciful sentence, and then he himself will be confirmed in it. Remember how gracious and merciful the Lord thy God is, how he bears long with sinners, and does not deal with them according to their deserts, but is ready to forgive. Remember how the Lord thy God spared Cain, who slew his brother, and protected him; and how he had winked at his sins, Gen. 4. 15. Remember how the Lord thy God forgave thee the blood of Uriah, and let the king, that has found mercy, show mercy." Note, Nothing is more proper, or more powerful, to engage us to every duty, especially to all acts of mercy and kindness, than to remember the Lord our God. (5.) This importunate widow, by pressing the matter thus close, obtains, at last, a full pardon for her son, ratified with an oath as she desired; As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth; that is, "I will undertake he shall come to no damage upon this account." The Son of David has assured all that put themselves under his protection, that, though they should be put to death for his sake, not a hair of their head shall perish; (Luke 21. 16, 18.) though they should lose for him, they should not be lost by him. He undertakes to protect the innocent in every emergency, v. 12. He undertakes the protection of a murderer, whom the cities of refuge would not protect, I cannot say. But as the matter of fact appeared to him, there was not only great reason for compassion to the mother, but room enough for a favourable judgment concerning the son: he had slain his brother, but he hated him not in time past; it was upon a sudden provocation, and, for aught that appeared, it might be done in self-defence. He pitied not this himself, but the judge must be of counsel for the prisoner; and therefore, Let mercy, at this time, rejoice against judgment.

5. The case being thus adjudged in favour of her son, it is now time to apply it to the king's son, Absalom. The mask here begins to be thrown off, and another scene opened; the king is surprised, but not entirely alarmed; for the second personage, if a sudden, become his replacement, his privy-counselor, an advocate for the prince his son, and the mouth of the people, undertaking to represent to him their sentiments. She begs his pardon, and his patience, for what she had further to say, (v. 12.) and has leave to say it, the king being very well pleased with her wit and humour.

(1.) She supposes Absalom to be in, effect, the same with that which she had put as her son's; and therefore, if the king would protect her son, though he had slain his brother, much more ought.
he to protect his own, and to fetch home his banished, v. 13. Mutato nomine die te fabula narratur—Change but the names, to you the tale belongs. She names not Absalom, nor needed she to name him; David lingered too much after him, and had him so much in his thoughts, that he was soon aware whom she meant by his banished. And in those two words, were two arguments which the king's tender spirit felt the force of: “He is banished, and has, for three years, undergone the disgrace and terror, and all the inconveniences, of banishment: sufficient to such a one in this punishment: but he is thy banished, thy own son, a piece of thyself, thy dear son, whom I have given concerning her’s.

It is true, Absalom's case differed very much from that which she had put. Absalom did not slay his brother upon a hasty passion, but maliciously, and upon an old grudge; not in the field, where there were no witnesses, but at table, before all his guests. Absalom was not an only son, as her's was; David had many more, and one lately born, more I Kelly to be his successor than Absalom, for he was called Jedidiah, because God loved him. But David was himself too well affected to the cause, to be critical in his remarks upon the disparity of the cases, and was more desirous than she could be, to bring that favourable judgment to his own son, which he had given concerning her's.

(2.) She reasons upon it with the king, to persuade him to recall Absalom. All the weight of banishment be give him his pardon, and take him into his favour again.

[1.] She pleads the interest which the people of Israel had in him. “What is done against him, is done against the people of God, who have their eye upon him as heir of the crown, at least, have their eye upon the house of David in general, with which the covenant is made, and which therefore they cannot see the diminution and decay of, by the fall of so successful a prince in such an engagement. Therefore the king speaks as one that is faithful, for he will provide that my husband's name and memory be not cut off, and yet takes no care, though his own be in danger, which is of more value and importance than ten thousand of our’s.”

[2.] She pleads man's mortality; (v. 14.) “If we must needs die, it is appointed for us, we cannot alter the thing itself, nor defer it till another time. We are not as God, who doth say, ‘when we are dead, we are past recall, as water spilt upon the ground; nay, even when we are alive, we are so, we have lost our immortality, past retrieve. Amnon must have died, some time, if Absalom had not killed him; and if Absalom be now put to death for killing him, that will not bring him to life again.”

This was poor reasoning, and would serve against the punishment of any murderer; but, it should seem, Amnon was a much lesser regarded by the people, and his death little lamented, and it was generally thought hard that so dear a life as Absalom's should go for one so little valued as Amnon's.

[3.] She pleads God's mercy and his clemency toward poor guilty sinners. “God does not take away the soul, or life, but deviues means that his banished, his children that have offended him, and are obnoxious to his vengeance, that he yet by ever expelled from him,” v. 14. Here are two great instances of the mercy of God to sinners, properly urged as reasons for showing mercy. First, The patience he exercises toward them. His law is broken, yet he does not immediately take away the life of those that break it; does not strike sinners dead, as justly he might, in the act of sin, but bears with them, and waits to be gracious. God's vengeance had suffered Absalom to live; why then should not David's justice suffer him? Secondly, The provision he had made for their restoration to his favour, that though by sin they had banished themselves from him, yet they might not be expelled, or cast off, for ever. Atonement might be made for sinners by sacrifice. Lepers, and others ceremonially unclean, were banished, but provision was made for their cleansing, that, though for a time, excluded, they might not be finally expelled. The state of sinners is a state of banishment from God. Poor banished sinners are likely to be for ever expelled from God, if some course be not taken to prevent it: it is against the mind of God that they should be so, for he is not willing that any should perish: infinite wisdom has devised proper means to prevent it; so that it is sinners’ own fault, if they be ever cast off. This my request, and will towards us all, should incline us to be merciful and compassionate one towards another, Matt. 18. 32, 33.

6. She concludes her address, with high compliments to the king, and strong expressions of her assurance, that he would do what was just and kind, both in the one case and the other; (v. 15-17.) for, as if the case had been real, still she pleads for herself and her son, yet mentioning Absalom.

(1.) She would not have troubled the king thus, but that the people made her afraid. Understanding it of her own case, all her neighbours made her apprehensive of the ruin she and her son were upon the brink of, from the avengers of blood, the terror of which made her thus bold in her application to the king himself. Understanding it of Absalom's case, it was a way of reasoning, that he did not know before, that the nation was disgusted at his severity towards Absalom, to that degree, that she was really afraid it would occasion a general mutiny, or insurrection, for the preventing of which great mischief, she ventured to speak to the king himself. The fright she was in must excuse her rudeness.

(2.) She apologised herself to him with a great confidence in his wisdom and clemency. “I said, I will speak to the king myself, and ask nobody to speak for me; for the king will hear reason, even from so mean a creature as I am, will hear the cries of the oppressed, and will not suffer the poorest of his subjects to be destroyed out of the inheritance of God,” that is, “driven out of the land of Israel, to seek for shelter among the uncircumcised, as there was no safety for a man, unless he was being shut out of the inheritance of God, he wants God's law and ordinances, which might help to bring him to repentance, and is in danger of being infected with the idolatry of the heathen among whom he sojourns, and of bringing home the infection.”

To engage the king to grant her request, she expresses a confident hope, that his answer would be reasonable, and such as angels bring, (as Bishop Patrick explains it,) viz. asengers of divine mercy. What this woman says, by way of compliment, the prophet says by way of promise, (Zech. 12. 8.) that when the voice shall be as David, the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord. “And, in order to this, the Lord thy God shall be with thee, to assist thee in this and every judgment thou givest.” Great expectations are set up engaging the king, especially in point of honour, to do their utmost not to disappoint these that depend upon them.

Lastly, The hand of Joab is suspected by the king, and acknowledged by the woman, to be in all this, v. 18-20.

(1.) The king soon suspected it. For he could not think that such a woman as this, would have appeared to him, in a matter of such moment, of her own head. And he knew none so likely to set her on as Joab, who was a politic man, and a friend of Absalom.

(2.) The woman very honestly owned it. “Th-
servant Joab, he bade me, 'If it be well done, let him have the thanks; if ill, let him bear the blame.'

Though she found it very agreeable to the king, yet she would not take the praise of it to herself, but speaks the truth as it was, and gives us an example to do likewise, and never to tell a lie for the concealing of a well-managed scheme; *Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie.*

21. And the king said unto Joab, Behold now I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. 22. And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant. 23. So Joab arose, and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24. And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face. 25. But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 26. And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it; because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it,) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels, after the king's weight. 27. And unto Absalom there were born three sons, and one daughter, whose name was Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

Observe here,

I. Orders given for the bringing back of Absalom: the command on which the woman came to David, was so agreeable, and her management of it so very ingenious and surprising, that he was brought into a peculiarly kind humour: *Go, (says he to Joab,) bring the young man Absalom again.* 21. He was himself inclined to favour him, yet, for the honour of his justice, he would not do it but upon his intercession made for him, which may illustrate the methods of divine grace. It is true, God has thoughts of compassion toward poor sinners, not willing that any should perish, yet he is reconciled to them through a Mediator, who intercedes with him on their behalf, and to whom he has given these orders, *Go, bring them again.* 22. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and he came to this land of our abhorrence, to bring us to God. 23. Joab, having received these orders, 1. Returns thanks to the king for doing him the honour to employ him in an affair so universally grateful, v. 22. Joab took it as a kindness to himself, and (some think) as an indication that he would never call him to an account for the murder he had been guilty of. But if he meant so, he was mistaken, as we shall find, 1 Kings 2. 5, 6. 2. Delays not to execute David's orders, he brought Absalom to Jerusalem, v. 25. 3. See how David can be justified in suspending the execution of the ancient law, (Gen. 9. 6.) *Whose sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,* in which a righteous magistrate ought not to acknowledge even his brethren, or know his own children. God's laws were never designed to be like cobwebs which catch the little flies, but suffer the great ones to break through. God justly made Absalom a scourge to him, when his foolish pity thus spared. But though he allowed him to return to his own house, he forbade him the court, and would not see him himself, v. 24. He put him under this interdict, (1.) For his own honour, that he might not seem to countenance so great a criminal, nor forgive him too easily. (2.) For Absalom's greater benefit. Perhaps he had heard something of his conduct, when Joab went to fetch him, which gave him too much reason to think that he was not truly penitent; he therefore put him under this mark of his displeasure, that he might be awakened to a sight of his sin, and to sorrow for it, and might make his peace with God; upon the first notice of which, no doubt, David would be forward to reconcile him again into his favour.

II. Occasion taken from hence to give an account of Absalom. Nothing is said of his wisdom and piety; though he was the son of such a devout father, we read nothing of his devotion; parents cannot give grace to their children, though they give them ever so good an education. All that is here said of him, is, 1. That he was a very handsome man; there was not his equal in all Israel for beauty, v. 25. 2. A poor commendation for a man that had nothing else in him valuable. Handkerchiefs they that handsome do. Many a polluted deformed soul dwells in a fair and comely body; witness Absalom's, that was polluted with blood, and deformed with unnatural affliction to his father and prince. In his body there was no blemish, but in his mind nothing but wounds and bruises. Perhaps this was one reason why his father was so fond of him, and protected him. Who cannot reason to fear affliction in their children, who are ever pleased with their beauty than with their virtue. 2. That he had a very fine head of hair. Whether it was the length, or colour, or extraordinary softness of it, something there was, which made it very valuable, and very much an ornament to him, v. 26. This notice is taken of his hair, not as the hair of a Nazarite, (he was far from that strictness,) but as the hair of a wise and wealthy man. He let it grow, till it was burden to him, and was heavy on him, nor would he cut it, as long as ever he could hear it. As pride feels no cold, so it feels no heat; and that which feeds and gratifies it, is not complained of, though very uneasy. When he did poll it at certain times, for ornamentation, he had it weighed, that it might be seen how much it excelled other men's; and it weighed two hundred shekels, which some reckon to be twenty pounds, and two ounces of our weight; and with the oil and powder, especially if it were powdered (as Josephus says the fashion then was) with gold-dust, Bishop Patrick thinks it is not at all incredible that it should weigh so much. This fine hair proved his halter, ch. 18. 9, 3. That his family began to be built up. It is probable that it was a good while before he had a child; and then it was, that, despairing of having one, he set up that pillar which is mentioned, ch. 18. 18. to bear up his name; but afterward he had three sons, and one daughter, v. 27. Or, perhaps, these sons, while he was licking his rebellion, were all cut off by the righteous hand of God, and thereupon, he set up that monument.

28. So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. 29. Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the
second time, he would not come. 30. Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absa-
lon's servants set the field on fire. 31. Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? 32. And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me. 33. So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

Three years, Absalom had been an exile with his father-in-law, and now, two years, a prisoner at large in his own house, and, in both, better dealt with than yet he had been. He was still unhumbled, his pride unmortified, and, instead of being thankful that his life is spared, he thinks himself sorely wronged that he is not restored to all his places at court. Had he truly repented of his sin, his distance from the gaieties of the court, and his solitude and retirement in his own house, especially being in Jerusalem the holy city, would have been very agreeable to him. If a murderer must live, let him be for ever a recluse. But Absa-

1. By his insolent carriage toward Joab, he brought him to meditate for him. Once and again, he sent to Joab to come and speak with him, for he durst not go to him; but Joab would not come, (v. 29.) probably, because Absalom had not owned the kindness he had done him, in bringing him to Jerusalem, so gratefully as he thought he should have done; and men take every service done them for a debt. One would have thought that a person in Absalom's circumstances would have sent to Joab a kindly message, and offered him a large gratuity; courtiers expect it: instead of this, he bids his servants set Joab's corn-fields on fire; (v. 30.) as situate an thing as he could do. Samson could not think of a greater injury to do the Philistines than to set fire to the corn, and Absalom, by doing Joab a mischief, to prevail with him to do him a kindness: or to recommend himself to the favour of his prince or people, by showing himself so very malicious and ill-natured, and such an enemy to the public good, for the fire might spread to the corn of others. Yet by this means he brings Joab to him, (v. 31.) Thus God, by afflictions, brings those to him, that kept at a distance from him. Absalom was obliged by the law to make restitution, (Exod. 22. 6.) yet we do not find that either he offered it, or that Joab demanded it. Joab (it might be)
called unto him, and said, Of what city act thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. 3. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. 4. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice! 5. And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obisauce, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. 6. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court, than he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumbled under his troubles, became insufferably proud when they were over. But what was the cause of Behemoth's being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor, but he must be king now. His mother was a king's daughter; on that, perhaps, he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel. David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smarred for his being unequally yoked with an unbeliever.

When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father, and make him easy; but, on the contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him. Two things recommend a man to popular esteem; greatness, and goodness.

I. Absalom looks great, v. 1. He had learned of the king of Geshur, what was not allowed to the kings of Israel; triply horses; which make him look desirable, while his father, on his nule, looks despicable. The people desired a king like the nations; and such a one Absalom will be, appearing in pomp and magnificence, above what had been seen in Jerusalem. Samuel had foretold that this would be the manner of the king; He shall have chariots and horsemen, and some shall run before his chariot. (1 Sam. 8. 11.) and this is Absalom's manner. Fifty footmen (in rich livery we may suppose) running before him, to give notice of his approach, would highly gratify his pride, and the people's foolish fancy. David thinks that it is designed only to grace his court, and communes at it. Those parents know not what they do, who indulge a proud humour in their children; for I have seen more young people ruined by pride, than by any one else. 2. Absalom will seem very good too, but with a very bad design. Had he proved himself a good son, and a good subject, and set himself to serve his father's interest, he had done his present duty, and showed himself worthy of future honours, after his father's death. Those that know how to obey well, know how to rule. But to show how good a judge, as well as how a king, he will be, he devised to deceive himself and others. These are good indeed, that are good in their own place, not that pretend how good they will be in other people's places. But this is all the goodness we find in Absalom.

1. He wishes that he were a judge in Israel, v. 4. He had all the pomp and all the pleasure the he could wish; yet this will not content him, unless he have power too; 2. That I were a judge in Israel! He that should himself have been judged to death for murder, has the impudence to aim at being a judge of others. We read not of Absalom's wisdom, virtue, or learning in the laws, nor had he given any proofs of his love to justice, but the contrary; yet he wishes he were a judge. Note, These are commonly most ambitious of preferment, that are least fit for it; for those who are most modest and self-diffident, while it is no better than the spirit of an Absalom, that says, 3. That I were a judge in Israel!

2. He takes a very bad course for the accomplishing of his wish. Had he humbly petitioned his father to employ him in the administration of justice, and studied to qualify himself for it, (according to the law,) he would have been sure of the next judge's place that fell; but this is too mean a post for his proud spirit. It is below him to be subordinate, of the king his father; he must be supreme, or nothing. He wants to be such a judge, that every man who has any cause, shall come to him; in all causes, and over all persons, he must preside; little thinking what a fatigue this would be, to have every man come to him. Absalom fancying himself could not bear it. These know not what power is, that grasp at so much, so very much.

To gain the power he aims at, he endeavours to instil into the people's minds,

(1.) A bad opinion of the present administration, as if the affairs of the kingdom were altogether neglected, and no care taken about them. He get around him all he could, that had business at the council-board, inquired what their business was; and, (1.) Upon a slight and general inquiry into their cause, he pronounced it good; Thy matters are right. A fit man indeed to be a judge, who would give judgment upon hearing one side only! For he has a bad cause indeed, that cannot put a good colour upon it, when he himself has the telling of the story. But, (2.) He told them that it was to no purpose to appeal to the throne, There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. The king is himself old, and past business; or so taken up with his devotions, that he never minds business; (his sons were so addicted to their pleasures, that, though they had the name of chief rulers, they took no care of the affairs committed to them;) he further seems to insinuate, what a great loss there was of him, while he was banished and confined, and how much the public suffers by it. Hence Absaln's (Ps. 75. 3.) he says fably, The land and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved, all will go to wreak and ruin, unless I bear up the fallers of it. Every appellant shall be made to believe that he will never have justice done him, unless Absalom be viceroy, or lord-justice. It is the way of turbulent facts aspiring men, to reproach the government they are under, presumptions are they, self-ductions, and not the result of necessities, 2 Pet. 2. 10. Even David himself, the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures. They that aim to usurp, cry out of grievances, and pretend to design nothing but the redress of them, as Absalom here.

2. A good opinion of his own fitness to rule. That the people might say, 6. That Absalom were a judge? (and they are apt enough to desire such judges,) he recommends himself to them, (1.) As very diligent; he rose up early, and appeared in public before the rest of the king's sons were stirring, and he stood beside the way of the gate, where the courts of judgment sat, as one mightily concerned to see justice done, and public business despatched. (2.) As very inquisitive and prying, and desirous to be acquainted with every one's case.
He would know of what city every one was, that came for judgment, that he might inform himself concerning every part of the kingdom, and the state of it, v. 2. (3.) As very familiar and humble. If any Israelite offered to do obseissm to him, he took him, and embraced him as a friend. No man's conduct could be more condescending, while his heart was as proud as Lucifer's. Ambitious projects are often carried on by a show of humility, Col. 2. 23. He knew what a grace it puts upon greatness, to be affable and courteous, and how much it wins upon common people: had he been sincere in it, it had been his praise, but to fawn upon the people, that he might betray them, was abominable hypocrisy. He crouched, and humbled himself, to draw them into his net, Ps. 10. 9, 10.

7. And it came to pass after forty years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee, let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed unto the Lord in Hebron. 8. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then will I serve the Lord. 9. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. 10. But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron. 11. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. 12. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Gilo, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

We have here the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion, which he had long been contriving. It is said to be after forty years, v. 7. But whence that is to be dated, we are not told, not from David's beginning his reign, for then it would fall in the last year of his life, which is not probable, but either from his first anointing by Samuel seven years before, or rather, (I think,) from the people's desiring a king, and the first change of the government into a monarchy; which might be about ten years before David began to reign; it is fitly dated from thence, to show that the same restless spirit was still working, and still they were given to change: as fond now of a new man, as then of a new model. So it fell about the thirtieth year of David's reign, Absalom's plot being nowripe for execution.

1. The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

2. The pretence he had both to go thither, and to invite his friends to him there, was, to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment, v. 7, 8. We have cause enough to suspect that he had not made any such vow, it does not appear that he was so religiously inclined; but he that struck not at murder and treason, would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose. If he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretence,

1. He got leave of his father to go to Hebron. He would be well pleased to hear that his son, in his exile, was so desirous to return to Jerusalem, not only his father's city, but the city of the living God: that he looked up to God, to bring him back; that he had vowed, if he were brought back, to serve the Lord, whose service he had hitherto neglected; and that now, being brought back, he remembered his vow, and was resolved to perform it, and to do it in Hebron, rather than in Zion or Gilbon, the good king is so well pleased with the thing itself, that he will not object against his choice of the place. See how willing tender parents are to believe the best concerning their children, and, upon the least indication of good, to hope, even concerning those that have been untoward, that they will repent and reform. But how easy it is for children to make advances to the ways of their parents, and to impose upon them with the show of religion, while still they are what they were! David was overjoyed to hear that Absalom was inclined to serve the Lord, and therefore readily gave him leave to go to Hebron, and to go thither with solemnity.

2. He got a good number of sober substantial citizens to go along with him, v. 11. There were two hundred men, even, probably, the principal men of Jerusalem, whom he invited to join with him in his feast upon his sacrifice; and they went in their simplicity, not in the least suspecting that Absalom had any bad design in his journey. He knew that it was to no purpose to tempt them into his plot, they were inviolably firm to David; but he drew them in to accompany him, that the common people might believe that they were good friends to David, and that David was deserted by some of his best friends. Note, It is no new thing for very good men, and very good things, to be made use of by designing men, to put a colour upon bad practices. When religion is made a stalking-horse, and sacrifice a sheathing-horn, to sedition and usurpation, it is not to be wondered at, if some that were well-affect ed to religion, as these followers of Absalom here, are involved with him in the fall; for they had taken connivance to that, with their names, which in their heart they abhor, not having known the depths of Satan.

III. The project he laid, was, to get himself proclaimed king throughout all the tribes of Israel, upon a signal given, v. 10. Spies were sent abroad, to be ready in every country to receive the notice with satisfaction and acclamations of joy, and to make their report; he believed the people would give some connivance to that, with their names, which in their heart they abhor, not having known the depths of Satan.

1. The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

2. The pretence he had both to go thither, and to invite his friends to him there, was, to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment, v. 7, 8. We have cause enough to suspect that he had not made any such vow, it does not appear that he was so religiously inclined; but he that struck not at murder and treason, would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose. If he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretence,
II.

21. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. 22. And David said to Ittai, Go, and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. 23. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over toward the way of the wilderness.

Here is,

I. The notice brought to David of Absalom's rebellion, v. 13. The matter was bad enough, and yet it seems to have been made worse to him (as such things commonly are) than really it was; for he was told, that the hearts of the men of Israel (that is, the generality of them, at least, the leading men) were after Absalom. But David was the more apt to believe it, because now he could call to mind the arts Absalom had used to inveigle them, and perhaps reflected upon it with regret, that he had not done more to counterwork him, and secure his own interest, which he had been too confident in. Note, It is possible to be under no certain impression of the hearts of others, but that if they have them, they have their purses, and arms, and all, at their service.

II. The alarm this gave to David, and the resolutions he came to, thereupon. We may well imagine him in a manner thunder-struck, when he heard that the son he loved so dearly, and had been so indulgent to, was so unaccountably, and ungratefully, in arms against him. Yea, he might say with Cæsar, quod tu noster—What, thou my son? Let not parents raise their hopes too high from their children, lest they be disappointed. David did not call a counsel, but, consulting only with God and his own heart, determined immediately to quit Jerusalem, v. 14. He took up this strange resolve, so disagreeable to his character as a man of courage, either, 1. As a penitent, submitting to the rod, and laying down under God's correcting hand. Conscience now reminded him of his sin in the matter of Uriah, and the sentence he was under for it, which was, that evil should raise against him out of his own house. "Now," thinks he, "the word of God begins to be fulfilled, and it is not for me to contend with it, or fight against it: God is righteous, and I submit." Before unrighteous us Abasolom, he could justify himself, and stand it out; but before the righteous God, he must condemn himself, and yield to his judgments. Thus he accepts the punishment of his iniquity. Or, 2. As a politician. Jerusalem was a great city, but not tenable; it should seem, by David's prayer, (Ps. 51.18.) that the walls of it were not built up, much less was it regularly fortified; it was too large to be garrisoned by so small a force as David had now with him: he had reason to fear that the generality of the inhabitants were too well affected to Absalom, to be true to him; should he fortify himself there, he might lose the country, in which, especially among those that lay furthest from Absalom's tampering, he hoped to have the most friends. And he had such a kind of Jerusalem, that he was loath to make that the seat of war, and expose it to the calamities of a siege; he will rather quit it tamely to the rebels. Note, Good men, when they suffer themselves, care not how few are involved with them in suffering.
III. His hasty flight from Jerusalem. His servants agreed to the measures he took, faithfully adhered to him, (v. 15.) and assured him of their inviolable allegiance. Whereupon, 1. He went out of Jerusalem himself on foot, while his son Absalom had chariots and horses. It is supposed the balance of his house, or, the body that was behind, makes the best figure. See here, not only the servant, but the traitor, on horseback, while the prince, the rightful king, walks as a servant upon the earth, Eccl. 10. 7. Thus he chose to do, to abase himself so much the more under God's hand, and in condescension to his friends and followers, with whom he would walk, in token that he would live and die with them. 2. He went as a humble man, with his wife and children, that he might protect them in this day of danger, and that they might be a comfort to him in this day of grief. Masters of families, in their greatest frights, must not neglect their households. Ten women, that were concubines, he left behind, to keep the house, thinking that the weakness of their sex would secure them from murder, and their age and relation to him, would secure them from rape; but God overruled this for the fulfilling of his word. 3. He took his life-guard with him, or band of pensioners; the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were under the command of Benaiah; and the Gittites, who were under the command of Ittai, v. 18. These Gittites seem to have been, by birth, Philistines of Gath, who came, a regiment of them, 600 in all, to enter themselves in David's service, having known him in Gath, and being greatly in love with him for his piety and piety, and having embraced the Jews' religion. David made them of his garde du corps—his body-guard, and they adhered to him in his distress. The son of David found not so great faith in Israel as in a Roman centurion, and a woman of Canaan. 4. As many as would, of the people of Jerusalem, he took with him, and made a halt at some distance from the city, to draw them up, v. 17. He compelled none; they were hearts were with Absalom, to Absalom let them go, and so shall their doom be, they will soon have enough of him. Christ enlist's none but volunteers.

IV. His discourse with Ittai the Gittite, who commanded the Philistine proselytes. 1. David dissuaded him from going along, with him, v. 19. 20. Though he and his men might be greatly serviceable to him, yet, (1.) He was as free as to whether he went or no, and not inclined to Absalom, who therefore bids him return to his post in Jerusalem, and serve the new king. If he were no more than a soldier of fortune, (as we say,) he would be for that side which would pay and prefer him best; and to that side let him go. (2.) If he were faithful to David, yet he would not have him exposed to the fatigues and perils he now counted upon. David's treaties were not to be made with strangers and exiles, a proselyte and a new convert, which, by all means possible, to be encouraged and made easy, should at first coming, meet with such hard usage. "Should I make thee go up and down with us? No, return with thy brethren." Generous souls are more concerned at the shares others have in their troubles, than at their own. Ittai shall therefore be dismissed with a blessing. "Mercy and truth be with thee, and mayest be easy wherever thou art." David's dependence was upon the mercy and truth of God, for comfort and happiness, both for himself and his friends; see Ps. 61. 7. 2. Ittai bravely resolves not to leave him, v. 21. Where David is, whether in life or death, safe or in peril, there will this faithful friend of his be; and he confirms his resolution with an oath, that he might not be tempted to break it; such a value has he for David, not for the sake of his wealth and greatness, (for then he would have deserted him, now that he saw him thus reduced,) but for the sake of his wisdom and goodness, which were still the same, that, whatever comes of it, he will never leave him. Note, That is a friend indeed, who loves at all times, and will adhere to us in adversity. Thus should we cleave to the Son of David, with full purpose of heart, that neither life nor death shall separate us from his love.

V. The common people's sympathy with David in his affliction. When he and his attendants passed over the brook Kidron, (the very same brook that Christ passed over, when he entered upon his sufferings, John 18. 1.) toward the way of the wilderness, which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho, all the country went with a loud voice, v. 23. Cause enough there was for weeping. 1. To see a prince thus reduced; one that had lived so great force from his palace, and in fear of his life, with a small retinue, seeking shelter in a desert; the city of David, which he himself won, built, and fortified, made an unsafe abode for David himself: it would move the compassion even of strangers, to see a man fallen thus low from such a height, and this by the wickedness of his own son; a piteous case it was. Parents that are abused and ruined by their own children, merit the tender sympathy of their friends, as much as any of the sons or daughters of affliction. Especially, 2. To see their own prince thus wronged, who had been so great a blessing to their land, and had not done any thing to forfeit the affections of his people; to see him in this distress, and themselves unable to help him, might well draw floods of tears from their eyes.

24. And, lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city.

25. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. 26. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.

27. The king said also unto Zadok, the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimeaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me. 29. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they tarried there. 30. And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered; and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.

Here is, I. The fidelity of the priests and Levites, and
their firm adherence to David and his interest. They knew David's great affection to them and their office, notwithstanding his failings; the method Absalom took to gain people's affections, made no impression upon them; he had little religion in him, and therefore they steadily adhered to David; Zadok and Abiathar, and all the Levites, if he go, will accompany him, and assist him with their talent; therefore, they ask counsel of God for him, v. 24. Note, That they are friends to the ark in their prosperity, shall find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly, David would not rest, till he had found a resting place for the ark; and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest, till David returns to his rest.

II. David's dismissal of them back to the city, v. 24, 25. High Priest (1 Kings 2. 35.) but Zadok was his assistant, and attended the ark most closely, while Abiathar was active in public business, v. 24. Therefore David directs his speech to Zadok, and an excellent speech it is, and shows him to be in a very good frame under his affliction, and that still he holds fast his integrity.

1. He is very solicitous for the safety of the ark; "By all means carry that back into the city, let not that be settled and exposed with me, lodge that again in the tent pitched for it; surely Absalom, bad as he is, will do that no harm." David's heart, like Eli's, trembled for the ark of God. Note, It argues a good principle, to be more concerned for the church's prosperity, than for our own; to prefer Jerusalem before our chief joy; (Ps. 137. 6.) the success of the gospel, and the flourishing of the church, above our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, even when they are most in hazard.

2. He is very desirous to return to the enjoyment of the privileges of God's house. He will reck it the greatest instance of God's favour to him, if he may but once more be brought back to see it, and his habitation; this will be more his joy than to be brought back to his own palace and throne again. Note, Gracious persons measure their comforts and conveniences in this world, by the opportunity they give them of communion with God. Hezekiah wishes for the recovery of his health, for this reason, that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa. 38. 22.

3. He is very submissive to the holy will of God, concerning the issue of his present dark dispensation. He hopes the best, (v. 25.) and hopes for it from the favour of God, which he looks upon to be the foundation of all good; and he will be satisfied and comforted with what God does. Observe with what satisfaction and holy complacency he speaks of the divine disposal: not only, "He can do what he will," subscribing to his power, (Job 9. 12.) or, "He may do what he will," subscribing to his sovereignty, (Job 33. 13.) or, "He will do what he will," subscribing to his unchangeableness, (Job 23. 13, 15.) but, Let him do what he will, subscribing to his wisdom and goodness. Note, We should be content, as he was, to cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God, whatever befals us. That we may not complain of what is, let us see God's hand in all events; and that we may not be afraid of what shall be, let us see all events in God's hand.

III. The confidence David put in the priests, to serve his interest to the utmost of their power, in his absence. He calls Zadok a seer, (v. 27.) that is, a wise man, a man that can see into business, and discern time and judgment; "Thou hast thine eyes in thy head, (Eccl. 2. 14.) and therefore art capable of doing me service, especially, by sending me intelligence of the enemies' motions and resolutions." One friend that is a seer, in such an exigence as this, makes David's case very quick-sighted. For the settling of a private correspondence with the priests in his absence, he appoints, 1. Whom they should send to him, their two sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whose coat, it might be hoped, would be their protection, and of whose prudence and faithfulness, probably, he had had experience. 2. Whether they should send. He would encourage them to do; not with the fear of the wilderness, till he heard from them, (v. 28.) and then send them according to the information and advice they should send him. Hereupon, they returned to the city, to wait the event; it was pity that any disturbance should be given to a state so happy as this was, when the prince and the priests had such an entire affection for, and confidence in each other.

IV. The melancholy posture that David and his men put themselves into, when, at the beginning of their march, they went up the mount of Olives, v. 30. 1. David himself, as a deep mourner, covered his head and face for shame and blushing, went barefoot, as a prisoner or a slave, and for mortification, and went weeping. Did it become a man of his reputation for courage and greatness of spirit, thus to cry like a child, only for fear of an enemy at a distance, against whom he might easily have made head, and perhaps with one bold stroke have routed him? Yes, it did not ill become him, considering how much there was in this trouble, (1.) Of the unkindness of his son. He could not but weep, to think that one who came out of his bowels, and had so often him in his arms, would thus lift up the heel against him. God himself is said to be grieved with the rebellions of his own children, (Ps. 95. 10.) and even broken with their whorish heart, Ezek. 6. 9. (2.) There was much of the displeasure of his God in it; this infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, Lam. 3. 19. His sin was ever before him, (Ps. 51. 3.) but never so plain, nor ever appearing so black, as now. He never wept thus when Saul hunted him, but a wounded conscience makes troubles lie heavy, Ps. 38. 4. 2. When David wept, all his company wept likewise, being much affected with his grief, and willing to share in it. It is our duty to weep with those that weep, especially our superiors, and those that are better than we; for, if this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? We must weep with those that weep for sin. When Hezekiah humbled himself for his sin, all Jerusalem joined with him, 2. Chron. 32. 26. To prevent suffering with sinners, let us sorrow with them.

31. And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, to turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. 32. And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent, and earth upon his head; 33. Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me: 34. But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O
king; as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. 35. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. 37. So Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Nothing, it seems, appeared to David more threatening in Absalom's plot, than that Ahithophel was in it; for one good head, in such a design, is worth a thousand good hands. Absalom was himself no politician, but he had got one entirely in his interest that was, and would be the more dangerous, because he had been, all along, acquainted with David's counsels and affairs: if therefore he can be baulked, Absalom is as good as rooted, and the head of the conspiracy cut off. This David endeavours to do.

1. By prayer. When he heard that Ahithophel was in the plot, he lifted up his heart to God, in this short prayer, Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, v. 31. He had not opportunity for a long prayer, but he was none of those that thought he should be heard for his much speaking. It was a fervent prayer, "Lord, I pray thee, do this." God is well pleased with the importunity of those that come to him with their petitions. David was particular in this prayer; he names the person whose counsels he prays against. God gives us leave, in prayer, to be humble and reverently free with him, and to mention the particular care, and fear, and grief, that lies heavy upon us. He prays not for his own person's sparing or taking against his counsel, that God would turn it into foolishness, that though he was a wise man, he might, at this time, give foolish counsel; or, if he gave wise counsel, that it might be rejected as foolish: or, if it were followed, that, by some providence or other, it might be defeated, and not attain the end. David prayed this, in a firm belief that God has all hearts in his hand, and tongues too; that, when he pleases, he can take away the understandings of the aged, and make the judges fools, (Job 12. 17. Isa. 3. 2, 3.) and in hope that God would own and plead his just and injured cause. Note, We may pray in faith, and should pray with fervency, that God will turn that counsel into foolishness, which is taken against his people.

2. By policy. We must second our prayer with our endeavours, else we tempt God. It is good service to counterfeit the policy of the church's enemies. When David came to the top of the mount, he worshipped God, v. 32. Note, Weping must not hinder worshipping, but quicken it rather. Now he penned the third Psalm, as appears by the title; and some think that his singing it, was the worship he now paid to God. Just now Providence brought Hushai to him; while he was yet speaking, God heard, and sent him the person that should be instrumental to baffle Ahithophel. He came to converse with David on his present trouble, with his great rent, and earth upon his head; but David, having a great deal of confidence in his conduct and faithfulness, resolved to employ him in the nature of a spy upon Absalom: he would not take him with him, (v. 33.) for he had now more need of soldiers than counsellors, but sent him back to Jerusalem, to wait for Absalom's arrival, as a deserter from David, and to offer him his service, v. 34. Thus he might insinuate himself into his counsels, and defeat Ahithophel, either by dissuading Absalom from following his advice, or by discovering it to David, that he might know where to stand upon his guard. How this great dissimulation, which David put Hushai into, but he justly a1lages in, I do not see. The best that can be made of it is, that Absalom, if he rebel against his father, must stand upon his guard against all mankind, and if he will be deceived, let him be deceived. David recommends him to Zadok and Abiathar, as persons proper to be consulted with, (v. 35.) and to their two sons, as trusty men to be sent on errands to David, v. 36. Hushai, thus instructed, came to Jerusalem, (v. 37.) whither also Absalom soon after came with his forces. How soon do royal palaces and royal cities change their masters! But we look for a kingdom which cannot be thus shaken, and in the possession of which we cannot be disturbed.

CHAP. XVI.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left David flying from Jerusalem, and Absalom entering into it; in this chapter, I. We are to follow David in his melancholy flight; how he fares, and how he finds his people, with approbation; and the course he takes; II. Absalom enters on his dominion; he takes his residence in the palace, Joh. 20. 3-23. And the sheep are scattered, and the shepherd is gone before them. 1. And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and a hundred bunches of raisins, and a hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine. 2. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. 3. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, I abide at Jerusalem; for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father. 4. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertain unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

We read before how kind David was to Mephibosheth the son of Jathan, how he prudently en trusted his servant Ziba with the management of his estate, while he generously entertained him at his own table, ch. 9. 10. This matter was well settled; but, it seems, Ziba is not content to be manager, he longs to be master, of Mephibosheth's estate. Now he thinks it is his time to make himself so; if he can procure a grant of it from the crown, he hopes, whether David or Absalom get the better, it is all one to him, he shall secure his prey, which he promises himself by fishing in troubled waters. In o
1. He makes David a handsome present of provi-
ditions, which was the more welcome, because it car
ried: David's (v. 15) and with this he designed
to incline him to himself; for a man's gift maketh
room for him, and bringeth him before great men,
Prov. 16. 14. Nay, whithersover it turneth, it
prospereth, Prov. 17. 8. David inferred from this,
that Ziba was a very discreet and generous man,
and well affected to him, when, in all, he designed
nothing but to make his own market, and to get
Mephibosheth's estate settled upon him. Shall the
people do this, and this on this wise? Shall not
mischief
prosper
David;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
man;
reproaches, and that David's present afflictions proved him to be as bad a man as he was willing to represent him. Job's friends condemned him upon this false principle. They that are under the rebukes of a gracious God, must not think it strange if these bring upon them the reproaches of evil men. If once it be said, God hath forsaken him, presently it follows, Persecute and take him, Ps. 71. 11. But it is the character of a base spirit thus to trample upon those that are down, and insult over them. 

See, (1.) What this wretched man did: He cast stones at David, (v. 6.) as if his king had been a dog, or the worst of criminals, whom all Israel must stone with stones till he die. Perhaps he kept at such a distance, that the stones he threw, could not reach David, nor any of his attendants, yet he showed what he would have done, if it had been in his power. He cast darts (v. 13.) while, probably, would blow into his own eyes, like the curses he threw, which, being causeless, would return upon his own head. Thus, while his malice made him odious, the impotency of it made him ridiculous and contemptible. They that fight against God, though they hate him, cannot hurt him. If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? Job 33. 6. In the blood of the house of Saul there was attended with his mighty men on his right hand and on his left, so that he was not in so forlorn a condition as he thought; (persecuted, but not forsaken;) and that he continued to do it, and did it the more passionately, for David's bearing it patiently. 

(2.) What he said. With the stones he shot his arrows, even bitter words, (v. 7, 8.) in contempt of that law, Thou shalt not curse the gods, Exod. 22. 28. David was a man of sin, but more of uncleanliness and in great reputation for every thing that is just and good; what could this foul mouth say against him? Why truly, what was done long since to the house of Saul, is the only thing which he can recall, and with which he upbraids him, because that was the thing that he himself was a loser by. See how apt we are to judge of men and their character, by what they are to us; and to conclude that those are cursed, and that have ever so unjustly been, or that we ever so unjustly think have been, instruments of evil to us. So partial are we to ourselves, that no rule can be more fallacious than this. No man could be more innocent of the blood of the house of Saul than David was. Once and again he spared Saul's life, while Saul sought his. When Saul and his sons were slain by the Philistines, David and his men were many miles off; and, when they heard it, one of them, from the house of Abner and Ish-bosheth he had sufficiently cleared himself; and yet all the blood of the house of Saul must be laid at his door: innocence is no fence against malice and falsehood; nor are we to think it strange, if we be charged with that which we have been most careful to keep ourselves from. It is well for us, that men are not to be our judges, but He, whose judgment is according to truth. The blood of the house of Saul was more unjustly charged upon him, [1.] As that which gave him his character, and denominated him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, v. 7. And if a man of blood, no doubt, a man of Belial, that is, a child of the Devil, (who is called Belial, 2 Cor. 6. 15.) and who was a murderer from the beginning. Bloody men are the worst of men. [2.] As that which brought the present trouble upon him. Now that the art is pronounced, and driven out to the wilderness, the Lord has returned upon thee the blood of the house of Saul." See how forward malicious men are to press God's judgments into the service of their own passion and revenge. If any, who, they think, has wronged them, come into trouble, that must be made the cause of the trouble. But we must take heed, lest we wrong God by making his providence thus to patronize our foolish and unjust resentments. As the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God serves not the wrath of man. [3.] As that which would now be his utter ruin; for he endeavors to make him despise of ever recovering his dignity. As they told him, There is no help for him in God, Ps. 3. 3. Thus, the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Abshai, (not Mephibosheth,) the house of Saul never dreamed of making him king, as Ziba suggested, and thou art taken in thy mischief; that is, "the mischief that will be thy destruction, and all, because thou art a bloody man." Thus Shimei cursed. 

II. See how patient and submissive David was, under this abuse. The sons of Zeruiah, Abishai particularly, were forward to maintain David's honour with their swords; they resented the affront keenly, as well they might; Why should this dead dog be suffered to curse the king? v. 9. If David will but give them leave, they will put these lying cursing lips to silence, and take off his head; for his throwing stones at the king was an overt-act, which abundantly proved that he compassed and imagined evil against the king. Thus David's patience and resignation of it, What have I to do with you? So let him curse. Thus Christ rebuked the disciples, who, in zeal for his honour, would have fire from heaven on the town that affronted him, Luke 9. 55. Let us see with what considerations David quieted himself.

1. The chief thing that silenced him, was, that he had deserved it: this is not mentioned indeed; for a man may truly repent, and yet needs not, upon all occasions, proclaim his penitent reflections. Shimei unjustly upbraided him with the blood of Saul; from that his conscience acquitted him, but, at the same time, charged him with the blood of Uriah: "The reproach is too true," (thinks David,) "though false as he means it." Note, A humble tender spirit will turn reproaches into reproofs, and so get good by them, instead of being provoked by them. 

2. He observes the hand of God in it: The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David; (v. 10.) and again, So let him curse, for the Lord hath hidden him; v. 11. As it was Shimei's sin, it was not from God, but from the Devil, and his own wicked heart, nor did God's hand in it excuse or extenuate it, much less justify it, any more than it did their sin, who put Christ to death, Acts 2. 24.—4. 28. But here was David's affliction, it was from the Lord, one of the evils which he raised up against him. David looked above the instrument of his trouble to the supreme director, as Job, when the plunders had stripped him, acknowledges, The Lord hath taken away. Nothing more proper to quiet a gracious soul under affliction, than an eye to the hand of God in it: I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. The scourge of the tongue is God's providence.

3. He quieted himself under the lesser affliction, with the consideration of the greater; (v. 11.) My son seeks my life, much more may this Benjamite. Note, Tribulation works patience in those that are sanctified. The more we bear, the better able we should be to bear still more; what tries our patience, should improve it. The more we are imprisoned to trouble, the less we should be surprised at it, and not think it strange. Marvel not therefore; if enemies are injurious, when even friends are unkind; nor that friends are unkind, when even children are unfruitful. 

4. He comforts himself with hopes that God would, some way or other, bring good to him out of
his affliction, would balance the trouble itself, and recompense his patience under it; "The Lord will require me good for his cursing. If God bid Shimei grieve me, it is that he himself may the more sensibly comfort me; surely he has mercy in store for me, which he is preparing me for by this trial." We may depend upon God, as our Paymaster, not only for our services, but for our sufferings. Let them curse, but bless thou. David, at length, is housed at Bahurim, (v. 14.) where he meets with refreshment, and is hidden from this strife of tongues.

15. And Absalom, and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16. And it came to pass, when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king. 17. And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why westest thou not with thy friend? 18. And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay; but whom the Lord, and this people, and all the men of Israel, choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. 19. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of my son? As I have served in thy father's presence, so will I be in thy presence. 20. Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. 21. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. 22. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. 23. And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom.

Absalom had notice sent him speedily by some of his friends at Jerus bin, that David was withdrawn, and with what a small retinue he was gone; so that the coasts were clear, Absalom might take possession of Jerusalem when he pleased. The gates were open, and there were none to oppose him. Accordingly, he came without delay; (v. 15.) extremely elevated, no doubt, with this success at first, and that that, in which, when he formed his design, probably, he apprehended the greatest difficulty, was so easily and effectually done. Now that he is master of Jerusalem, he concludes all his own, the country will follow of course. God suffers wicked men to prosper a while in their wicked plots, even beyond their expectation, that their disappointment may be the more grievous and disgraceful.

The most celebrated politicians of that age, were, Ahithophel and Hushai; the former Absalom brings with him to Jerusalem, (v. 15.) the other meets him there; (v. 16.) so that he cannot but think himself sure of success, when he has both these to be his counsellors; on them he relies, and consults not the work, though he had that with them. But miserable counsellors were they both; for,

I. Hushai would never counsel him to do wisely; he was really his enemy, and designed to betray him, while he pretended to be in his interest; so that he could not have a more dangerous man about him. 1. Hushai complimented him upon his accession to the throne, as if he were abundantly satisfied in his title, and was amazed that he was come to the possession, v. 16. What arts of dissimulation are these tempted to use, who govern themselves by fleshy wisdom; and how happy are they, who have not known these depths of Satan, but have their conversation in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity! 2. Absalom is surprised to find him, for him, who was known to be David's intimate friend and confidant. Is this thy kindness to thy friend? (v. 17.) pleasing himself with this thought, that all would be his, since Hushai was. He doubts not of his sincerity, but easily believes what he wishes to be true, that David's best friends were so in love with him, as to take the first opportunity to declare for him, though the pride of his heart deceived him, Obad. 3. Hushai still makes him believe he is hearty for him. For though David is his friend, yet he is for the king in succession, v. 18. Whom the people choose, a Providence makes upon, he will be faithful to; and he is for the king in succession, (v. 19.) the rising sun. It was true, he loved his father; but he had had his day, and it was over; and why should he not love his successor as well? Thus he pretends to give reasons for a resolution he abhorred the thought of.

II. Ahithophel did counsel him to do wickedly, and so did as effectually betray him, as did, who wasdesigningly fall to his destruction. They that advise men to sin, certainly advise them to their hurt; and that government which is founded in sin, is founded in the sand. It seems, Ahithophel was noted as a deep politician; his counsel was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God, v. 23. Such reputation was he in for subtlety and sagacity in public affairs, such reaches had he beyond other privy-counsellors, such reasons would he give for his advice, and such success, generally, his projects had, that all people, good and bad, both David and Absalom, had a profound regard to his sentiments, too much by far, when they regarded him as an oracle of God; shall the prudence of any mortal compare with Him who is only wise? Let us observe from this account of Ahithophel's fame for policy, 1. That many excel in worldly wisdom, who are utterly destitute of heavenly grace; the estate, which is the basis for theirselves, are apt to despise the oracles of God. God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and the greatest statesmen are seldom the greatest saints. 2. That frequently the great politicians act most foolishly for themselves. Ahithophel is cried up for an oracle, and yet very unwisely takes part with Absalom, who was not only a usurper, but a rash youth; he never could have come to good; when he estimated the fall of all that adhered to him, any one, with the tenth part of the policy that Ahithophel pretended to, might foresee. Well, after all, honesty is the best policy, and will be found so in the long run.

Observe, (1.) The wicked counsel Ahithophel gave to Absalom: finding that David had left his concubines to keep the house, he advises him to take them; (v. 15.) very wicked thing; he who had made it a capital crime, Lev. 20. 11. The apostle speaks of it as a piece of villany, not so much as named among the Gentiles, 1 Cor. 5. 1. Reuben lost his birth-right for it. But Ahithophel advised it as a political thing, because it would give assurance to all Israel. [1.] That he was in good earnest in his pretensions; no doubt, he resolved to make himself master of all that belonged to his predecessor, when he began with his concubines. [2.]
II. SAMUEL, XVII.

That he was resolved never to make peace with his father upon any terms; for, by this, he would render himself so odious to his father, that he would never be reconciled to him, which, perhaps, the people were jealous of, and that they must be sacrificed to the reconciliation. Having drawn the sword, he did, by this provocation, throw away the scabbard, which he had strengthened the hands of his party, and keep them tight to him. This was his cursed policy, which bespake him rather an oracle of the devil, than of God.

(2.) Absalom's compliance with this counsel. It entirely suited his lewd and wicked mind, and he delayed not to put it in execution, v. 22. When an unnatural rebellion was the opera, what fitter prologue or commencement could there be to such a natural lust? Thus was his wickedness all of a piece, and such as a conscience, not quite seared, could not entertain the thoughts of without the utmost horror. Nay, the client outdoes what his counsel advises: Ahithophel bid him do it, that all Israel might hear of it; but as if that were not enough, so perfectly lost is he to all honour and virtue, he will do it, and all Israel shall see it. A tent is, accordingly, spread on the top of the castle, and he goes to the uttermost part of the town, and from thence did he declare his sin as Sodom. Yet, in this, the word of God was fulfilled in the letter of it: God had threatened, by Nathan, that, for his defiling of Bath-sheba, he should have his own wives publicly debauched; (ch. 12. 11, 12.) and some think that Ahithophel, in advising it, designed to be revenged on David for the injury done to Bath-sheba, who was his great delight: for see of this chapter, the daughter of Eliam, (ch. 11. 3.) who was the son of Ahithophel, ch. 23. 34. Job speaks of a circumstance like this, as the just punishment of adultery, (ch. 31. 9, 10.) and the prophet, Hos. 4. 13, 14. What to think of these concubines, who submitted to this wickedness, it were easy to say; but how unrighteous soever Absalom and they are, we must say, The Lord is righteous: nor shall any word of his fall to the ground.

CHAP. XVII.

The contest between David and Absalom is now drawing towards a crisis. It must be determined by the sword, and not in solemn counsel, according to the counsel of Ahithophel. Absalom calls a council of war, in which Ahithophel urges to despatch, (v. 1-4,) but Hushai recommends deliberation, (v. 5-13,) and Hushai's counsel is agreed to, (v. 14,) for execution at which, Ahithophel hangs himself. II. Ahithophel's counsel is sent to David, (but with much difficulty,) of their proceedings, v. 15-21. III. David marches to the other side Jordan, (v. 22-24.) and there his camp is victualled by some of his friends in that country, v. 27-29. IV. Absalom and his forces march after him into the land of Gilead on the other side Jordan, v. 25, 26. There we shall, in the next chapter, find the cause decided by a battle: hitherto, every thing has looked black upon poor David, but now the day of his deliverance begins to dawn.

1. Moreover, Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: 2. And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only. 3. And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seestkest is as all returned: so all the people shall be in peace, 4. And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. 5. Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. 6. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not, speak thou. 7. And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. 8. For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. 9. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. 10. And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men. 11. Therefore I counsel, that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person. 12. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one. 13. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there. 14. And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom.

Absalom is in peaceable possession of Jerusalem, the palace-royal is his own, and the thrones of judgment, even the thrones of the house of David. His good father reigned in Hebron, and only over the tribe of Judah, above seven years, and was not capable to destroy his rival: his government was built upon a divine promise, which he was sure of the performance of in due time, and therefore he waited patiently in the mean time. But the young man, Absalom, not only hastens from Hebron to Jerusalem, but is impatient there, till he has destroyed his father; cannot be content with his throne till he has his life; for his government is founded in iniquity, and therefore finds itself tottering, and thinks itself obliged to do every thing with violence. That so profligate a wretch as Absalom should aim at the throne of so good a father, is not so strange; (there are here and there monsters in nature;) but that the body of the people of Israel, to whom David had been so great a blessing in all respects, should join with him in it, is very amazing. But their fathers
often mutined against Moses. The best of parents, and the best of princes, will not think it strange, if they be made uneasy by those who should be their support and joy, when they consider what sons and what subjects David himself had.

David, and all that adhered to him, must be cut off. That is resolved, for aught that appears, nemine contradicente—unanimously. None dares mention his personal merits, and great services done to his country; his vices are his resolution, so much as to ask, "Why, what evil has he done, to forfeit his crown, much less his head?" None dares propose that his banishment suffice, for the present, or that agents be sent to treat with him to resign the crown, which, having so timely quitted the city, they might think he would easily be persuaded to do. It was not long since Absalom himself fled for a crime, and David contented himself with his being an exile, though he desired very much, and he mourned and longed for him; but so perfectly void of all natural affection is this ungrateful Absalom, that he perfectly thrills after his own father's blood. It is past dispute, David must be destroyed, all the question is, how it may be done.

1. Ahithophel advises that he be pursued immediately, this very night, with a flying army, which he himself undertakes the command of, that the king only be smitten and his forces dispersed, that Absalom would fall in with Absalom, of course, and there would not be such a long war as had been between the house of Saul and David, v. 1. 3. The man whom thou seekest, is as if all returned. By this, it appears that Absalom had declared his design to be upon David's life, and Ahithophel concurs with him in it; Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and be an easy prey to the wolf. Thus he contributes to a little blood by cutting off a whole nation, neither with small nor great, but the king of Israel only, and to conclude it in a little time, by falling upon him immediately. Nothing could have been more fatal to David, than the taking of these measures. It was too true, that he was weary and weak-handed; that a little thing would make him afraid, else he had not fled from his house, upon the first alarm of Absalom's rebellion. It was probably upon a free attack, especially in the night, the small force he had, would be put into confusion and disorder, and it would be an easy thing to smite the king only, and then the business was done, the whole nation would be reduced, of course, and all the people, says he, shall be in peace. See how a general ruin is called, by usurpers, a general peace; but thus the Devil's palace is in peace, while he, as a strong man, keeps it. Compare with this the plot of Caliphas (that second Ahithophel) against the Son of David, to crush his interest by destroying him; Let that one man die for the people, John 11. 50. Kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be our's. Matth. 21. 38. But the counsel of them both was turned into foolishness. Yet the children of light may, in their generation, learn wisdom from the children of this world. What our hand finds to do, let us do quickly, and with all our might. It is prudence to be vigorous and expeditious, and not to lose time. Particularly in our spiritual warfare, if Satan flee from us, let us follow our blow. They that have quarrelled with crowned heads, have generally observed the decorum of declaring only against their evil counsellors, and calling them to account, the king himself can do so wrong, it is they that do it, Absalom himself, and strikes at the king directly, nay, at the king only; for, (would you think it?) this saying, I will smite the king only, pleased Absalom well; (v. 4.) nor had he so much sense of honour and virtue left him, as to pretend to startle at it, or even to be redundant in this barbarous and monstrous resolution. What good can stand before the heat of a furious ambition?

II. Hushai advises that they be not too hasty in pursuing David, but take time to draw up all their force against him, and to overpower him with numbers, as Ahithophel had advised to take him by surprise. Now Hushai, in giving this counsel, really intended to serve David and his interest; that he might have time to send him notice of his proceedings, and that David might gain time to gather an army, and to remove into those countries beyond Jordan, which, lying more remote, Absalom, probably, had got least interest in. Nothing would be of greater advantage to David in this juncture, than time to turn himself in; that he may have that, Hushai counsels Absalom to do nothing rashly, but to proceed with caution, and secure his success by securing his interest.

Now, i. Absalom gave Hushai a fair invitation to advise him. All the elders of Israel approved of Ahithophel's counsel, yet God overruled the heart of Absalom not to proceed upon it, till he had advised with Hushai, (v. 5.) Let us hear what he saith. Herein he thought he did wisely, (two heads are better than one,) but God taketh the wise in their own craftiness. See Mr. Poole's note on this.

2. Hushai have whereon to advise, and to make the proposal. (1.) He argued against Ahithophel's counsel, and undertook to show the danger of following his advice. It is with modesty, and all possible deference to his settled reputation, that he begs leave to differ from him, v. 7. The counsel of Ahithophel is usually the best, and such as may be relied on; but, with submission to that noble peer, he is of opinion that his counsel is not good at this time, for it was not in the king's interest to have his children, in which they were now engaged, upon so small a number, and such a hasty as, Ahithophel advised; remembering the defect of Israel before Ai, Josh. 7. 4. It has often proved of bad consequence to despise an enemy; See how plausibly Hushai reasons: [1.] He insists much upon it, that David was a great soldier, a man of great conduct, courage, and expedition; Heres, and would not be in the way, in which they were now engaged, upon so small a number, and such a hasty as, Ahithophel imagined. Hushai himself says, Thy father is a man of war (v. 8.) a mighty man, (v. 10.) and so not so weary and weak-handed as Ahithophel imagines. Hushai, retiring from Jerusalem must be imputed, not to his cowardice, but to his prudence. [2.] His attendants, few, were mighty men, (v. 8.) valiant men, (v. 10.) men of celebrated bravery, and versed in all the arts of war. Ahithophel, who perhaps, within the gown more than the sword, could find himself an unequal match for them, One of them would chuse a thousand. [3.] They were all exasperated against Absalom, who was the author of all this mischief, were chafed in their minds, and would fight with the utmost fury; so that, what with their courage, and what with their rage, there would be no standing before them, especially for such raw soldiers as Absalom's general- ly were. Thus does he represent them as formidable as Ahithophel had made them despicable.

[4.] He suggests that, probably, David and some of his men would lie in ambush, in some pit, or other close place, and fall upon Absalom's soldiers before they were aware, the terror of which would put them to flight; and the defeat, though but of a small party, would dispirit all the rest, especially their own consciences, at the same time accusing them of a sin worse than death, that they were sure, was not only God's anointed, but a man after his own heart, v. 9. "It will soon be given out, that there is a slaughter among Absalom's men, and then they will all make the best of their way, and
II. SAMUEL, XVII.

the heart of Ahithophel himself, though now it seems like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt away. Unhappy, he will not find it a matter to say a matter to deal with David and his men as he thinks it is; and if he be foiled, we are all routed."

(2.) He offered his own advice; and gave his reasons; and,

[1.] He counselled that which he knew would gratify Absalom’s proud vain-glorious humour, though he would not be really serviceable to his interest. 

First, He advised that Ahithophel should be gathered together, that is, the militia of all the tribes; his taking it for granted that they were all for him, and giving him an opportunity to see them altogether under his command, would gratify him as much as any thing. Secondly, He advises that Absalom go to battle in his own person, as if he looked upon him to be a better soldier than Ahithophel, more fit to give command, and have the honour of being first on the field of battle, to show that by putting a slight upon him, in offering to go without him: see how easy it is to betray proud men, by applauding them, and feeding their pride.

[2.] He counselled that which seemed to secure the success, at last, infallibly, without running any hazard. For if they could raise such vast numbers as they promised themselves, wherever they found him, they should not fail to crush him. 

First, If the multitude were upon him, that managed the thing that covers the face of the ground, and cut off all his men with him, v. 12. Perhaps, Absalom was better pleased with the design of cutting off all the men that were with him, having a particular antipathy to some of David’s friends, than with Ahithophel’s project of smiting the king only. Thus Hushai gained his point by humouring his revenge, as well as his pride. Secondly, If in a city, they might get it upon them, were, like him, hands enough, if occasion were, to draw the city itself into its river with ropes, v. 13. This strange suggestion, how impracticable soever, being new, served for an amusement, and recommended itself by pleasing the fancy, for they would all smile at the humour of it.

By all these arts, Hushai gained not only Absalom’s approbation of his advice, but the unanimous concurrence of this great council of war; they all agreed that the counsel of Hushai was better than the counsel of Ahithophel, v. 14. See here, First, How much the policy of man can do: if Hushai had not been there, Ahithophel’s counsel had certainly prevailed; and though all had given their opinion, nothing could be really more for Absalom’s interest than that which he advised, yet Hushai, with his maxims, brought them over to his side; and none of them are aware, that he says all this in favour of David and his interest, but all say as he says. See how the unthinking part are imposed upon by the designing part of mankind; what tools, what fools, great men make of one another by their intrigues; and what tricks there are often in courts, and councils, which are the happiest that are least conversant with. Secondly, See how much more the providence of God can do: Hushai managed the plot with dexterity, yet the success is ascribed to God, and his agency on the minds of those concerned; The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel. Be it observed, to the comfort of all that fear God, he turns all men’s hearts as the rivers of waters, though they know not the thoughts of the Lord. He sends in the congregation of the mighty, has an overruling hand in all councils, and a negative voice in all resolutions, and laughs at men’s projects against his anointed.

15. Then said Hushai unto Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled. 16. Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him. 17. Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel, (for they might not be seen to come into the city:) and a wench went and told them; and they went and told king David. 18. Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom: but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man’s house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court, whither they went down. 19. And the woman took and spread a covering over the well’s mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known. 20. And when Absalom’s servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21. And it came to pass, after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, Arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against thee.

We must now leave David’s enemies pleasing themselves with thoughts of a sure victory, by following Hushai’s counsel, and sending a summons, no doubt, to all the tribes of Israel, to come to the general rendezvous at place, and join themselves to that counsel; and we next find David’s friends consulting how to get him notice of all this, that he might steer his course accordingly. Hushai tells the priests what had passed in council, v. 15. But, it should seem, he was not sure, but that yet Ahithophel’s counsel might be followed, and was there fore jealous, lest, if he made not the best of his way, the King would be swallowed up, and all the people that were with him, v. 16. Perhaps, as he was called in to give his advice, (v. 5.) so he was dismissed before they came to that resolute, (v. 14.) in favour of his advice. Or he feared they might afterward change their mind. However, it was good to provide against the worst, and therefore to hasten those valuable lives out of the reach of these destroyers.

Such strict guards did Absalom set upon all the avenues to Jerusalem, that they had much ado to get this necessary intelligence to David. 1. The young priests that were to be the messengers, were forced to retire secretly out of the city, by En-rogel; which signifies, as some say, the fountain of a sky. Surely it went ill with Jerusalem, when two such faithful priests as they were, might not be seen to come into the city. 2. Instructions were sent to them by a poor simple young woman, who, probably, went to that well under pretence of fetching water, v. 17. If she carried the message by word of mouth, there was danger of her making some mistake or blunder in it; but Providence can make an ignorant girl a trusty messenger, and serve its
wise counsel by the foolish things of the world. 3. Yet, by the vigilance of Absalom's spies, they were discovered, and information brought to Absalom of their motions. A lad saw them, and told him, v. 18. 4. They being aware that they were discovered, sheltered themselves in a friend's house in Bahurim, where David had refreshed himself but just before, ch. 16. 14. There they were happily hid in a well, which now, in summer time, perhaps, was dry, v. 18. The woman of the house very ingeniously covered the mouth of the well with a cloth, on which she spread corn to dry, so that the pursuers were not aware that there was a well; else they had searched it, v. 19. Thus far, the woman did well; but we know not how to justify her further concealing them with a lie, v. 20. We must not do evil that good may come of it. However, hereby the messengers were protected, and the pursuers were defeated, and returned to Absalom without their prey. It was well that Absalom did not, hereupon, fall upon their two fathers, Zadok and Abiathar, as Saul on Ahimelech for his kindness to David; but God restrained him. Being thus preserved, they brought their intelligence very faithfully to David, (v. 21.) with the advice of his friends, that he should not dare to pass over Jordan, near to which it seems, he now was. There, as some think, he penned the 42d and 43d Psalms, looking back upon Jerusalem from the land of Jordan, Ps. 42. 6.

22. Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan. 23. And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and got him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. 24. Then David came to Mahanaim. And Absalom passed over Jordan, and he and all the men of Israel with him. 25. And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab: which Amasa was a man's son whose name was Ithran, an Ishmaelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26. So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead. 27. And it came to pass, when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiud of Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, 28. Brought beds, and basins, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse, 29. And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat: for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Here is, 1. The transporting of David and his forces over Jordan, pursuant to the advice he had received from his friends at Jerusalem, v. 22. He, and all that were with him, went over in the night, whether in ferry boats, which, probably, always plied there, or through the fords, does not appear. But special notice may be taken of this, that there lacked not one of them; none deserted him, though his distress was great, none stayed behind sick or weary, not one was left behind. 2. In this act they were happily CAST away in passing the river. Herein some make him a type of the Messiah, who, said, in a difficult day, Of all that thou hast given me have I lost none. Being got over Jordan, he marched many miles forward to Mahanaim, a Levite's city in the tribe of Gad, in the utmost border of that tribe, and not far from Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites. This city, which Ishbosheth held for his royal city, (ch. 2. 6.) David now made his head-quarters, v. 27. and and now he had time to raise an army wherewith to oppose the rebels, and give them a warm reception. II. The death of Ahithophel, v. 23. He died by his own hands, fero de se— a suicide: he hanged himself for vexation that his counsel was not followed; for thereby, 1. He thought himself slighted, and an intolerable slur cast upon his reputation for wisdom. 2. By the dismissal of his council-board, but now another's opinion is thought wiser and better than his; his proud heart cannot bear the affront, it rises and swells, and the more he thinks of it, the more violent his resentments grow, till they bring him, at last, to this desperate resolve, not to live to see another preferred before him. All men think him a wise man, but he thinks himself the only wise man; and therefore, to be avenged upon mankind for not thinking so too, he will die, that wisdom may die with him. The world is not worthy of such an oracle as he is, and therefore will make them know the want of him. See what real enemies they are to themselves, that think too well of themselves, and what mischief they run upon, that are impatient of contempt. That will break a proud man's heart, that will not break an humble man's sleep. 2. He thought himself endangered, and his life exposed. He concluded, that, because his counsel was not followed, Absalom's cause would certainly miscarry, and then, whoever would find David's mercy, he concluded, that he, who was the greatest criminal, and had particularly advised him to lie with his father's concubines, must be sacrificed to his justice; to prevent therefore the shame and terror of a public execution, he does justice upon himself, and after all his reputation for wisdom. The act, puts a far greater disgrace upon himself than Absalom's privy counsel had put upon him, and answers his name Ahithophel, which signifies, the brother of a fool. Nothing indicates so much folly as self-murder. Observe how deliberately he did it, and of malice prepense against himself: not in a heat, but he went home to his city, to his house, to die; and the deed stands in the history of it, and yet did it. And to prove himself compeus unius—in his senses, when he did it, first put his household in order, made his will as a man of sane memory and understanding, settled his estate, balanced his accounts; yet he that had sense and prudence enough to do this, had not consideration enough to revoke the sentence his pride and passion had passed upon his own neck, or so much as to suspend the execution of it till the termination of Absalom's rebellion. Now herein we may see, (1.) Contempt poured upon the wisdom of man; he that was more renowned for policy than any man, plays the fool with himself more abundantly. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, when he sees him that was so great an oracle, dying as a fool dies. (2.) Honour done to the justice of God. When the wicked are thus snared in the work of their own.
hands, and sunk in a pit of their own digging, the
Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth,
and we must say Higgiona, Selah; it is a thing to
be marked and meditated upon, Ps. 7. 15, 16. (3.)
Psalm 37. 10. Be not envious against evil men,
his counsels was turned into foolishness to him-
self. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that David penned the
55th Psalm, upon occasion of Ahithophel's being in
the plot against him, and that he is the man com-
plained of, (v. 13.) that had been his equal, his
guide, and his acquaintance; and so, this was an
immediate answer to his prayer there, (v. 15.) Let
dee sete upon them, let them go down quickly into
hell. Ahithophel's death was an advantage to Da-
vid's interest; for he digested that affront, (if
those must resolve often to do, that will live in this
world,) and continued his post at Absalom's elbow,
his might have given him counsel afterward, that
might have been of pernicious consequence to Da-
vid. It is well that that breath is stopped, and that
head laid, from which nothing could be expected
but mischief. It seems, it was not then usual to
disgrace the dead bodies of self-murderers, for
Ahithophel was buried, we may suppose, honoura-
ably buried, in the sepulchre of his father, though
he deserved no better than the burial of an ass: see
Eccl. 8. 10.

III. Absalom's pursuit of his father; he had now
got all the men of Israel with him, as Hushai ad-
vised, and he himself at the head of them. But
even so, he could not venture. No sooner that he had
driven his good father to the utmost corner of his kingdom,
his resolution to chase him out of the world. He
pitched in the land of Gilead with all his forces,
ready to give David battle, v. 26. Absalom made
one Amasa his general, (v. 25.) whose father was,
by birth, Jether, an Ishmæelite, (1 Chron. 2. 17.)
but, by religion, Ithra, (as he is here called,) an
Israelite; probably, he was not only proscribed, but
having married a daughter of David's, was, by
some act of the state, naturalized, and is therefore
called an Israelit. His wife, Amasa's mother, was
Abigail, David's sister, whose other sister, Zeruiah,
was Joab's mother, 1 Chron. 2. 16. So that Amasa
was the same relation to David that Joab was. In
honour to his family, even while he was in arms
against his father, Absalom made him commander
in chief of all his forces. Jesse is here called Na-
han', and many had two names; or perhaps it was
his wife's name.

IV. The friends David met with in this distant
country. Even Shobi, a younger brother of the
royal family of the Ammonites, was kind to him, v.
27. It is probable that he had detested the indignity
which his brother Hanun had done to David's
ambassadors, and, for that, had received favours
from David, which he now returns. Those that
think their prospects most chearful, know not but,
some time or other, they may stand in need
of the kindness of those that now lie at their mercy,
and may be glad to be beholden to them; which is
a reason, why we should, as we have opportunity,
do good to all men, for he that watereth, shall be
watered also himself, when there is occasion. Ma-
 chir, the son of Ammiel, was he that maintained
Mishael (1 Chron. 4. 4.) till David eased him of
that charge; and is now repaid for it by that gene-
rous man, who, it seems, was the common patron
of distressed princes. Barzillai we shall hear of
again. These, compassionating David and his men,
now that they were weary with a long march,
brought him furniture for his house, beds and
fURNITURE; and provisions for his table, wheat and
harry, &c. v. 28, 29. He did not put them under
contrivance, did not compel them to supply him,
much less, plunder them; but, in token of their
dutiful affection to him, their firm adherence to his
government, and their sincere concern for him in
his present straits, of their own good will they
brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion
for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-
headed, according as our ability is, to all in distress,
especially great men, to whom it is most grievous,
and good men, who deserve better treatment. Ob-
serve here, how G d sometimes makes up to his
people that comfort from strangers, which they are
disappointed of in their own families.

CHAP. XVIII.

This chapter puts a period to Absalom's rebellion and life,
and so makes way for David to his throne again, whither
the next chapter brings him back in peace and triumph.
We have here, 1. David's preparations to engage the
rebels, v. 1. 5. 2. The total defeat of Absalom's party,
and their destruction, v. 6. 8. 11. 3. The death of Absa-
lon, and his burial, v. 9. 18. 4. The bringing of the
 tidings of it to David, who tarried at Mahanaim, v. 19.
32. V. His bitter lamentations of Absalom, v. 33.

1. AND David numbered the people that
were with him, and set captains of
thousands and captains of hundreds over
them. 2. And David sent forth a third part
of the people under the hand of Joab, and
a third part under the hand of Abishai the
son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part
under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the
king said unto the people, I will surely go
forth with you myself also. 3. But the people
answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if
we flee away, they will not care for us;
neither if half of us die will they care for us:
but now thou art worth ten thousand of us:
therefore now it is better that thou succour
us out of the city. 4. And the king said
unto them, What seemeth you best I will
do. And the king stood by the gate side,
and all the people came out by hundreds
and by thousands. 5. And the king com-
manded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying,
Deal gently for my sake with the young
man, even with Absalom. And all the
people heard when the king gave all the cap-
tains charge concerning Absalom. 6. So
the people went out into the field against
Israel; and the battle was in the wood of
Ephraim; 7. Where the people of Israel
were slain before the servants of David;
and there was there a great slaughter that
day of twenty thousand men. 8. For the
battle was there scattered over the face of
all the country: and the wood devoted
more people that day than the sword de-
vo
ered.

Which way David raised an army here, and what
reinforcements were sent him, we are not told;
many, it is likely, from all the coasts of Israel, at
least, from the neighbouring tribes, came in to his
assistance, so that, by degrees, he was able to
make head against Absalom, as Ahithophel foresaw.
Now here we have 1.

1. His army numbered and marshalled, v. 1, 2.
He had, no doubt, committed his cause to God by prayer, for that was his relief in all his afflictions; and then he took an account of his forces; Josephus says they were, in all, but about four thousand; these he divided into regiments, and companies, to each of which he appointed proper officers, and then disposed them, as is usual, into the right wing, the left wing, and the centre, two of which he committed to his two old experienced generals, Joab and Abishai, and the third to his new friend Ittai. Good order and good conduct may sometimes be as serviceable to armies, as good advice, as any fathers. Wisdom teaches us to make the best of the strength we have, and let it reach to the utmost.

II. Himself over-persuaded not to go in person to the battle. He was Absalom’s false friend, that persuaded him to go, and served his pride more than his prudence; David’s true friends would not let him go, remembering what they had been told of Ahithophel’s design to smite the king only. David showed his affection to them by being willing to venture with them; (v. 2) and they showed their’s to him by opposing it. We must never reckon it an affront to be gainsaid for our good, and by those that therein consult our interest.

1. They would by no means have him expose himself, for, (say they,) Thou art worth ten thousand of us. Thus ought good princes to be valued by their subjects, who, if they had not an eye to their own safety, must have respected themselves. 2. They would not so far gratify the enemy, who would rejoice more in his fall, than in the defeat of the whole army. 3. He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a reserve of his forces there, whence he might send them recruits. That may be a post of real service, which yet is not a post of danger. The king acquired in their reasons, and changed his purpose: (v. 4.) What seemeth you best, I will do. It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be overruled by their advice, when it appears to be for our own good. Whether the people’s prudence had an eye to it or no, God’s providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle: for then his tenderness had certainly interposed to save Absalom’s life, whom God had destined to be a means of blessing.

III. The charge he gave concerning Absalom, v. 5. When the army was drawn out, rank and file, Josephus says, he encouraged them, and prayed for them, but withal bade them all take heed of doing Absalom any hurt. How does he render good for evil! Absalom would have David only smitten, David would have Absalom only spared. What folly are these to each other! Never yet was hatred to a father more strong than in Absalom; nor was ever natural affection to a child more strong than in David; each did his utmost, and showed what he could do; how bad it is possible for a child to be the best of fathers, and how good it is possible for a father to be the worst of children; as if they were designed to be a resemblance of man’s wickedness toward God, and God’s mercy toward man, of which he is himself an example. It is so amazing. “Deal gently,” says David, “by all means, with the young man, even with Absalom, for my sake; he is a young man, rash and heady, and his age must excuse him; he is mine, whom I love; if ye love me, he not severe with him.” This charge supposes David’s strong expectation of success, having a good cause, and a good God: he doubts not but Absalom would lie at his mercy, and therefore bids them deal gently with him, spare his life, and reserve him for his judgment.

Bishop Hall thus descants on this: “What means this ill-placed love? This unjust mercy? Deal gently with a traitor? Of all traitors, with a son? Of all sons, with an Absalom? That graceless daring of so good a father? And all this, for thy sake, whose crown, whose blood, he hunts after? And for what sake must he be pursued, if for a traitor’s? Must the case of the quarrel be the native of mercy? Even in the holiest parents, nature may be guilty of an injurious tenderness, of a bloody indulgence. But was not this done in type of that unmeasurable mercy of the true King and Redeemer of Israel, who prayed for his persecutors, for his murderers; Father, forgive them. Deal gently with the enemy, for God spares an affliction to correct his children, it is with this charge, “Deal gently with them for my sake,” for he knows their frame.

IV. A complete victory gained over Absalom’s forces. The battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim, (v. 6.) so called from some memorable action of the Ephraimites there, though it lay in the tribe of God. David thought fit to meet the enemy with his forces at some distance, before they came up to Mahanaim, lest he should bring that city into trouble, which had so kindly sheltered him. The cause shall be decided by a pitched battle. Josiah represents the fight as very obstinate, but the rebels were at length totally routed, and 20,000 of them slain, v. 7. Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their unfaithfulness toward so good a government, and their base ingratitude to the goodness of their government. For thus it was to take up arms for an usurper, who with his kisses and caresses, had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferences, the golden days, they promised themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord, and his anointed, and to think of breaking his bands asunder. And that they might see that God fights against them, 1. They are conquered by a few, an army, in all probability, much inferior to their’s in number. 2. By that flight with which they hoped to save themselves, they destroyed themselves; the wood, which they sought to for shelter, devoured more than the sword: that they might see how, when they thought themselves safe from David’s men, and said, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet the justice of God pursued them, and destroyed them. Why then, can rebels find from divine vengeance? The pits and bogs, the stumps and thickets, and, as the Chaldee paraphrase understands it, the wild beasts of the wood, were, probably, the death of multitudes of the dispersed distracted Israelites, beside the 20,000 that were slain with the sword. God herein fought for David, and yet fought against him; for all these things were slain were his own subjects, and the common interest of his kingdom was weakened by it. The Romans allowed no triumph for a victory in a civil war.

9. And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away. 10. And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak. 11. And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle. 12. And the man said unto
Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom. 13. Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against me. 14. Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15. And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about, and smote Absalom, and slew him. 16. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17. And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent. 18. Now Absalom in his life-time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom's Place.

Here is Absalom quite at a loss; at his wit's end, first, and then at his life's end. He that began the fight, big with the expectation of triumphing over David himself, with whom, if he had had him in his power, he would not have dealt gently, is now in the greatest consternation, when he meets the servants of David, v. 9. Though they were forbidden to meddle with him, he durst not look in the face; but, finding they were near him, he makes the best of his way, and so rides headlong upon his own destruction. Thus he that flies from the fear, shall fall into the pit, and he that geteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare, Jer. 48. 44. David is inclined to spare him, but divine justice passes sentence upon him as a traitor, and sees it executed; that he hang by the neck, be caught alive, be embowelled, and his body disposed of disgracefully.

I. He is hanged by the neck. Riders furiously under the thick boughs of a great oak which hung low, and had been never cropped, either the twisted branches, or some one forked bough of the oak, caught hold of his head, either by his neck, or, as some think, by his long hair, which had been so much his pride, and was now justly made a halter for him, and there he hung, astonished, that he could not use his hands to help himself; or so entangled, that his hands could not help him, but the more he struggled the more he was embarrassed. This set him up for a fair mark to the servants of David, and he had the terror and shame of seeing himself thus exposed, while he could do nothing for his own relief, neither fight nor fly.

Observe concerning this, 1. That his name was taken away from him, as if glad to get clear of such a burshtain, and resign it to the ignominious tree. Thus the whole creation groans under the burshtain of man's corruption, but shall shortly be delivered from its load, Rom. 8. 21, 22. 2. That he hung between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either, as abandoned of both; earth would not keep him, heaven would not take him, hell therefore opens her mouth to receive him. 3. That this was a most surprising unusual thing; it was fit that it should be so, his crime being so monstrous: if, in his flight, his mule had thrown him, and left him half dead upon the ground, till the servants of David had come and despatched him, the same thing had been done as effectually; but that had been too common a fate for so uncommon a criminal; God will here, as in the case of the other rebellious, Dathan and Abiram, create a new thing, that it may be understood how much this man has provoked the Lord, Numb. 16. 29, 30. Absalom is here hung up, in terror—to frighten children from disobedience to their parents; see Pro. 30. 17.

II. He is caught alive by one of the servants of David, who went straight, and told Joab in what postures he found that arch rebel, v. 10. Thus was he set up for a spectacle, as well as a mark, that the righteous might see him, and laugh at him, (Ps. 52. 6.) while he has this further vexation in his breast, that of all the friends he had courted and confided in, and thought he had sure in his interest, though he hung long enough to have been relieved, yet he had none at hand to disentangle him. Joab chides the man for not despatching him, (v. 11.) telling him, if he had given that bold stroke, he would have had him in ten half crowns, and a girdle, that is, a captain's emblems, which perhaps, was signified by the delivery of a belt or girdle; see Isa. 22. 21. But the man, though zealous enough against Absalom, justified himself in not doing it: "Despatch him!" says he, "not for all the world; it would have cost me my head: and thou thyself wast witness to the king's charge concerning him, v. 12.) and, for all thy talk, wouldest have been the first to execute him, v. 13. Those that love the treason, hate the traitor. Joab could not deny this, nor blame the man for his caution, and therefore makes him no answer, but breaks off the discourse, under colour of haste; (v. 14.) I may not tarry thus with thee. Superiors should consider a reproof before they give it, lest they be ashamed of it afterward, and find themselves unable to make it good.

III. He is (as above) embowelled and quartered, as traitors are, so pitifully mangled is he as he hangs there, and receives his death in such a manner, as to see all its terrors, and feel all its pains. 1. Joab throws three darts into his body, which put him, no doubt, to exquisite torment, while he is yet alive in the midst of the oak, v. 14. I know not whether Joab can be justified in this direct disobedience to the command of his sovereign; was this to deal gently with the offender? and did David have suffered him to do it, if he had been upon the spot? Yet this may be said for him, that while he broke the order of a too indulgent father, he did real service both to his king and country, and would have endangered the welfare of both, if he had not done it. Salus populi suprema lex—The safety of the people is the supreme law. 2. Joab's young men, ten of them, smite him, while he is despatched, v. 15. They surround him, made a ring about him in triumph, and then smote him, and slew him. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord. Joab, hereupon, sounds a retreat; (v. 16.) the danger is over now that Absalom is slain; the people will soon return to their allegiance to David, and therefore no more blood shall be spilt; no prisoners are taken, to be tried as traitors, and made examples: let every man return to his tent; they are all the king's subjects, all his good subjects again.

IV. His body is disposed of disgracefully, v. 17,
18. They cast it into a great pit in the wood; they would not bring it to his father, (for that circumstance would but have added to his grief,) nor would they preserve it to be buried, according to his order, but threw it into the pit with indignation, 26. for which he had been so much admired! Where are his aspiring projects, and the castles he had built in the air? His thoughts perish, and he with them. And, to signify how heavy his iniquity lay upon his bones, as the prophet speaks, (Isa. 52. 27.) they raised a great heap of stones upon him, to be a monument of his villany, and to signify that he ought to have been stoned as a rebellious son. Deut. 21. 21. Travellers say, that the place is taken notice of to this day, and that it is common for passengers to throw a stone to this heap, with words to this purport; Cursed be the memory of rebellious Absalom, and cursed for ever all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents. To aggravate the ignominy of Absalom's burial, the historian takes notice of a pillar he had erected in the valley of Kidron, near Jerusalem, to be a monument for himself, and keep his name in remembrance, (v. 18.) at the foot of which, it is probable, he designed to be buried. What foolish insignificant projects do proud men fill their heads with! And what care do many people take about the disposal of their bodies, when they are dead, that have no care at all what shall become of their precious souls. Absalom had had three sons, (ch. 14. 27.) but it seems, now he had none; God had taken them away by death; and justly is a rebellious son written childless; to make up the want, he erects this pillar for a memorial; yet, in this also, Providence crosses him, and a rude heap of stones shall be his monument instead of this marble pillar. Thus they that exalt themselves, shall be abased. His care was, to be basely named in remembrance, and it is so, to his everlasting dishonour. He could not but be content in the obscurity of the rest of David's sons, of whom nothing is recorded but their names, but would be famous, and is therefore justly made for ever infamous. The pillar shall bear his name, but not to his credit; it was designed for Absalom's glory, but proved Absalom's folly.

19. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run and bear the tidings, how that the Lord hath avenged him of his enemies. 20. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day; but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. 21. Then said Joab to Cushi, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cushi bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. 22. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, yet again to Joab, But, howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushi. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? 23. But, howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushi. 24. And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, a man running alone.

25. And the watchman cried, and told the king. And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. 26. And the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. 27. And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. 28. And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the Lord thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. 29. And the king said, Is the young man Absalomsafe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joabsenthe king's servant, and methy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. 30. And the king said unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside, and stood still. 31. And, behold, Cushi came; and Cushi said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. 32. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. 33. And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!
19. This he desired, not so much in hope of a reward, (he was above that,) as that he might have the pleasure and satisfaction of bringing the king, whom he loved, this good news. Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did, and that the tidings of Absalom's death, which must conclude the story, would spoil the acceptableness of all the rest; and he therefore thought it better to let it be the messenger of those tidings, (v. 20,) than for Ahimaaz to be brought by a footman than by a priest. However, when Cushi was gone, Ahimaaz begged hard for leave to run after him, and with great importunity obtained it, v. 22, 23. One would wonder why he should be so very fond of this office, when another was employed in it. (1.) Perhaps it was to show his swiftness; observing how heavily Cushi ran, and that he could outstrip him, though he was not the swiftest of men. He had a mind to show how fast he could run, and that he could go the farthest way about, and yet beat Cushi. No great praise for a priest to be swift of foot, yet perhaps Ahimaaz was proud of it. (2.) Perhaps it was in prudence and tenderness to the king, that he desired it. He knew he could get before Cushi, and therefore was willing to prepare the king, with an amusing story, for the plain truth Cushi would afterwards tell him. If bad news must come, it is best that it come gradually, and will be the better borne.

3. They are both discovered by the watchman on the gate of Mahanaim; Ahimaaz first, (v. 24,) for though Cushi had the lead, he soon overran him; but, presently after, Cushi appeared, v. 26. (1.) When the king hears of one running alone, he concludes he is an express; (v. 25,) If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth; for if they had been beaten, and were flying back from the enemy, there would have been many. (2.) When he hears it is Ahimaaz, he concludes he brings good news, v. 27. Ahimaaz, it seems, was so famous for running, that he was known by it at a distance; and so eminently good, that it was taken for granted, if he be the messenger, the news must needs be good: he is a good man, zealously affected to the king's interest, and would not bring bad news. It is a pity but the good tidings if the gospel should always be brought by good men; and how welcome should they be to us for their message-sake!

4. Ahimaaz is very forward to proclaim the victory; (v. 28,) cries at a distance, Peace, there is peace: peace after war, which is doubly welcome. All is well, my lord O king; the danger is over, and we may return, when the king pleases, to Jerusalem. And when he comes near, he tells him the news more particularly. They are all cut off, that lifted up their hand against the king; and, as becomes a priest, while he gives the king the joy of it, he gives God the glory of it, the God of peace and war, the God of salvation and victory; Blessed be the Lord thy God, that has done this for thee, as thy God, pursuant to the promises made to uphold thy throne, ch. 7. 16. When he said this, he fell down upon his face, not only to the king, but in humble adoration of God, whose name he praises for this success. By directing David thus to give God thanks for his victory, he prepares him for the approaching news of its ally. The more our hearts are fixed, and enlarged, in thanksgiving to God for our mercies, the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflictions of the flesh. For though David is so much a father, that he forgets he is asking for his own life, he therefore cannot rejoice in the news of a victory, till he know whether the young man Absalom be safe; for whom his heart seems to tremble, almost as Elie's, in a like case, for the ark of God. Ahimaaz soon discerns what Joab intimated to him, that the death of the king's son would make the tidings of the day very unwellcome, and therefore in his report leaves that matter doubtful; and though he gives occasion to suspect how it was, yet, that the thunderclap might not come suddenly upon the poor perplexed king, he refers him to the next messenger, whom they saw coming, for a more particular account of it. "When Joab sent the king's servant, namely, Cushi, and me thy servants, to carry the tidings to thee of the death of Absalom, they were occasioned by something extraordinary, as you will hear by and by; but I have nothing to say about it, I have delivered that which was my message, Cushi is better able to inform you than I am. I will not be the messenger of evil tidings; nor will I pretend to know that which I cannot give a perfect account of." He is therefore bid to stand by till Cushi came; (v. 28,) and now, we may suppose, he gives the king a more particular account of the victory, which was the thing he came to bring the news of.

5. Cushi, the slow post, proves the sure one, and beside the confirmation of the news of the victory which Ahimaaz had brought, v. 31, The Lord has avenged thee through us of all them that rose up against thee, he satisfies the king's inquiry concerning Absalom, v. 32. Is the king, says David, well? says Cushi, this is it. Cushi did not mean that the news was so properly, that, how unwelcome soever the message was, the messenger could have no blame. He does not tell him plainly that Absalom was hanged, and run through, and buried under a heap of stones; but only that his fate was what he desired might be the fate of all that were traitors against the king, his crown and dignity. The end of my lord the king; whatever they are, and all that resteth at the right hand of the young man; as that young man is, I need wish them no worse.

II. We are told how David received the intelligence; he forgets all the joy of his deliverance, and is quite overwhelmed with the sorrowful tidings of Absalom's death, v. 33. As soon as he perceived by Cushi's expression that Absalom was dead, he asked no more questions, but fell into a passion of weeping, retired from company, and abandoned himself to sorrow. As he was going up to the chamber, he was overheard to say, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; alas, for thee! I lament thee: how art thou fallen! Would God I had died for thee, and that thou hadst remained alive this day; so the Chaldee adds, O Absalom, my son, my son. I wish I could see reason to think that this arise from a concern about Absalom's everlasting state, and what he had to do to get him, because he had good hopes of his own salvation, and of Absalom's repentance, if he had lived: it rather seems to have been spoken inconsiderately, and in a passion, and it was his infirmity. He is to be blamed, 1. For showing so great a fondness for a graceless, however handsome and witty, son, that was justly abandoned both of God and man. 2. For quarrelling, not only with Divine Providence, as to what disposals of which he ought silently to acquiesce in, but divine justice, the justice of which he ought to adore and subscribe to: see how Bildad argues, (Job 8. 3, 4,) If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away in their transgression, thou shouldst submit, for doth God pervert judgment? See Lev. 10. 3. For opposing the justice of the nation, which, as king, he was intrusted with the administration of, and which, to serve the public interest, he ought to prefer before any natural affection. 4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom, from Absalom's wicked designs, as if these were no mercy, nor worth giving thanks for, because it cost the life of Absalom. 5. For indulging a strong passion, and speaking unad-
wisely with his lips. He now forgot his own reasonings upon the death of another child, (Can I bring him back again?) and his own resolution to keep his mouth as with a bridle, when his heart was hot within him as well as his own practice at other times, when he quieted himself as a child that was weaned from his mother. The best men are not always in a good frame; what we over-loved, we are apt to over-grieve for: in each affection, therefore, it is wisdom to have rule over our own spirits, and to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us, which was very dear to us. Losers think they may have leave to speak; but little said is soon amended. The penitent patient sufferer sisteth alone, and keepeth silence; (Lam. 3. 28.) or rather, with Job, says Blessed be the name of the Lord.

CHAP. XIX.

We left David's army in triumph, and yet David himself in tears: now here we have, 1. His return to himself, by the persuasion of Joab, v. 1. II. His return to his kingdom from his present banishment. 1. The men of Israel were forward themselves to bring him back, v. 9. 10. 2. The men of Judah were dealt with by David's agents to do it, (v. 11, 14.) and did it, v. 15. III. At the king's coming over Jordan, Shimei's treason is pardoned. Joab had already found Mephibosheth's failure is excused, (v. 24. 30.) and Barzillai's kindness is thankfully owned, and recompensed to his son, v. 31. 40. IV. The men of Israel quarrelled with the men of Judah for not calling them to the ceremony of the king's restoration, which occasioned a new rebellion in the next chapter, v. 41. 43.

1. AND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. 2. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day how the king was grieved for his son. 3. And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. 4. But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son! 5. And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines; 6. In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends: for thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. 7. Now therefore, arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the Lord, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befell thee from thy youth until now. 8. Then the king arose, and sat in the gate. And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate. And all the people came before the king; for Israel had fled, every man to his tent.

Soon after the messengers had brought the news of the defeat and death of Absalom to the ears of Mahanaim, Joab and his victorious army followed, to grace the king's triumphs, and receive his further orders. Now here we are told,

I. What a damp it was to them to find the king in tears for Absalom's death, which they construed as a token of his displeasure against them for what they had done, whereas they expected him to have met them with joy and thanks for their good services. It was told Joab, v. 1. The report of it ran through the army, (v. 2.) how the king was grieved for his son. The people will take particular notice what their princes say and do: the more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely, and to govern our passions strictly.

When they came to the city, they found the king in close mourning, v. 4. He covered his face, and would not so much as look up, nor take any notice of the generals, when they attended him. It could not but surprise them to find, 1. How the king proclaimed his passion, which he ought to have been ashamed of, and which he should have striven to smooth and conceal, if he had consulted either his reputation or courage, which was lessened by his mean submission to the tyranny of so absurd a passion, or his interest in the people, which would be prejudiced by his dishonouring what was witnessed in zeal for his honour and the public safety. Yet see how he avows his grief, He cries with a loud voice, O my son Absalom. "My servants are all come home safe, but where is my son? He is dead; and, dying in sin, I fear, he is lost for ever: I cannot now say, I shall go to him, for my soul shall not be gathered with such sinners; what shall be done for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son?" 2. How he profited by his passion, for till the army was come up to him, which must be some time after he received the first intelligence. If he had contented himself with giving vent to his passion for an hour or two, when he first heard the news, it had been excusable, but to continue it thus for so bad a son as Absalom, like Jacob for so good a son as Joseph, with a resolution to go to the grave mourning, and to stain his triumphs with his tears, was very unwise and unworthy.

Now, see how ill this was taken by the people. They were loath to blame the king, for whatever he did used to please them, (ch. 3. 36.) but they took it as a great mortification to them. Their victory was turned into mourning, v. 2. They stole into the city as men ashamed, v. 3. In compliment to their sovereign, they would not rejoice in that which they perceived to be so offensive to him, and yet that could not but be uneasy that they were thus obliged to conceal their joy. Superiors ought not to put such hardships as these on their inferiors. II. How plainly and vehemently Joab reproved David, for this indiscreet management of himself in this critical juncture. David never more needed the hearts of his subjects than now, nor was ever more concerned to secure his interest in their affections; and therefore, whatever he could do, and the greatest wrong imaginable to his friends that adhered to him, Joab therefore censures him, v. 5-7. where he speaks a great deal of reason, but not with the respect and deference which he owed to his prince. Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? A plain case may be fairly pleaded with those that are above us, and they may be reproved for what they do amiss, but it must not be done with rudeness and insolence.
David did indeed need to be roused and alarmed; and Joab thought it no time to daily with him. If superiors do that which is foolish, they must neither think it strange, nor take it ill if their inferiors tell them of it, perhaps too bluntly. 1. Joab magnifies the service of David's soldiers: "The duty they have by thy life, and therefore deserve to be taken notice of, and have reason to resent it, if they be not." It is implied, that Absalom, whom he honoured with his tears, sought his ruin, and the ruin of his family, while those, whom by his tears he puts a slight upon, were such as preserved from ruin him and all that was dear to him. Great mischiefs have arisen to princes from their contempt ofetics. 2. He aggregates the discouragement David had given them; "Thou hast shamed their faces, for while they have shown such a value for thy life, thou hast shown no value for their's, but preferrest a spoiled wicked youth, a false traitor to his king and country, whom we are happily rid of, before all thy wise counsellors, brave commanders, and loyal subjects. What can be more absurd than to love thine enemies and hate thy friends?" 3. He advises him to present himself immediately at the head of his troops, to smile upon them, welcome them home, congratulate their successes, and return them thanks for their services. Even those that may be commanded, yet expect to be thanked, when they do well, and ought to be. He threatens him with another rebellion if he would not do this, intimating, that rather than serve so ungrateful a prince, he himself would head a revolt from him, and then, (so confident is Joab of his own interest in the people,) "There will not tarry with thee one man. If I go, they all go. Thou hast now nothing to mourn for; but if thou persist in thy murmurs, I will bring upon thee" (as Josephus expresses it) "real and more bitter sorrow." III. How prudently and mildly David took the reproof and counsel given him, v. 6. He shook off his grief, and set his head, and washed his face, that he might not appear unto men to mourn, and then made his appearance in public in the gate, which was as the guild-hall of the city. Hither the people flocked to him to congratulate his and their safety, and all was well. Note, When we are convinced of a fault, we must amend, though we are told of it by our inferiors, and indecently, or in heat and passion. 9. And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. 10. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle. Now, therefore, why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? 11. And king David sent to Zadok and to Abia-thar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house. 12. Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh: wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? 13. And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab. 14. And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man; so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou, and all thy servants. 15. So the king returned, and came to Jordan. And Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

It is strange that David did not immediately, upon the defeat and dispersion of Absalom's forces, march with all expedition back to Jerusalem, to regain the possession of his capital city, while the rebels were all dispirited, and the enemy could rally again. What occasion was there to bring them back? Could not he himself go back with the victorious army he had with him in Gilgal? He could, no doubt; but, 1. He would come back as a prince, with the consent and unanimous approbation of the people, and not as a conqueror forcing his way: he would restore their liberties, and not take occasion to seize them, or encroach upon them. 2. He would come back in peace and safety, and be sure that he should meet with no difficulty or opposition in his return; and therefore would be satisfied that the people were well affected to him before he would stir. 3. He would come back in honour, and like himself; and therefore would come back, not at the head of his forces, but in the arms of his subjects; for the prince that has wisdom and goodness enough to make himself his people's darling, without doubt, looks greater, and makes a much better figure, than the prince that has strength enough to make himself his people's terror. It is resolved therefore that David must be brought back to Jerusalem his own city, and his own house there, with some ceremony, and here we have that matter concerted.

I. The men of Israel (that is, the ten tribes) were the first that talked of it, v. 9, 10. The people were at strife about it; it was the great subject of discourse and dispute throughout all the country. Some perhaps opposed it; "Let him either come back himself, or stay where he is;" others appeared zealous for it, and reasoned as follows here, to further the design; 1. That David had formerly helped them, had fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and done them much service, and therefore it was a shame that he should continue unworthy of their country, whom he had been in a benefactor to it. Note, Good services done to the public, though they may be forgotten for a while, yet will be remembered again when men come to their right minds. 2. That Absalom had now disappointed them. "We were foolishly sick of the cedar, and chose the brach to reign over us; but we have had enough of him, he is consumed, and therefore we must not do a strange, or narrow, and heinous thing, but go to the king, and by his presence and consent again return to our allegiance, and think of bringing the king back." Perhaps this was all the strife among them, not a dispute whether the king should be brought back or no, (all agreed it was to be done,) but whose fault it was, that it was not done; as is usual in such cases, every one justified himself, and blamed his neighbour. The people laid the fault on the elders, and the elders on the people, and each tribe upon the other. Many accusations to the doing of a good work are laudable, but not mutual accusations for the not doing of it: for usually when public services are neglected, all sides must share in the blame; each might do more than he does, in reformation of manners, healing of divisions, and the like.

II. The men of Judah, by David's contrivance, were the first that did it. It is strange that they, being David's own tribe, were not so forward as the
rest. David had intelligence of the good disposition of all the rest toward him, but nothing from Judah, though he had always been particularly careful of
them. But we do not always find the most kindness from those whom we have most reason to expect it. Yet David would not return till he knew the sense of his own tribe, (Judah was his lawful
Ps. 60. 7.) that his way home might be the more clear.

1. He employs Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, to treat with the elders of Judah; and to excite them to give the king an invitation back to his house, even to his house, which was the glory of their tribe, v. 11, 12. No men more proper to negotiate this affair than the two priests, who were
him to David's interest, were prudent men, and had great influence with the people. Perhaps the men of Judah were remiss and careless, and did not,
not because nobody put them on to do it, and then it was proper to stir them up to do it. Many will follow, who, in a good work, will not lead: it is a pity that they should continue idle for want of being spoken to. Or, perhaps, they were so sensible of the greatness of the provocation they had given to David. Absalom, Abigail. Absalom was afraid to bring him back, despising of his favour; he therefore warrants his agents to assure them of it, with this reason, "Ye are my brethren, his bone and my flesh, and therefore I cannot be severe with you." The Son of David has been pleased to call us brethren, his bone and his flesh, which encourages us to hope that we shall find favour with him. Or, perhaps, they were willing to see what the rest of the tribes would do, before they stirred, with which they are here upbraided; "The speech of all Israel is come to the king to invite him back, and shall Judah be the last, that should have been the first? Where is now the celebrated bravery of that royal tribe? Where its loyalty?" Note, We should be stirred up to that which is great and good, by the examples both of our ancestors and of our neighbours, and by the consideration of our rank. Let not the first in dignity be last in duty.

2. He particularly courts into his interest Amasa, who had been Absalom's general, but was his own
kinsman too as Joab, v. 13. He owns him for his
kinsman, and promises him that, if he would appear for him now, he would make him captain-general of all his forces in the room of Joab, would not only pardon him, (which, it may be, Amasa questioned,) but prefer him. Sometimes there is nothing tender in preserving the friendship of one that has been an enemy. Amasa's interest might do David good service at this juncture. But if David did wisely for himself in designating Amasa for this post, (Joab being now grown intolerably haughty,) he did not do kindly by Amasa in letting his design be known, for it occasioned his death by Joab's hand, ch. 20. 10.

3. The rest was hereby gained. He bowed the heart of the men of Judah to pass a vote, nemine contradictente—unanimously, for the recall of the king, v. 14. God's providence, by the priests' persuasions and Amasa's interest, brought them to this resolve. David stirred not till he received this invitation, and then he came as far back as Jordan, at which river they were to meet him, v. 15. Our Lord's friends will not invite him to serve the throne in their hearts, and not till he is invited. He first bows the heart, and makes it willing in the day of his power, and then rules in the midst of his enemies, Ps. 110. 2, 3.

16. And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hasted, and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. 17. And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king. 18. And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan; 19. And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. 20. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king. 21. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the Lord's anointed? 22. And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? Shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? For do not I know that I am this day king over Israel? 23. Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.

Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua. David, in his aestival flight, remembered God particularly from the land of Jordan, (Ps. 42. 6.) and now that land, more than any other, was graced with the glories of his return. David's soldiers furnished themselves with accommodations for their passage over this river, but, for his own family, a ferry-boat was sent on purpose, v. 18. A fleet of boats, say some; a bridge of boats was made, say others; the best convenience they had to serve him with.

Two remarkable persons met him on the banks of Jordan, who had abused him wretchedly when he was in his flight.

I. Ziba, who had abused him with his fair tongue, and, by accusing his master, had obtained from the king a grant of his estate, ch. 16. 4. A greater abuse he could not have done him, than, by imposing upon his credulity, to draw him in to do a thing so unkind to the son of his friend Jonathan. He comes now, with a retinue of sons and servants, to meet the king, (v. 17.) that he might obtain the king's favour, and so come off the better, when Mephibosheth would shortly undeceive him, and clear himself, v. 26.

II. Shimei, who had abused him with his foul tongue, railed at him, and cursed him, ch. 16. 5. If David had been defeated, no doubt, he would have continued to trample upon him; but he have gloried in what he had done; but now that he sees him coming home in triumph, and returning to his throne, he thinks it his interest to make his peace with him. Those who now slight and abuse the son of David, would be glad to make their peace too, when he shall come in his glory; but it will be too late. Shimei, to recommend himself to the king. 1. Came with good company, with the men
of Judah, as one in their interest. 2. He brought a regiment of the men of Benjamin with him, a thousand, of which, perhaps, he was chieflie, or commander in chief, offering his own and their service to the king; or, perhaps, they were volunteers, whom by his interest he had got together to meet the king, which was the more obliging, because of all the tribes of Israel, there were none, except these and Judah, that appeared to have the least reason to suspect him of any desertion. He therefore hastened to do; he lost no time; Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way. Here is, (1.) The criminal's submission; (v. 18-20.) He fell down before the king, as a penitent, as a supplicant; and that he might be thought sincere, he did it publicly before all David's servants, and his friends the men of Judah, yea, and before his house, his presence chamber. What he did, he hardened to do; he lost no time; Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way.

3. What he did, he made it known. He owned his crime, Thy servant doth know that I have sinned; he aggravates it, I did it perversely; he begs the king's pardon, Let not the king impute iniquity to thy servant, that is, deal with me as I deserve: he intimates, that it was below the king's great and generous mind to take it to his heart; and pleads his early return to his allegiance, that he was the first of David's princes that in the beginning of David's reign had distinguished themselves from Judah, by their adherence to Ishbosheth (ch. 2. 10.) that came to meet the king. He came first, that by his example of duty, the rest might be disposed, and by his experience of the king's clemency, the rest might be encouraged, to follow.

(2.) A motion made for judgment against him; (v. 21.) Shall not Shimei be put to death for a traitor? Let him, of all men, be made an example. Abishai moved it, who would have ventured his life to have been his death, then when he was cursing, ch. 16. 9. David did not think fit to have it done then, because his judicial power was cut short, but now that it was restored, why should not the law have its course? Abishai herein consulted what he supposed to be David's feelings more than his true interest. Princes have need to arm themselves against temptations to severity.

(3.) His discharge by the king's order, v. 22, 23. He rejected Abishai's motion with displeasure; What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? The less we have to do with those who are of an angry revengeful spirit, and who put us upon doing what is harsh and rigorous, the better. He looks upon these as the avengers of his government, and as he himself was their prince, so he would have them to punish those who pretended friendship and zeal for his honour. Those who advise us to what is wrong, are really Satan's adversaries to us. [1.] They were adversaries to his inclination, which was to clemency. He knew that he was this day king in Israel, restored to, and re-established in, his kingdom, and therefore his honour inclined him to forgive. It is the glory of kings to forgive those that humble and surrender themselves: Satha est prostrate leon---Sith it suffices the lion, that he has laid his victim prostrate. His joy inclined him to forgive: the pleasantness of his spirit on this great occasion forbade the entrance of any thing that was sour and peevish: joyful days should be forgiving days. Yet this was not all; his experience of God's mercy in restoring him to his kingdom, his exclusion from which, he attributed to himself, inclin'd him to show mercy: Shimei. They that are forgiven, must forgive. David had severely revived the abuses done to his ambassadors by the Ammonites (ch. 12. 31.) but easily passes by the abuse done to himself by an Israélique. That was an affront to Israel in general, and touched the honour of his crown and kingdom; this was purely personal, and therefore (according to the usual disposition of good men) he could the more easily forgive it. [2.] They were adversaries to his interest: if he should put Shimei to death, who cursed him, they would expect the same fate, who had taken up arms, and actually levied war against him, which would drive them from him, while he was endeavouring to draw them to him. Acts of severity are seldom acts of policy: The throne is established by mercy. Shimei, hereupon, has his pardon signed and sealed with an oath; yet bound, no doubt, to his good behaviour, and liable to be prosecuted if he afterward misbehaved; and thus was he reserved to be, in due time, as much a monument of the justice of the government, as he was now of its clemency, and in both of its prudence.

24. And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace. 25. And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said to him, Wherefore wentest thou not thou with me, Mephibosheth? 26. And he answered, My Lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. 27. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do, therefore, what is good in thine eyes. 28. For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table. What right, therefore, have I yet to cry any more unto the king? 29. And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. 30. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

The day of David's return was a day of bringing to remembrance, a day of account, in which what had past in his flight, was called over again; among other things, after Shimei's, comes Mephibosheth's case, to be inquired into, and he himself brings it on. 1. He went down in the crowd to meet the king, (v. 24.) and, as a proof of the sincerity of his joy in the king's return, we are here told what a true mourner he was for the king's banishment. During that melancholy time, when one of the greatest glories of Israel was departed, Mephibosheth continued in a very melancholy state. He was never trimmed, nor put on clean linen, but wholly neglected himself, as one abandoned to grief for the king's affliction, and the kingdom's misery. In times of public calamity, we ought to abridge ourselves of the delights of sense, in conformity to the season. There are times when God calls to weeping and mourning, and we must comply with the call.

2. When the king came to Jerusalem, (since he
1. and, hear 35. will

This shows that Ziba's suggestion was improbable: for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher, when he lived so easily, so happily, as he did? And could he be so very disinclined as to design any harm to David, of whom great kindness had been shown him? 

3. David hereupon recalls the sequestration of Mephibosheth's estate; being deceived in his grant, he revokes it, and confirms his former settlement of it; I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land; (v. 29.) that is, 'Let it be as I first ordered it, (ch. 9. 10.) the property shall still be vested in thee, but Ziba shall have the occupancy, he shall till the land, paying thee a rent.' Thus Mephibosheth is where he was, no harm is done, only Ziba goes away unpunished for his false and malicious information against David; David either feared him too much, or loved him too well, to do justice upon him according to that law, Deut. 19. 18, 19. and he was now in the humour of forgiving, and resolved to make every body easy.

4. Mephibosheth drowns all his cares about his estate in his joy for the king's return; (v. 30.) "Yea, let him take all, the presence and favour of the king will make him instead of all." A good man can contentedly bear his own private losses and disappointments, while he sees Israel in peace, and the throne of the Son of David exalted and established. Ziba, take all, so that David may be in peace.

31. And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. 32. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, even fourscore years old: and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim; for he was a very great man. 33. And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. 34. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? 35. I am this day fourscore years old; and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? 36. Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king; and why should the king recompense me with such a reward? 37. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my father and of my mother: but, behold, thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king; and do to him what shall seem good unto thee. 38. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee. 39. And all the people went over Jordan. And when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him; and he returned unto his own place.

David had already graced the triumphs of his restoration with the generous remission of the injuries that had been done him; we have him here gracing them with the no less generous reward of the kindnesses that had been shown him. Barzillai, the Gileadite, who had a noble seat at Rogelim, not far from Mahanaim, was the man who, of all the nobility and gentry of that country, had been most kind to David in his distress. If Absalom had prevailed, it is likely he might have suffered for it; but now he and his shall be no losers by it.

Here is,

I. Barzillai's great respect to David, not only as a good man, but as his rightful sovereign. He provided him with sustenance, for himself and family, while he lay at Mahanaim, (v. 32.) God had given him a large estate, for he was a very great man, and, it seems, he had a large heart to do good with it: what else but that, is a large estate good for? To reduced greatness, generosity obliges us, and to oppressed goodness, pity obliges us, to be in a particular manner kind, to the utmost of our power. Barzillai, to show that he was not weary of David, though he was so great a favour to him, attended him to Jordan, and went over with him, (v. 31.) Let subjects learn hence, to render tribute to whom tribute is due, and honour to whom honour, Rom. 13. 7.

II. The kind invitation David gave him to court, (v. 33.) Come thou over with me. He invited him, 1. That he might have the pleasure of his company, and the benefit of his counsel; for we may suppose that he was very wise and good, as well as very rich, else he had not been called here a very great man; for it is what a man is, more than what he has, that bespeaks him truly great. 2. That he might have an opportunity of returning his kindness; "I will feed thee with me. then shall fare as sumptuously as I fare, and this, at Jerusalem, the
royal and holy city." David did not take Barzillai’s kindness to him as a debt, (he was none of those arbitrary princes, who think that whatever their subjects have, is their’s when they please,) but accepted it and rewarded it as a favour. We must always study to be grateful to our friends, especially to those who have helped us in distress.

III. Barzillai’s reply to this invitation. Wherein, Barzillai’s generosity in making him this offer, lessening his service, and magnifying the king’s return for it; Why should the king recompense it with such a reward? v. 36. Will the master thank that servant who only does what was his duty to do? He thought he had done himself honour enough, in doing the king any service. Thus when the saints shall be called to inherit the kingdom, in consideration of what they have done for the Lord, they will be amazed at the disproportion between the service and the recompense; (Matth. 25. 37.) Lord when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee?

2. He declines accepting the invitation, begs his majesty’s pardon for refusing so generous an offer: he should think himself very happy in being near the king, but, (1.) He is old, and unfit to remove at all, especially to courts and business; the king, v. 34. Why should I go up with the king to Jerusalem? I can do no service there, in the council, the camp, the treasury, or the courts of justice; for how long have I to live? v. 34. Shall I think of going into business, now that I am going out of the world? Old, and unfit for the diversions of the court, which will be ill-bestowed, and even thrown away, upon one that can relieve them so little, v. 35. As it was in Moses’s time, so it was in Barzillai’s, and think it would now be, that if men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, their strength then is labour and sorrow, Ps. 90. 10. These were then, and are still, years of which men say they have no pleasure in them, Eccl. 12. 1. Dainties are insipid, when desire fails; and songs to the aged ear are little better than those sung to a heavy heart; how should they choose, when the daughters of music are brought low? Let those that are old, learn of Barzillai to be dead to the delights of sense; let grace second nature, and make a virtue of the necessity. Nay, Barzillai, being old, thinks he shall be a burthen to the king, rather than any credit to him; and a good man would not go any where to be burthensome, or if, he must be so, will rather be so to his own house than to another’s. (2.) He is dying, and must begin to think of his long journey, in removal out of the world, v. 37. It is good for us all, but it especially becomes old people, to think and speak much of dying. “Talk of going to court!” says Barzillai; “let me go home and die in my own city, the place of my Father’s sepulchre; let me die by the grave of my father, that my bones may be quietly carried to the place of their rest. The grave is ready for me, let me go and get ready for it, go and die in my nest.” He desires the king to be kind to him, and go to him at Chimham, Let him go over with my lord the king, and have preferment at court; what favour is done to him, Barzillai will take as done to himself. They that are old must not grudge young people those delights which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, or oblige them to retire as they do. Barzillai will go back himself, but he will not make Chimham go back with him; though he could ill spare Chimham, thinking it would gratify and improve him, the king is willing to do it.

IV. David’s farewell to Barzillai. 1. He sends him back into his country with a kiss and a blessing, (v. 39.) signifying that, in gratitude for his kindesses, he would love him and pray for him; and with a promise that, whatever request he should at any time make to him, he would be ready to oblige him; (v. 48.) Whatever thou shalt think of; when thou comest home, to ask of me, that will I do for thee. What is the chief excellency of power, but this, that gives men a capacity of doing the more good? 2. He takes Chimham forward with him, and leaves it to Barzillai to choose his preferment; I will do to him, what shall seem good unto thee, v. 38. And, it should seem, Barzillai, who had experienced the innocence and safety of retirement, begged a country-seat for him near Jerusalem, but not in it; for, long after, we read of a place near Beth-lehem, David’s city, which is called, The habitation of Chimham, allotted him, probably, not out of the crown-lands, or the forfeited estates, but David’s paternal estate.

40. Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel. 41. And, behold, all the men of Israel came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen thee away, and have brought the king and his household, and all David’s men with him, over Jordan? 42. And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us; wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king’s cost? or hath he given us any gift? 43. And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us, that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

David came over Jordan, attended and assisted by the men of Judah; when he was advanced as far as Gilgal, the first stage on this side Jordan, half the people of Israel, that is, of their elders and great men, were come to wait upon him, to kiss his hand, and congratulate him on his return, but found they came too late to witness the solemnity of his last appearance. This put them out of humour, and occasioned a quarrel between them and the men of Judah, which was a damp to the joy of the day, and the beginning of further mischief. Here is, 1. The complaint which the men of Israel brought to the king against the men of Judah, (v. 41.) that they had performed the ceremony of bringing the king over Jordan, and not given them notice, that they might have come to join in it. This was reflected upon them, as if they were not so well affected to the king and his restoration as the men of Judah were, whereas the king himself knew that they had spoken of it, before the men of Judah thought of it, v. 11. It seemed likewise as if they intended to monopolize the king’s favours when he was come back, and to be locked upon as his only friends. See what mischief comes from pride and jealousy.

2. The excuse which the men of Judah made for themselves, v. 42. (1.) They plead relation to the king; “He is near of kin to us, and therefore, in a matter of mere ceremony, as this was, we may claim precedence. It was into our country that he was to be brought, and therefore who so fit as we to bring
him." (2.) They deny the insinuated charge of self-seeking in what they had done. "Have we eaten at all of the king's cost? No, we have all borne our own charges. Hath he given us any gifts? No, we have no design to engross the advantages of his return; you are come time enough to share in them." Too many that attend princes, do it only for what they can get.

3. The men of Israel's vindication of their charge, v. 43. They pleaded, "We have ten parts in the king," (Judah having Simeon only, whose lot lay within, to join with him,) "and therefore it is a slight upon us, that our advice was not asked about bringing back the king." See how uncertain the multitude is; they all desire favoring against the king, to drive him out; now they are striving about him, which shall honour him most; a good man and a good cause will thus recover their credit and interest, though, for a time, they may seem to have lost them. See what is commonly the origin of strife; nothing so much as impudence of contempt, or the least seeming slight. The men of Judah had done better, if they had taken their brethren's advice, and had let not so slight a cause have so much ado. The men of Israel lay it so much to heart? If a good work be done, and well done, let us not be displeased, nor the work disparaged, though we had no hand in it.

Lastly, The scripture takes notice, by way of blame, of the contending parties managed the cause with most passion: The words of the men of Judah, v. 44. and the words of the men of Israel, v. 45. Though we have reason and right on our side, if we speak it with fierceness, God takes notice of it, and is much displeased with it.

CHAP. XX.

How do the clouds return after the rain? No sooner is one of David's troubles over, than another arises, as it were, out of the ashes of the former, wherein the threatening is fulfilled, that the sword should never depart from his house. I. Before he reaches Jerusalem, a new rebellion is raised by Sheba, v. 1, 2. II. His first work, when he comes to Jerusalem, is, to condemn his counsels to perpetual imprisonment, v. 3. III. Amasa, whom he intrusts to raise an army against Sheba, is too slow in his motions, which puts him into a fright, v. 4 - 6. IV. One of his generals barbarously murders the other, when they are taken together, v. 7 - 13. V. Sheba is at length shut up in the city of Abel, (v. 14, 15,) but the citizens delivered him up to Judah, and so his rebellion was crushed, v. 16 - 22. This chapter concludes with a short account of David's great officers, v. 23. - 26.

A ND there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite; and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. 2. So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem. 3. And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them: so they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood. David, in the midst of his triumphs, has here the affliction to see his kingdom disturbed, and his family disgraced.

I. His subjects revolting from him at the instigation of a man of Belial, whom they followed when they forsook the man after God's own heart. Observe, 1. That this happened immediately upon the crushing of Absalom's rebellion. We must not think it strange, while we are in this world, if the end of one trouble be the beginning of another; deep sometimes calls unto deep. 2. That the people were now just returning to their allegiance, when, of a sudden, they flew off from it. When a reconciliation is newly made, it ought to be handled with great tenderness and caution, lest the peace break again before it be settled. A broken bone, when it is set, must have time to knit. 3. That the ringlet, and the remainder of the kingdom, belonging to the remainder of the family, is. Lastly, of the events of the king's hasty return, v. 1.) who had his habitation in mount Ephraim, v. 21. Shimei and he were both of Saul's tribe, and both retained the ancient grudge of that house. Against the kingdom of the Messiah there is an hereditary enmity in the serpent's seed, and a succession of attempts to overthrow it; (Ps. 2. 1, 2,) but He that sits in Heaven, laughs at them all. 4. That the occasion of it was that foolish quarrel, which was the means of the king's return; this was the occasion of a chapter, between the elders of Israel and the elders of Judah, about bringing the king back. It was a point of honour that was disputed between them, which had most interest in David; "We are more numerous," say the elders of Israel; "We are nearer akin to him," say the elders of Judah. Now one would think David very safe and happy, when his subjects are striving which shall love him best, but be mindful that we have to do with a blind, that strife proves the occasion of a rebellion. The men of Israel complained to David of the slight which the men of Judah had put upon them; if he had now countenanced their complaint, commended their zeal, and returned them thanks for it, he might have confirmed them in his interest; but he seemed partial to his own tribe: their words prevailed above the words of the men of Israel; as some read the last words of the foregoing chapter. David inclined to justify them; which when the men of Israel perceived, they flew off with indignation; "If the king will suffer himself to be engaged by the men of Judah, let him and them make the best of one another, and we will set up one for ourselves. We thought we had ten parts in David, but that will not be allowed us; the men of Judah tell us, in effect, you have no part in him, and now we have none, nor will we attend him any further, in his return to Jerusalem, nor own him for our king." This Sheba proclaimed, (v. 1.) who, probably, was a man of note, and had been active in Absalom's rebellion; the disgusted Israelites took the hint, and went up from after David to follow Sheba, (v. 2.) that is, the generality of them did so, only the men of Judah adhered to him. We learn hence, (1.) That it is as impolitic for princes to be partial in their attentions to their subjects, as it is for parents to be so to their children; both should carry it with an even hand. (2.) Those know not what they do, that make light of the affections of their inferiors, by not countenancing and accepting them. Their hatred may be feared, whose love is thus poisoned. (3.) Sheba, a Benjamite chief, is as the letting forth of water; it is therefore wise to leave it off before it be meddled with, Prov. 17. 14. How great a matter is but a little of this fire kindle! (4.) The perverting of words is the subverting of peace; and much mischief is made by forcing invidious constructions upon what is said and written, and drawing consequences that were never intended. The men of Judah said, The king is near to kin to us, by which, say the men of Israel, in a mean, We have no part in him; whereas they meant no such thing. (5.) People are very apt to run into
extremes. We have ten parts in David, said they; and almost in the next breath, We have no part in him. To-day, Hosanna, to-morrow, Crucify.

11. His counsels shuts up and imprisoned for life, and he himself under the necessity of doing it, because they had been defiled by Absalom, v. 3. David had multiplied wives, contrary to the law, and they proved a grief and shame to him. Those whom he had sinned taken pleasure in, he was now, 1. Obliged, in duty, to put away, they being rendered naught to him, by the v2 uncleanness his son and committed with them. They whom he had loved, must now be loathed. 2. Obliged, in prudence, to shut up in privacy, not to be seen abroad for shame, lest the sight of them should give occasion to people to speak of what Absalom had done to them, which ought not to be so much as named, 1 Cor. 5. 1. That that villain might be buried in oblivion, they must be buried in obscurity. 3. Obliged, in justice, to shut up in prison, to punish them for their easy submission to Absalom's lust, desiring, perhaps, of David's return, and giving him up for gone. Let none expect to do ill, and fare well.

4. Then said the king to Amasa, Assembly me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here present. 5. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah; but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him. 6. And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants, and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us. 7. And there went out after him, Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. 8. When they were at the great stone which is in Gideon, Amasa went before them. And Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his lioms in the sheath thereof: and as he went forth it fell out. 9. And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. 10. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again: and he died. So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. 11. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David, let him go after Joab. 12. And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway. And when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him stood still. 13. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

We have here Amasa's fall, just as he began to rise. He was nephew to David, (ch. 17. 25.) had been Absalom's general, and commander in chief of his rebellion, v. 7. But being routed there came into David's interest, up, v. 4. It seems that he should be general of his forces instead of Joab. Sheba's rebellion gives David an occasion to make good that promise sooner than he could wish, but Joab's envy and emulation made it injurious both to him and David.

1. Amasa has a commission to raise forces for the suppressing of Sheba's rebellion, and is ordered to do it with all expedition, v. 5. It seems, the men of Judah, though forward to attend the king's triumphs, were backward enough to fight his battles; else, when they were all in a body attending him to Jerusalem, they might immediately have pursued Sheba, and have crushed that cockatrice in the egg; but most love a loyalty, as well as a religion, that is cheap and easy. Many boast of their being akin to Christ, that yet are very loth to venture for him. An agent is sent to assemble the men of Judah within three days; but he finds them so backward and unready, that he cannot do it within the time appointed, (v. 5.) though the promotion of Amasa, who had been their general under Absalom, was very agreeable, and a proof of the clemency of David's government.

2. Upon Amasa's delay, Abishai, the brother of Joab, is ordered to take the guards and standing forces, and with them to pursue Sheba, (v. 6.) for nothing could be of more dangerous consequence than to give him time. David gives these orders to Abishai, because he resolves to mortify Joab, and degrade him, not so much, I doubt, for the blood of Abner, which he shed basely, as for the blood of Absalom, which he had shed justly and honourably. Now, (says Bishop Hall.) Joab smarteth for a loyal disobedience. How slippery are the stations of earthly honours, and subject to continual mutability! Happy are they who are in favour with Him in whom there is no shadow of change. Joab, without orders, though in disgrace, goes along with his brother, knowing he might be serviceable to the public, or perhaps now meditating the removal of his rival.

3. Joab, near Gideon, meets with Amasa, and barbarously murders him, v. 8-10. It should seem, the great stone in Gideon was the place appointed for the general rendezvous: there the rivals met; and Amasa, relying upon his commission, went before, as general both of the new-raised forces which he had got together, and of the veteran troops which Abishai had brought in; but Joab there took an opportunity to kill him with his own hand; and, 1. He did it suddenly and with contrivance, and not upon a sudden provocation. He girds his coat about him, and that might not hang in his way, and girds himself upon his coat, that his sword might be the readier to him; he puts his sword in a sheath too big for it, that, whenever he pleased, it might, upon a little shake, fall out, as if it fell by accident, and so he might take it into his hand, unsuspected, as if he were going to return it into the sheabard, when he designed to sheath it in the bowels of Amasa. The words there is a plot in a spin, the verse is, 2. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of friendship, that Amasa might not be upon his guard. He called him brother, (for they were own cousins) inquired of his welfare, Art thou in health? and took him by the beard, as one he was free with, to kiss him, while with the drawn sword in his other hand he was aiming at his heart. Was this done like a
gentleman, like a soldier, like a general? No, but like a villain, like a base coward. Just thus he slew Abner, and went unpunished for it, which encouraged him to do the like again. 3. He did it impudently, not in a corner, but at the head of his troops, and in their sight, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to do it, that was so hardened in blood and murders, that he could neither blush nor tremble. 4. He did it at one blow, gave the fatal stroke with a good will, as we say, so that he needed not strike him again; with such a strong and steady hand he gave this one stroke that it was fatal. 5. He did it in contempt and defiance of David, and the commission he had given to Amasa; for that commission was the only ground of his being trusted with the public army and as a leader to deal with it. And Joab did this; he. and it was, in effect, told to his face, that Joab would be general, in spite of him. 6. He did it very unseasonably, when they were going against a common enemy, and were concerned to be unanimous. This ill-timed quarrel might have scattered their forces, or engaged them one against another, and so have made them all an easy prey to thee, and to their enemies. So contended could Joab sacrifice the interest both of king and kingdom to his personal revenge.

IV. Joab immediately resumes his general's place, and takes care to lead the army on in pursuit of Sheba, that, if possible, he might prevent any prejudice to the common cause by what he had done. 1. He leaves one of his men to make proclamation to the forces that were coming up, that they were still engaged in David's cause, and under his command, v. 11. He knew what an interest he had in the soldiery, and how many favoured him, rather than Amasa, that had been a traitor, was now a turn-coat, and had never been successful; on this he boldly relied, and called them all to follow him. What man of Judah would not be for his old king, and his old general? But one would wonder with what face a murderer could pursue a traitor; and how, under such a heavy load of guilt, he had courage to enter upon danger; his conscience was seared with a hot iron. 2. Care is taken to remove the dead body out of the way, because at that they made a stand, (as ch. 2. 23.) and to cover it with a cloth, v. 12, 13. Wicked men think themselves safe in their wickedness, if they can but conceal it from the eye of the world; if he be hidden, it is with them as if they had never done it; that where they committed blood with a cloth cannot stop its cry in God's ear for vengeance, or make it the less loud. However, since this was no time to arraign Joab for what he had done, and the common sifted called for expedition, it was prudent to remove that which retarded the march of the army; and then they all went on after Joab, while David, who, no doubt, had notice soon brought him of this tragedy, could not but wonder, if it had been within his power, that he had not formerly done justice upon Joab for the death of Abner, and that he now exposed Amasa by preferring him. And, perhaps, his conscience reminded him of his employing Joab in the murder of Uriah, which had helped to harden him in cruelty.

14. And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachaah, and all the Berites; and they were gathered together, and went also after him. 15. And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachaah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down. 16. Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come nearer hither, that I may speak with thee. 17. And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine handmaid. And he answered, I do hear. 18. Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abul: and so they ended the matter. 19. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seestest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the Lord? 20. And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. 21. The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim, Sheba the son of Bichri by name, hath lifted up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. 22. Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom: and they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city every man to his tent. And Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

We have here the conclusion of Sheba's attempt. 1. The rebel, when he had ravaged over all the tribes of Israel, and found them not willing, upon second thoughts, to follow him, as they had been, upon a sudden provocation, to desert David, (having only picked up a few like himself, that sided with him,) entered Abel Beth-maachaah a strong city in the north, in the lot of Naphtali, where we find it placed, 2 Kings 15. 39. Here he took shelter, whether by force, or with consent, does not appear, but his adherents were mostly Berites of Beth-moth in Benjamin, v. 14. One bad man will find and make more. 2. Joab drew up all his force against the city, besieged it, battered the wall, and made ready for a general storm, v. 15. Justly is that place attacked with all this fury, which dares harvest a traitor; nor will that heart fare better, which indulgesthe rebellious lusts that will not have Christ to reign over them. 3. A discreet good woman of the city of Abel brings this matter, by her prudent management, to a good issue, so as to satisfy Joab, and yet save the city. Here is, 1. Her treaty with Joab, and her capitulation with him by which he is engaged to raise the siege, upon condition that Sheba be delivered up. It seems, not of all the men of Abel, but of the elders or magistrates, offered to treat with Joab, no, not when they were reduced to the last extremity; either they were stupid, and unconcerned for the public safety, or they stood in awe of Sheba, or they despised it gaining any good terms with Joab, or they had not wit enough to manage the treaty. But this one woman with her wisdom saved the city. Souls know no difference of sexes; though the man be the head, it does not therefore follow that he has the mono-
poly of the brains, and therefore he ought not, by any true law, to have the monopoly of the crown; many a masculine heart, and more than masculine, has been found in a female breast; nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable for being lodged in the weaker vessel.

In the treaty between this nameless heroine and Joab:

1. She gains his audience and attention, 16, 17. We may suppose it was the first time he had ever treated with a woman in martial council. (2.) She reasons with him on behalf of her city, and very ingeniously. [1.] That it was a city famous for wisdom, (v. 16.) as we translate it; she pleads that this city had been long in such reputation for prudent knowing men, that it was the common refuge of the country, and all agreed to abide by the award of its elders. Their sentence was worded quite lettered, and the matter is closed, all sides will acquiesce. Now, shall such a city as this be laid in ashes, and never treated with? [2.] That the inhabitants were generally peaceable and faithful in Israel, v. 19. She could speak, not for herself only, but for all those whose cause she pleaded, that they were not of turbulent and seditious spirits, but of known fidelity to their prince, and peaceableness with their fellow-subjects; neither did they need to be urged to this use of the heritage. There was a mother in Israel, a guide and nurse to the towns and country about; and that it was a part of the inheritance of the Lord, a city of Israelites; not of heathens; and the destruction of it would lessen and weaken that nation which God had chosen for his heritage. [4.] That they expected him to offer them peace, before he made an attack upon them, according to that known law of war, Deut. 20. 10. So the mar- kets were left open. They plainly spake in the beginning, (of the siege,) saying, Surely they will ask of Abel; that is, ‘The besiegers will demand the traitor, and will ask us to surrender him; and if they do, we shall soon come to an agreement, and so end the matter.’ Thus she quietly upbraids Joab for not offering them peace, but hopes it is not too late to beg it.

2. Joab and Abel’s advocate soon agree that Sheba’s head shall be the ransom of the city. Joah, though, in a personal quarrel, he had lately swollen up and destroyed Amasa, yet, when he acts as a general, will by no means bear the imputation, ‘Far be it from me that I should delight to swallow up or destroy, or design it, but when it is necessary for the public safety, v. 20. The matter is not so, our quarrel is not with your city, we would have our lives for its secession; our quarrel is only with the traitor that is harboured among you; deliver him up, and we have done.’ A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if contending parties would but understand one another. The city obstinately holds out, believing Joab aims at its ruin; Joab furiously attacks it, believing the citizens all confederates with Sheba; whereas both were mistaken; let both sides be undeceived, and the matter is soon accommodated. The single condition of peace is, the surrender of the traitor; it is so in God’s dealing with the soul, when it is besieged by conviction and distress; sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgressions, and all shall be well. No peace on any other terms. Our wise woman immediately507. 507 An ancient law of France, which debared females from succeeding to the throne.—Ed.

bly, by some public order of their government, and it was thrown over the wall to Joab. He knew the traitor’s face, and therefore looked no further, intending not that any of his adherents should suffer. The public safety was secured, and he felt no wish to gratify the public revenge. Joab, hereupon, raised the siege, and marched back to Jerusalem, with the trophies rather of peace than victory.

23. Now Joab was over all the host of Israel; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites, and over the Pelethites; 24. And Adoram was over the tribute; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 25. And Sheva was scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests: 26. And Ira also, the Jairite, was a chief ruler about David.

Here is an account of the state of David’s court, after his restoration. Joab was continued general, being too great to be displaced, Benaiah, as before, captain of the host. Here is one new office, which we had not, ch. 8. 16. that of treasurer, or one over the tribute, for it was not till to ward the latter end of his time, that he began to raise taxes. Adoram was long in this office, but it cost him his life at last, 1 Kings 12. 18.

CHAP. XXI.

The date of the events of this chapter is uncertain. I incline to think that they happened as they are here placed, after Abdon and Sheba’s rebellion, and toward the latter end of David’s reign. That the battles with the Philistines, mentioned here, were long after the Philistines were subdued, appears by comparing 1 Chron. 20. 1 with ch. 20. 4. The numbering of the people was just before the Exig of the place of the temple, (as appears from 1 Chron. 22. 1.) and that was toward the close of David’s life; and, it should seem, the people were numbered just before the three years’ famine for the Gibeonites, for that which is threatened as these years’ famine, 1 Chron. 21. 12, is called seven years, 2 Sam. 24. 14. 15. Three more, with the year current, added to those three. We have here, 1. The Gibeonites avenged. 1. By a famine in the land, v. 1. 2. And the putting of death to death, v. 5. 6. 7. care, however, being taken of their dead bodies, and of the bones of Saul, v. 10. 11. 12. The giants of the Philistines slain in several battles, v. 15. 22.

1. THEN there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. 2. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them; and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah;) 3. Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord? 4. And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What you shall say, that will I do for you. 5. And they an-
swered the king. The man that consumed us, and that devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel. 6. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah of Saul, whom the Lord did choose. And the king said, I will give them. 7. But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the Lord’s oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite; 9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the Lord: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley-harvest. Here, we are told of the injury which Saul had, long before this, done to the Gibeonites, which we had no account of in the history of his reign, nor should have heard of here, but that it came now to be reckoned for. The Gibeonites were of the remnant of the Amorites, (v. 2.) who by a wife had made peace with Israel, and had the public faith pledged to them by Joshua for their safety. We had the story, Josh. 9. where it was agreed (v. 25.) that they should be secured of their lives but deprived of their lands and liberties, that they and their’s should be tenants in vassallage to Israel. It does not appear that they had broken their part of the covenant, either by denying their service, or attempting to recover their lands or liberties, nor was it pretended; but Saul, under colour of zeal for the honour of Israel, that it might not be said that they had any of the natives among them, aimed to root them out, and, in order to that, slew many of them. Thus he would seem wiser than his predecessors the judges, and more zealous for the public interest; and perhaps he designed it for an instance of his royal prerogative, and the power which as king he assumed to rescind the former acts of government, and to dissolve the most solemn leagues. It may be, he designed, by this severity toward the Gibeonites, to atone for his clemency toward the Amalekites. Some he sought to cut off the Gibeonites at the same time when he put away the witches: (1 Sam. 28. 3.) or perhaps many of them were remarkably pious, and he sought to destroy them when he slew the priests their masters. That which made this an exceeding sinful sin, was, that he not only shed innocent blood, but therein violated the solemn oath by which the nation was bound to protect them. See what brought ruin on Saul’s house; it was a bloody house. We II. We find the nation of Israel chastised with a sore famine, long after, for this sin of Saul. Observe, 1. Even in the land of Israel, that fruitful land, and in the reign of David, that glorious reign, there was a famine, not extreme, for then it would sooner have been taken notice of, and inquiry made into the cause of it, but great drought, and scarcity of provisions, the consequence of it, for three years together. If corn miss one year, commonly the fault makes up the deficiency; but if it miss three years successively, it will be a sore judgment; and the man of wisdom will by it hear God’s voice crying to the country, to repent of the abuse of plenty. 2. David inquired of God concerning it. Though he was himself a prophet, he must consult the oracle, and know God’s mind before his appointed way. Note, When we are under God’s judgments, we ought to inquire into the grounds of the controversy. Lord show me wherefore thou contestest with me. It is strange that David did not sooner consult the oracle, not till the third year; but, perhaps, till then, he apprehended not to be an extraordinary judgment for some particular sin. Even David was often slack and remiss in doing their duty. We continue in ignorance, and understand not, because we delay to inquire. 3. God was ready in his answer, though David was slow in his inquiries. It is for Saul. Note, God’s judgments often look a great way back, which obliges us to do so, when we are under his rebukes. It is not for us to object against the people’s smarting for the sin of their kings, perhaps they were aiding and abetting, and so bearing for the same sin. God is the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and his judgments are a great deep; he gives not account of any of his matters. Time does not wear out the guilt of sin; nor can we build hopes of impunity upon the delay of judgments. There is no statute of limitation to be pleased against God’s demands. Nullum tempus occurrat Deo—God may punish when he pleases. III. We have vengeance taken upon the house of Saul, for the turning away of God’s wrath from the land, which, at present, smarted for his sin. 1. David, it is probable by divine direction, referred it to the Gibeonites themselves, to prescribe what satisfaction should be given them for the wrong that had been done them, v. 3. They had many years remained silent, had not appealed to David, nor given the kingdom any disturbance with their complaints or demands; and now, at length, God speaks for them: I heard not, for thou wilt hear; (Ps. 38. 14, 15.) and they are recompensed for their patience with this honour, that they are made judges in their own cause, and have a blank given them to write their demands on; What ye shall say, that will I do, (v. 4.) that atonement may be made, and that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord, v. 5. It is seen in his family respect to have the prayers of oppressed innocency answered, and the violence of those that were ready to perish, Job 29. 13. My servant Job, whom you have wronged, shall pray for you, says God, and then I will be reconciled to you, and not till then. These understand not themselves, that value not the prayers of the poor and needy. 2. They desired that seven of Saul’s posterity might be put to death, and David granted them their demand. (1.) They required no silver, nor gold, v. 4. Note, Money is no satisfaction for blood; see Num. 35. 31.—33. It is the ancient law, Blood calls for blood; (Gen. 9. 6.) and those over-value money, and undervalue blood, that should be liable to destruc tions for corruptible things, such as silver and gold. The Gibeonites had now a fair opportunity to get a discharge from their servitude, in compensation for the wrong done them, according to the equity of that law, (Exod. 21. 26.) If a man strike out his servant’s eye, he shall let him go free for his eye’s sake. But they did not insist on this; though the covenant was broken on the other side, it should not be broken on their’s. They were willing, given
to God and his people Israel, and they would not seem weary of the service.

(2.) They required no lives but of Saul's family; he had done them the wrong, and therefore his children must pay for it. Women's lives are for the parent's debts; men may not extend that so far as life, Deut. 24. 16. The children, in an ordinary course of law, shall never be put to death for the parents, but this case of the Gibonites was altogether extraordinary. God had made himself an immediate party to the cause, and, no doubt, put it into the heart of the Gibonites to make this demand, for he was the children's judge, and his judgments are not subject to the rules which men's judgments must be subject to. Let parents take heed of sin, especially the sin of cruelty and oppression, for their poor children's sake, who may be smiting for it by the just hand of God, when they are in their graves. Guilt and a curse are a bad entail upon a family. It should seem, Saul's posterity trod in his steps, for it is called a bloody house: it was the spirit of the family, and therefore they are justly reckoned with for his, as well as for their own.

(3.) They would not impose it upon David to do this execution: "Thou shalt notkill any man, (v. 4.) but we will do it ourselves, we will hang them up into the Lord," (v. 6.) that if there were any hardship in it, they might bear the blame, and not David or his house. By our old law, if a man had committed murder against him upon an appeal, the relations that appeared, had the executing of him.

(4.) They did not require this, out of malice against Saul or his family, (had they been revengeful, they would have moved it themselves long before,) but out of love to the people of Israel, whom they saw plagued for the wrong done to them. The king, as the representative of God's justice, to gratify any revenge of our own; for the good of the public, not for our own reputation.

(5.) The nomination of the persons they left to David; who took care to secure Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, that while he was avenging the breach of one oath, he might not himself break another; (v. 7.) but he delivered up two of Saul's sons, whom he had buried, and five of his grandsons, sons, whom his daughter Merab bore to Adriel, (1 Sam. 18. 19.) but his daughter Michal brought up, v. 8. Now Saul's treachery was punished, in giving Merab to Adriel, when he had promised her to David, with a design to provoke him. "It is a dangerous matter," says Bishop Hall, upon this, "to offer injury to any of God's faithful ones; if their meekness have easily remitted it, their God will not suffer it over without a severe retribution, though it may be long first.

(6.) The place, time, and manner, of their execution, all added to the solemnity of their being sacrificed to divine justice. [1.] They were hanged up as anarchists, under a peculiar mark of God's displeasure; for the law had said, He that is hanged, is accursed of God, Deut. 21. 23. Gal. 3. 13. This was a severe, and most conduite manner of satisfying for our sins, and to turn away the wrath of God, because obedient to this ignominious death.

[2.] They were hanged up in Gibeah of Saul, (v. 8.) to show that it was for his sin that they died. They were hanged, as it were, before their own door, to expiate the guilt of the house of Saul; and thus God accomplished the ruin of that family, for the blood of the saints, and of the prophets, and their families, which, doubtless, was hanged upon their house. God's curse and inquisition was made for it, Ps. 9. 12. Yet the blood of the Gibonites only is mentioned; because that was shed, in violation of a sacred oath, which, though sworn long before, though obtained by a wife, and the promise made to Canaanites, yet is thus severely reckoned for. The despising of the oath, and breaking of the covenant, will be recompensed by those who thus profane God's sacred name, Ezek. 17. 18. And thus God would show, that with him rich and poor meet together. Even royal blood must go to atone for the blood of Gibonites, who were but the vassals of the congregation. [3.] They were put to death in the days of harvest, (v. 9.) at the beginning of harvest, (v. 10.) to show that they were thus sacrificed for the turning away of that wrath of God, which had withheld from them their harvest twice for so many years past, and to obtain his favour in the present harvest. Thus there is no way of appeasing God's anger, but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our sins. These executions must not be complained of as cruel, which are become necessary to the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul's bloody house be hanged, than that all Israel be famished.

10. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. 11. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. 12. And David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: 13. And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. 14. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father; and they performed all that the king commanded: and after that, God was entreated for the land.

Here we have,

I. Saul's sons not only hanged, but hanged in chains, their dead bodies left hanging, and exposed, till the judgment ceased, which their death was to turn away, by the sending of rain upon the land. They died as sacrifies, and thus they were, in a manner, offered up, not consumed all at once by fire, but gradually by the air. They died as anarchists, and by this ignominious usage they were represented as execrable, because iniquity was laid upon them. When our blessed Saviour was made sin for us, he was made a curse for us. But how shall we reconcile this with the law, which expressly obliged to bury those that were hanged, the same day? Deut. 21. 23. One of the Jewish Rabbins wished this passage of story were expounded, that the name of God might be sanctified, which, he observed, is dishonoured by his acceptance of those, which was a violation of his law; but this was an extraordinary case, and did not fall within that law: may, the very reason for that law is a reason for this
II. SAMUEL, XXII.

exception. He that is thus left hanged, is accursed, therefore ordinary malefactors must not be so abused; but therefore these must, because they were sacred men; and yet, for his justice, but for the crime of the nation, no less a censure than the violating of the public faith, and for the deliverance of the nation from no less a judgment than a general famine. Being thus made as the off-scouring of all things, they were made a spectacle to the world; (1 Cor. 4, 9, 13.) God appointing, or, at least, allowing it.

III. Their dead bodies watched by Rizpah, the mother of two of them, v. 16. It was a great affliction to her, now in her old age, to see her two sons, who, we may suppose, had been a comfort to her, and were likely to be the support of her declining years, cut off in this dreadful manner. None know what sorrow they are reserved for. She may not see them decently interred, but they shall be decently attended. She attempts not to violate the sentence past upon them, that they should hang there till God sent rain; she neither steals nor forces away the dead bodies, though the divine law might have been cited to bear her out; she patiently submits, pitches a tent of sackcloth near the gibbets, where, with her servants and friends, she protected the dead bodies from birds and beasts of prey. Thus, 1. She indulges her grief, as mourners are too apt to do, to no good purpose. When sorrow, in such cases, is in danger of growing excessive, we should endeavor how to divert it, and how to pacify it, by some appearance of comfort, and how to humour and gratify it. Why should we thus burden ourselves in sorrow? 2. She testified her love. Thus she let the world know that her sons died, not for any sin of their own, not as stubborn and rebellious sons, whose eye had despised to obey their mother; if that had been the case, she would have suffered the ravens of the valley to pick it out, and the young eagles to eat it, Prov. 30, 17. But they died for their father’s sake, and therefore their mind could not be alienated from them by their hard fate. Though they must die, yet they shall die pitted and lamented.

The solemn interment of their dead bodies, with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, in the burying-place of their family. David was so far from being displeased at what Rizpah had done, that he was backward to restore the dead bodies of Jeshob-gilead and Jonathan to the house of Saul, and to these breaches of it among the rest; thus it appeared that it was not out of any personal disgust to the family that he delivered them up, and that he had not desired the woful day, but that he was obliged to do it for the public good. 1. He now betook himself of removing the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from the place where the men of Jabesh-gilead had decently, but privately, and of course, interred them, under a tree, 1 Sam. 31, 12, 13. Though the shroud of Saul was vilely cast away, as if he had not been anointed with oil, yet let not royal dust be lost in the graves of the common people. Humanity obliges us to respect human bodies, especially of the great and good, in consideration both of what they have been, and what they are to be. 2. With them he buried the bodies of those that were hanged; for when God’s anger was turned away, they were no longer to be looked upon as a curse, v. 13, 14. When water dropped upon them out of heaven, (v. 10,) that is, when God sent rain to water the earth, (which, perhaps, was not many days after they were hung up,) then they were taken down, for then it appeared that God was entreated for the land. When justice is done on earth, vengeance from heaven ceases. The body of Saul was hanged on a tree, and so made a curse for us, to expiate our guilt, (though he was himself guiltless,) God is pacified, and is entreated for us: and it is said, (Acts 13, 29,) that when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, in token of that and of God’s acceptance of it, they took him down and laid him in a sepulchre.

Moreover, the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint. 16. And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, (the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight,) he, being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David: 17. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succored him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David sware unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel. 18. And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbecai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant. 19. And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, a Bethlehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam. 20. And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant. 21. And when he defied Israel, Jonathan, the son of Shimeah, the brother of David, slew him. 22. These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

We have here the story of some conflicts with the Philistines, which happened, as it should seem, in the latter part of David’s reign. Though he had so subdued them, that they could not bring any great numbers into the field, yet, as long as they had any giants among them to be their champions, they would never be quiet, but took all occasions to disturb the peace of Israel, to challenge them, or to make incursions upon them.

1. David himself was engaged with one of the giants; the Philistines began the war yet again, v. 15. The enemies of God’s Israel are restless in their attempts against them. David, though old, desired not a writ of ease from the public service, but he himself went down in person, to fight against the Philistines. Senecit, non segment—He grows old, but not indolent. A sign that he fought not for his own glory, (at this age he was loaded with that, and needed no more,) but for the good of his kingdom. But this engagement was fought in distress and danger. He thought he could bear the fatigues of war as well as he had done formerly; his will was good, and he hoped he could do as at other times; but he found himself deceived, age had cut his hair, and, after a little toil, he waxed faint. His body could not keep pace with his mind. The champion of the Philistines was soon aware of his advantage, perceived that David’s strength failed him, and being himself strong and well armed, he thought to have slain David; but God was not in his thoughts, and therefore in that very day they
all perished. The enemies of God's people are often very strong, very subtle, and very sure of success, like Ishbi-benob, but there is no strength, nor courage, against the Lord. 2. Wonderfully rescued by Abishai, who came seasonably in to his relief, v. 17. Herein we must own Abishai's courage and fidelity to his prince, to save whose life he bravely ventured his own; but, much more, the good providence of God, which brought him in to David's succour, in the minute of his extremity. Such a cause and such a champion, though distressed, shall not be deserted. When Abishai succeeded him, gave him a cordial, it may be, to relieve his fainting spirits, or appeared as his second, he (namely, David, so I understand it) smote the Philistine, and killed him: for it is sin, (v. 22.) David had himself a hand in slaying the giants. David fainted, but he did not flee; though his strength failed him, he bravely kept his ground, and then God sent him this help in the time of need, which, though brought him by his junior and inferior, he thankfully accepted, and, with a little recruiting, gained his point, and came off a conqueror. Christ, in his agonies, was strengthened by an angel. In spiritual conflicts, even strong saints sometimes wax faint; then Satan attacks them familiarly; but they that stand their ground and resist him, shall be relieved, and made more than conquerors. 3. David's servants, hereupon, resolved that he should never again expose himself, but easily persuaded him not to fight against Abasolm, (ch. 18. 3.) but against the Philistines he would go, till, having had this narrow escape, it was resolved in council, and confirmed with an oath, that the light of Israel (its guide and glory, so David was) should never be put again into such hazard of being blown out. Such valuable lives as David's was, ought to be preserved with a double care, both by themselves and others.

II. The rest of the giants fell by the hand of David's servants. 1. Saph was slain by Sibbechai, one of David's worthies, v. 18. 1 Chron. 11. 29. 2. Another, who was brother to Golias, was slain by El-hanan, who is mentioned, ch. 23. 24. 3. Another, who was of such an unusual bulk, that he had more fingers and toes than other people, (v. 26.) and such an unparalleled measure, that, though he had seven hands and seven feet, yet he despised Israel, was slain by Jonathan the son of Shimea. Shimea had one son named Jonadab, 2 Sam. 13. 3. I should have taken it for the same with this Jonathan; but that was noted for subtlety, this for bravery. These giants, probably, were the remains of the sons of Anak, who, though long feared, fell at last. Now observe, (1.) It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength; David's servants were no larger or stronger than other men; yet thus, by divine assistance, they mastered one giant after another. God chooses by the weak things to confound the mighty. (2.) It is common for these to go down slain to the pit, who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. 32. 27. (3.) The most powerful enemies are often reserved for the last conflict. David began his glory with the conquest of one giant, and here concludes it with the conquest of four. Death is a christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak; but through Him that triumphed for us, we hope, even over that enemy, to be more than conquerors at last.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter is a psalm, a psalm of praise; we find it afterward inserted among David's psalms, (Ps. 18.) with some little variation. We have it here, as it was at first composed for his own comfort, and his own harp; but there we have it, as it was afterward delivered to much more than a musician for the service of the church; a second edition with some amendments: for though it was calculated primarily for David's ears, yet it might indifferently serve the devotion of others, in giving thanks for their deliverance; or, it was intended that his people should thus join with him in his thanksgivings, because, being a public person, his deliverances were to be accounted public blessings, and called for public acknowledgments. To inspired historian, having largely related David's deliverances, in this and the foregoing book, and one particularly in the close of the foregoing chapter, thought fit to record this sacred poem, with a record of a memorial of a particular occasion related. Some think that David penned this psalm when he was old, upon a general review of the mercies of his life, and the many wonderful preservations God had blessed him with, and kept him in, and brought him through, so many dangers and difficulties, and glorious victories, as appears by the variations in the several psalms: there is a sense of the past, some that parted with him, and others that ministered to him. Others think he penned it when he was young, upon occasion of some of his first deliverances, and kept it for such an occasion. (1.) In the expectations he had of his further favours. Some that parted with him, and others that ministered to him. Others think he penned it when he was young, upon occasion of some of his first deliverances, and kept it for such an occasion. (2.) In the expectations he had of his further favours. These are intermixed throughout the whole psalm.

1. A ND David spake unto the Lord the words of this song, in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

Observe here, 1. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart: many were those that hated him, and sought his ruin; Saul is particularly named, either, (1.) As distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations; Saul hated David, but David did not hate Saul, and therefore would not reckon him among his enemies; or, rather, (2.) As the chief of his enemies, that was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let us not these whom God loves, mar vel if the world entertain them with their offices. 2. They that trust God in the way of duty, shall find him a present Help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so; God delivered him out of the hand of Saul: he takes special notice of that. Remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular emphasis. He delivered him also out of the hand of all his enemies, one after another; sometimes in one way, sometimes in another: and David, from his own experience, has assured us, that though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers them out of them all, Ps. 34. 19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all his, 2 Tim. 1. 8. 18. 3. Those that have received many signal mercies from God, ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak; David spake, not to himself, only for his own pleasure, or to those about him, only for their instruction; but to the Lord, for his honour, the words of this song. Then we sing with grace, when we sing to the Lord. In distress he cried with his voice, (Ps. 142. 1.) therefore with his voice he gave thanks: that is the sweetest music. 4. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God: in the day that God delivered him, he sang
II. SAMUEL, XXII.

_This song._ While the mercy is fresh, and we are most affected with it, let the thank-offering be brought, to be kindled with the fire of that affection.

2. And he said, The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; 3. The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. 4. I will call on the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 5. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; 6. The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me. 7. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God; and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears. 8. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. 9. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 10. He bowed the heavens also and came down; and darkness was under his feet. 11. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12. And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. 13. Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. 14. The Lord thunders from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. 15. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. 16. And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. 17. He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; 18. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. 19. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay. 20. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me. 21. The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompenced me. 22. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23. For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. 24. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. 25. Therefore the Lord hath recompenced me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye-sight. 26. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright. 27. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself unsavoury. 28. And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the boughy, that thou mayest bring them down. 29. For thou art my lamp, O Lord; and the Lord will lighten my darkness. 30. For by thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall. 31. As for God, his way is perfect, the word of the Lord is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. 32. For who is God, save the Lord? and who is a rock, save our God? 33. God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. 34. He maketh my feet like hinds' feet; and setteth me upon my high places. 35. He teacheth my hands to war; so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 36. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great. 37. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. 38. I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. 39. And I have consumed them, and wounded them, and they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet. 40. For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me. 41. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 42. They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. 43. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad. 44. Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people which I knew not shall serve me. 45. Strangers shall submit themselves unto me: as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me. 46. Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places. 47. The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. 48. It is God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me, 49. And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 50. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. 51. He is the tower of salvation for his king; and
showeth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

Let us observe, in this song of praise,

I. How David adores God, and gives him the glory of his infinite perfections. There is much like him in the psalmist, and to be compared with him: (v. 32.) Who is God, save the Lord? All others that are adored as deities, are counterfeits and pretenders. None are to be relied on besides. Who is a rock, save our God? They are dead, but the Lord liveth, v. 47. They dispijnt their worshippers, when they most need them. But as for God, his way is perfect, v. 51. Men begin in kindness, but end not, promise, but perform not; but God will finish his work, and his word is tried, and what we may trust.

II. How he triumphs in the interest he had in this God, and his relation to him, which he lays down as the foundation of all the benefits he had received from him. He is my God; as such he cries to him, (v. 7.) and cleaves to him; (v. 22.) and if my God, then, my Rock; (v. 2.) that is, my Strength and my Power, (v. 32.) the Rock under which I am safe, and which I use as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; the Rock on which I build my hope, v. 3. Whatever is my strength and support, it is the God of my rock that makes it so; yea, he is the God of the rock of my salvation, (v. 47.) my saving strength is in him and from him. David often hides himself in a rock, (1 Sam. 24. 2.) but God was his chief Hiding-place. "He is my Fortress, in whom I am safe, and which I may make my Rock," 1 Chronicles 29. 19. We do not find that in any of David’s battles, God fought for him, either with thunder, as in Samuel’s time, or with hail, as in Joshua’s time, or with the stars in their courses, as in Deborah’s time: but those lofty metaphors are used, [1.] To set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance. His wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God’s glory to an eye of faith, as those would have been to an eye of sense. [2.] To set forth God’s displeasure against his enemies. God so espoused his cause, that he showed himself an Enemy to all his enemies. His anger is set forth by a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth; (v. 9.) coals kindled, (v. 13.) arrows, v. 15. Who knows the power and terror of his wrath? [3.] To set forth the vast confusion which his enemies were put into, and the consternation that seized them; as if the earth had trembled, and the foundations of the world had been discovered, v. 8, 16. Who can stand before God, when he is angry? [4.] To show how ready God was to help him; he rose up against him, (v. 40, 49.) that hated him; (v. 41.) a violent man, (v. 49.) name, Saul, who was malicious in his designs against him, and vigorous in his pursuits. This is expressed figuratively, v. 5. 6. He was surrounded with death on every side, threatened to be overwhelmed, and saw no way of escape; So violently did the waves of death beat upon him, as those strongly did the cords and snares of death hold him, that he could not help himself—no more than a man in the grave can. The floods of Belial, the wicked one, and his wicked instruments, made him afraid; he trembled to see not only earth, but death and hell, in arms against him.

(2.) That his deliverance was in answer to prayer, v. 7. He has here left us a good example, when we are in distress, to cry unto God with importunity, with a faith which will not be contradicted by others; and with the assurance of his answer, that he was a listening ear, and a readiness to perform his word, even as he had promised. In this he was no instance of private privilege, nor was it confined to him; it is the right of every soul, and is one of the great arguments of God’s grace and truth, and a strong incitement to holiness, to know that he is a God hearing himself, (Isa. 45. 15.) for he made darkness his pavilion, (v. 12.) for the amazement of his enemies, and the protection of his own people.

(4.) That God manifested his particular favour and kindness to him in these deliverances: (v. 20.) He delivered me, because he delighted in me. The deliverance came not from common providence, but from the special love and favour of God. He was therein treated as a favoured one; so the persecuted and terrified, on account of their dreadful sufferings, are here encouraged by the knowledge of divine grace and comfort to their soul, with these deliverances, and the communion he had with God in them. Herein he was a type of Christ, whom God upheld, because he delighted in him, Isa. 42. 1, 2. He magnifies the great successes God had crowned him with; he had not only preserved, but
II. SAMUEL, XXII.

prospered him. He was blest, (1.) With liberty and enlargement. He was brought into a large place, (v. 20.) where he had room to thrive; and his steps were enlarged under him, so that he had room to stir; (v. 37.) no longer straitened and confined. (2.) With military skill, and strength, and swiftness: though he was bred up to the crook, he was well instructed in the arts of war, and qualified for the tells and perils of it. God, having called him to fight his battles, had girded him with strength; and the sword he used, which made him very ingenuous: He teacheth my hands to war; (v. 35.) and this ingenuity was as good as strength, for it follows, so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms, not so much by main force, as by dexterity. He was also very vigorous and valiant: Thou hast girded me with strength to battle, v. 40. He gives God the glory of all his courage and ability for service. He was very expeditious too: He maketh my feet swift like hinds' feet, (v. 34.) which is of great advantage, both in charging and retreating. (3.) With victory over his enemies, not only Saul and Absalom, but the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, and other neighbouring nations, whom he subdued, and made tributaries to Israel. His wonderful victories are here described, v. 38-43. They were speedy victories; I turned not again till I had consumed them; (v. 38.) and in the victories of his life, he was wounded, destroyed, consumed, fell under his feet, trampled upon, and disabled to rise, and their necks lay at his mercy. They cried both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain, there was none to save, none that durst appear for them; God answered them not, for they were not on his side, nor did they cry unto him, till they were brought to the last extremity; being thus abandoned, they became an easy prey to David's righteous and victorious sword, so that he beat them as small as the dust of the earth, which is scattered by the wind, and driven on by every foot. (4.) With advancement to honour and power. To this he was appointed before his troubles began, and at length, just tot discrimina rerum—after all his dangers and disasters, he gained his point. God made his way perfect, (v. 33.) gave him success in all his undertakings, set him upon the throne of his father, and made him king over Israel, (v. 34.) in dignity and strength. God's gentleness, his grace, and tender mercy, made him great, (v. 36.) gave him great wealth, and great authority, and a name like that of the great men of the earth. He was kept to be the head of the heathen; (v. 41.) his signal preservation evinced that he was designed and reserved for something great—to rule over all Israel, notwithstanding the strivings of the people, and so that the people, whom he had not known should serve him, many of the nations that lay remote. Thus he was lifted up on high, as high as the throne, above those that rose up against him, v. 49.

V. The comfortable reflections he makes upon his own integrity, which God, by those wonderful deliverances, had graciously owned, and witnessed to, v. 21-23. He means especially his integrity with reference to Saul and Ish-bosheth, Absalom and Sheba, and those who either opposed his coming to the crown, or endeavoured to dethrone him; they falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, but he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he was not an ambitious aspiring man, a false and bloody man, as they called him; that he had never taken any indirect unlawful courses to secure or raise himself, but in his whole conduct kept in the way of his duty: and that in the course of it, he had fought both God's battles, and religion his business, so that he could take God's favours to him, as the rewards of his righteousness, not of debt, but of grace; God had recompensed him, though not for his righteousness, as if that had merited any thing at the hand of God, yet according to his righteousness, which he was well pleased with, and had an eye to.

His conscience witnessed for him, 1. That he had made the word of God his rule, and had kept to it, v. 23. Wherever he was, God's judgments were before him as his guide; whithersoever he went, he took his religion along with him; and though he had been forced to depart from his country, and sent, as it were, to serve other gods, yet the God of his statutes, he did not depart from them, but kept the way of the Lord, and walked in it. 2. That he had carefully avoided the by-paths of sin. He had not wickedly departed from his God; he could not say but that he had taken some false steps, but he had not deserted God, or forsaken his way. Sin's infamy he could not acquit himself from, but the grace of God had kept him from preposterous sin. Though he had sometimes weakly departed from his duty, he had never wickedly departed from his God. By this it appeared that he was upright before God, or to God, in his sight, and with an eye to him—that he kept himself from his own iniquity: not only from that particular sin of killing Saul, when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but, in general, he was afraid of sin, and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he had done, as one thing was better than another. (1. Kings 15. 5.) like that in Hezekiah's character, 2 Chron. 32. 31. Note, A careful abstaining from our own iniquity, is one of the best evidences of our own integrity; and the testimony of our conscience for us that we have done so, will be such a rejoicing, as will not only lessen the griefs of an afflicted state, but increase the comforts of an advanced state. David reflected with more comfort upon his victories over the heathen, than upon his conquest of Goliath and all the hosts of the uncircumcised Philistines; and the witness of his own heart to his uprightness, was sweeter, though more silent music, than their's that sang, David has slain his ten thousands. If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness. Let favour be shown to the upright, and his uprightness will sweeten it, will double it.

1. He enjoyed a full sense of God's further favour; as he looks back, so he looks forward, with pleasure, and assures himself of the kindness God had in store for all the saints, for himself and his seed.

1. For all good people, v. 26-28. As God had dealt with him according to his uprightness, so he will with all others. He takes occasion here to lay down the established rules of his proceedings with the children of men: (1.) That he will do good to those that are upright in their hearts. As we are found toward God, he will be found toward us. (1.) God's mercy and grace will be the joy of those that are merciful and gracious: even the merciful need mercy, and they shall obtain it. (2.) God's uprightness, his justice and faithfulness, will be the joy of those that are upright, just, and faithful, toward God and man. (3.) God's purity and holiness will be the joy of those that are pure and holy, who therefore give thanks at the remembrance of it. And if any of these good people be afflicted people, he will save them, either out of their afflictions, or by and after them. On the other hand, (2.) That those who turn aside to crooked ways, he will lead forth with the workers of iniquity, as he says in another Psalm, with the forward he will wrestle and the crooked with crooked. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! He will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, and be displeased with those that are displeased with him. As for the haughty, his eyes are upon them, marking them
upon the temple which was to be built. The last words of great and good men are thought worthy to be, in a special manner, remarked and remem-
bered; David would have those taken notice of, and recorded, either in his Psalms, (as they are here to that in the foregoing chapter) or in the
succession of his reign. These words especially, v. 5. though recorded before, we may suppose he often repeated for his own consolation, even to his last breath, and therefore they are called his last words. When we find death approaching, we should endeavour both to honour God, and to edify those about us, with our last words. Let those that have had long experience of God’s goodness, and the pleasantness of wisdom, when they come to have course, leave a record of that experience, and hear their testimony to the truth of the promise. We have upon record the last words of Jacob and Moses, and here of David, designed, as those, for a legacy to them that were left behind. We are here told,
I. Whose last will and testament this is. This is related, either as is usual, by the testator himself, or, rather, by the historian, v. 1. He is de-
scribed, 1. By the meanness of his family, he was the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Jesse, the son of David. It is good for those who are ad-
vanced to be corner-stones and top-stones, to be reminded, and often to remind themselves, of the rock out of which they were hewn. 2. By the height of his elevation: he was raised up on high, as one favoured of God, and designed for something great; raised up as a prince, to sit higher than his forefathers, Ps. 71.7, and as a prophet, to see further; for,
(1.) He was the anointed of the God of Jacob, and so was serviceable to the people of God in their civil interests, the protection of their country, and the administration of justice among them. (2.) He was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and so was service-
able to them in their religious exercises: he penned the psalms, set the tunes, appointed both the singers and the instruments of music, by which his devotion to his King and his people were much excited and enlarged. Note, Singing of psalms is a sweet ordinance, very agreeable to those that delight in praising God. It is reckoned among the honours to which David was raised up, that he was a psalmist: in that he was as truly great, as in his being the anointed of the God of Jacob. Note, It is true pre-
ferment to be serviceable to the church in acts of devotion, and instrumental to promote the blessed effects of psalmody; we should be so. Was David a prince? He was so for Jacob. Was he a psalm-
ist? He was so for Israel. Note, The dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and therefore, as every man has received the gift, so let him minister the same.
II. What the purport of it is. It is an account of his communion with God. Observe,
1. What God said to him, both for his direction and for his encouragement, as a king, and to be, in like manner, of use to his successors. Piou persons take a pleasure in calling to mind what they have heard from God, in recollecting his word, and reverencing it in their minds. Thus what God spake once, David heard twice, yea often.
See here, (1.) Who spake; The Spirit of the Lord; the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel; which, some suppose, is an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; the Father, God, Israel, the Son, the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, who spake by the prophets, and particularly by David, and whose word was not only in his heart, but in his tongue, for the benefit of others. David here avows his divine inspiration, that in his Psalms, and in this composition here, the Spirit of God spake by him. He, and other holy men, spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This puts an
2. For himself. He foresees that his conquests and kingdom should be yet further enlarged, v. 45, 46. Even the sons of the stranger, that should hear the report of his victories; and the tokens of God’s presence with him, should be possessed of a fear with him, should be forced to submit to him, though feignedly, and should be obediency to him. The successes which he had had, he looked upon as earnest of more, and means of more; who durst oppose him, whom so many had been overcome by! Thus the Son of David goes on, conquering and to conquer, Rev. 5.2. His gospel, which has been victorious, shall be so more and more.
3. For his seed. He shows mercy to his Mes-
siah, (v. 51.) not only to David himself, but to that Seed of his for evermore. David was himself anointed of God, not an usurper, but duly called to the government, and qualified for it, therefore he doubted not but God would show mercy to him: that mercy he had promised not to take from him, nor from his posterity; (ch. 7. 15, 16.) on that promise he depends, with an eye to Christ, who alone is his Seed for evermore, whose throne and kingdom still continue, and will, to the end, whereas the seed and lineage of David are long since extinct. See Ps. 89. 28, 29. Thus all his joys and all his hopes terminate, as our’s should, in the great Redeemer.

CHAP. XXIII.
The historian is now drawing toward a conclusion of Da-
vid’s reign, and therefore gives us an account here, I. Of some of his last words, which he spake by inspiration, and which seem to have reference to his Seed that was to be established for evermore. In the close of the foregoing chapter, v. 1. 7. II. Of the great men, especially the military men, that were employed under him; the first three, (v. S. 17.) two of the next three, (v. 18. 23.) and then the thirty, v. 24. 39.

1. NOW these be the last words of Da-
vid. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. 3. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: 4. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 5. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. 6. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. 7. But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear: and they shall be utterly burned with fire, in the same place.
II. SAMUEL, XXIII.

11. 1. 5.—32. 1. 2. Ps. 72. 2. God, by the Spirit, gave David the foresight of this, to comfort him under the many calamities of his family, and the melancholy prospects he had of the degeneracy of his house.

2. What comfortable use he made of this which God spake to him, and what were his devout meditations on it, by way of reply, v. 5. It is not unlike his meditation, on occasion of such a message, 2 Sam. 7. 18, &c. What goes before, the Rock of Israel spake by him; this the Spirit of God spake by him, and it is a most excellent confession of his faith and hope in the everlasting covenant.

Here is,

(1.) Trouble supposed. Although my house be not so with God, and although he make it not to grow. David's family was not so with God, as is described, (v. 3, 4,) and as he could wish; not so good, not so happy; it had not been so while he lived, he foresaw it would not be so when he was gone; that his house would be neither so pious nor so prosperous as one might have expected the offspring of such a father to be. [1] Not so with God. Note, We and our's are that really, which we are with God. This was it that David's heart was upon concerning his children, that they might be right with God, faithful to him, and zealous for him. The children of godly parents are often neither so holy nor so happy as might be expected. We must be made to know, that it is corruption, and not a want of good, that makes men so little of God, but not to the swift, but that God gives the Spirit as a free Agent. [2] Not made to grow, in number, in power; it is God that makes families to grow, or not to grow, Ps. 107. 41. God's men have often the melancholy prospect of a declining family. David's house was typical of the church of Christ, which is his house, Heb. 3. 3. Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish, suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened, by errors and corruptions, yea, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church's Head, the Son of David, that he will preserve to him a seed, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his house. This our Saviour comforted himself with, in his sufferings, that the covenant with him stood firm, Isa. 55. 10. 12.

(2.) Contract insurable. He hath made with me an everlasting covenant. Whatever trouble of God may have the prospect of, still he has some comfort or other to balance it with, (2 Cor. 4. 8, 9,) and none like this here. [1] It may be understood of the covenant of royalty, (in the type,) which God made with David and his seed, touching the kingdom, Ps. 132. 11, 12. But, [2] It must look further, to the covenant of grace, made with all believers; that God will be, in Christ, to them a God, which was signified by the covenant of royalty, and therefore the promises of the covenant are called, the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 3. It is this only that is the everlasting covenant, and it cannot be imagined that David, who, in so many of his Psalms, speaks so clearly concerning Christ, and the grace of the gospel, should forget it in his last works. God has made a covenant of grace made with all believers, that God will be, in Christ, to them a God, which was signified by the covenant of royalty, and therefore the promises of the covenant are called, the sure mercies of David, Isa. 55. 3. It is this only that is the everlasting covenant, from everlasting, in the contrivance and counsel of it, and to everlasting, in the continuance and consequences of it. Secondly, That it is ordered, well-ordered in all things, admirably well, to advance the glory of God, and the honour of the Mediator, together with the holiness and comfort of believers. It is herein well-ordered, that whatever is required in the covenant, is promised, and that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, and that it puts our salvation, not in our
own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. Thirdly, That it is sure, and therefore sure, because well-ordered; the general offer of it is sure, the promised mercies are sure, on the performance of the conditions. The particular application of it to each believes it is sure, all the same.

Fourthly, That it is all our salvation: nothing but this will save us, and this is sufficient: it is only upon which our salvation depends. Fifthly, That therefore it must be all our desire. Let me have an interest in this covenant, and the promises of it, and I have enough, I desire no more.

3. Here is the doom of the sons of Belial read, v. 6. (1.) They were thrust away: they are like thorns, not to be touched with hands, so passionate and furious that they cannot be managed or dealt with by a wise and faithful reproof, but must be restrained by law, and the sword of justice, (Ps. 32. 9.) and therefore like thorns. (2.) They shall, at length, be utterly burnt with fire in the same place, Heb. 6. 8. Now this is intended either, [1.] As a direction to magistrates, to use their power for the punishing and suppressing of wickedness. Let them thrust away the sons of Belial; see Ps. 101. 8. Or, [2.] As a caution to magistrates, and particularly to David's sons and successors, to see that they be not themselves sons of Belial, (as too many of them were,) for then neither the dignity of their place, nor their relation to David, would secure them from being thrust away by the righteous judgments of God. Though men could not deal with them, God would.

Or, [3.] As a prediction of the ruin of all the implaceable enemies of Christ's kingdom. There are enemies without, that openly oppose it, and fight against it; and enemies within, that secretly betray it, and are false to it; both are sons of Belial, the children of the wicked one, of the serpent's seed: both are as thorns, grievous and vexatious: but both shall be so thrust away, as that Christ will set up his Kingdom, in despite of their enmity, will go through them, (Isa. 27. 4.) and will, in due time, bless his church with such peace, that there shall be no pricking brier, nor grieving thorn. And those that will not repent, to give glory to God, shall, in the judgment-day, (to which the Chaldee paraphrast refers this,) be burnt with unquenchable fire. See Luke 19. 27.

3. These be the names of the mighty men whom David had: The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Ezrite; he lifted up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time. 9. And after him was Eleazar, the son of Dodo the Ahobite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: 10. He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the Lord wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil. 11. And after him was Shamshah the son of Agee the Hararite: and the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles; and the people fled from the Philistines: 12. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory. 13. And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest-time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. 14. And David was then in a hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Beth-lehem. 15. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate! 16. And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord! 17. And he said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men. 18. And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three; and he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. 19. Was he not most honourable of them therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the first three. 20. And Benaijah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. 21. And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 22. These things did Benaijah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. 23. He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 24. Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty; Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem, 25. Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, 26. Helez the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkesh the Tekoite, 27. Abiezer the Anathothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28. Zalmon the Ahobite, Maharai the Netophathite, 29. Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite; Ittai the son of Ribai, out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, 30. Benaijah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31. Abialon the Arbahite, Azmaveth the Bahumite, 32. Eliahba the Shaalbonite; of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33. Shamshah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharrar
the Hararite, 34. Eliphelet the son of Ahaziah, the son of Maachathite; Eliah the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35. Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, 36. Igil the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37. Zelek the Ammonite; Naharai the Beerothite, armour-bearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah, 38. Ira an Ithrite, Gareb an Ithrite, 39. Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

The catalogue which the historian has here left upon record of the greatest soldiers that were in David's time, is intended, 1. For the honour of David, who trained them up in the arts and exercises of war, and set them an example of conduct and courage. It is the reputation, as well as the advantage, of a prince, to be attended and served by such brave men as are here described. 2. For the honour of those worthies themselves, who were instrumental to bring David to the crown, settle and protect him in the throne, and enlarge his conquests. Note, Those that in public stations venture themselves, and lay out themselves, to serve the interests of their country, are worthy of double honour, both to be respected by these of their own age, and to be remembered by posterity. 3. To excite these that come after, to a generous emulation. 4. To show how much religion contributes to inspire men with true courage. David, both by his Psalms, and by his offerings for the service of the temple, greatly promoted piety among the grandees of the kingdom; (1 Chron. 29. 6.) and when they became famous for piety, they became famous for bravery.

Now these mighty men are here divided into three ranks.

1. The first three, who had done the greatest exploits, and thereby gained the greatest reputation. Adino, (v. 8.) Eleazar, (v. 9, 10.) and Shammah, v. 11, 12. I do not remember that we read of any of these, or of their actions, any where in all the story of David, but here, and in the parallel place, 1 Chron. 11. Many great and remarkable events are passed by in the ann Is, which relate rather the blemishes, than the glories, of David's reign, especially after his sin in the matter of Uriah; so that we may conclude it to have been more illustrious when man has appeared to us while reading the records of it.

The exploits of this brave triumvirate are here recorded. They signalized themselves in the wars of Israel against their enemies, especially the Philistines. 1. Adino slew eight hundred at once, with his spear. 2. Eleazar defied the Philistines, as they, by Goliath, had defied Israel, but with better success, and greater bravery; for when the men of Israel were gone away, he not only kept his ground, but arose, and smote the Philistines, on whom God struck a terror, equal to the courage with which this great hero was inspired. His hand was weary, and yet it clave to his sword; as long as he had any strength remaining, he held his weapon, and followed his blow. Thus, in the service of God, we should keep up the willingness and resolution of the spirit, notwithstanding the weaknesses and weariness of the body; faint, yet pursuing. (Judg. 8. 4.) the hand weary, yet not quitting the sword. Now that Eleazar had beaten the enemy, the men of Israel, who were gone away from the battle, (v. 9.) returned to spoil, v. 10. It is common for those who quit the field, when any thing is to be done, to hasten to it, when any thing is to be gotten. 3. Shammah met with a party of the enemy, that were foraging, and routed them, v. 11, 12. But observe both concerning this exploit and the former, it is here said, The Lord wrought a great victory. Note, How great soever the bravery of the instrument is, the praise of the achievement must be given to God. These fought the battles, but God wrought the victory. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, or any of his military operations, but let him that glories, glory in the Lord.

II. The next three were distinguished from, and dignified above, the thirty, but attained not to the first three, v. 23. All great men are not of the same stamp, nor of the same great advantage, but some have a bigger place, v. 24. This, which is not of the first magnitude; and much of a good ship not of the first rate: of this second triumvirate, two only are named, Abishai and Benaiah, whom we have often met with in the story of David; and who seem to have been neither inferior nor inconsiderable, though they were in dignity, to the first three.

Here is, 1. A brave action of these three in conjunction. They attended David in his troubles, when he abscended in the cave of Adullam, (v. 13.) suffered with him, and therefore were afterward preferred by him. When David and his brave men who attended him, who had acted so vigorously against the Philistines, were, by the iniquity of the times, in Saul's reign, driven to shelter themselves from his rage in caves and strong holds, no marvel that the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim, and put their garrison even in Beth-lehem itself, v. 13, 14. If the church's guides are so misled, as to persecute some of her best friends and champions, the common enemy will, no doubt, get advantage by it. If David had had his liberty, Beth-lehem would not have been now in the Philistine's hands.

But being so, we are here told, (1.) How earnestly David longed for the water of the well of Beth-lehem. Some make it a public-spirited wish, and that he meant, "O that we could drive the garrison of the Philistines out of Beth-lehem, and make that beloved city of mine our own again;" the well being put for the city, as the river often signifies the country it passes through. But if he meant so, those about him did not understand him; therefore it seems rather to be an instance of his weakness. It was harvest-time, the weather was hot, he was thirsty, perhaps good water was scarce, and therefore he earnestly wishes, "O that I could but have one draught of the water of the well of Beth-lehem!" With the water of that well he had often refreshed himself when he was a youth, and nothing now will serve him but that, though it is almost impossible to come at it. He strangely indulged a humour which he could give no reason for. Other water might quench his thirst as well, but he had a fancy for that above any. It is folly to entertain such an opinion, when the more usual follows, and not be content to quench our appetites, when they go out inordinately toward those things that really are more pleasant and grateful than other things. Be not desirous of dainties, much more, when they are thus set upon such things as only please a humour. (2.) How bravely this three mighty men, Abishai, Benaiah, and another not named, ventured through the camp of the Philistines, v. 24. Upon this occasion they fetched water from the well of Beth-lehem, without David's knowledge. When he wished for it, he was far from desiring that any of his men should venture their lives for it; but these three did, (v. 16.) to show, (1.) How much they valued his prince, and with what pleasure they could run the greatest hazards, and undergo the greatest hardships, in his service. David, though anointed
king, was, as yet, an exile, a poor prince that had no external advantages to recommend him to the affection and esteem of his attendants, nor was he in any capacity to prefer or reward them; yet those three were thus zealous for his satisfaction, firmly believing the time of recompense would come. Let us be willing to venture in the cause of Christ, even when it is a suffering cause, as those who are assured that it will prevail, and that God will uphold and prosper them, though they so forward to expose themselves, upon the least hint of their prince's mind, and so ambitious to please him? And shall we not covet to approve ourselves to our Lord Jesus, by a ready compliance with every intimation of his will, given us by his word, Spirit, and providence? [2.] How little they feared the Philistines. They were glad of an occasion to defy them. We admire they broke no word, and with such terror in their looks that the Philistines durst not oppose them, is not certain; it should seem, they forced their way, sword in hand. But see, (3.) How self-denyingly David, when he had this far-fetched, dear-bought water, poured it before the Lord, v. 16. [1.] Thus he would show the tender regard he had to the Lord's house, and that he was not from being prodigal of their blood, Ps. 72. 14. In God's sight, the death of his saints is precious. [2.] Thus he would testify his sorrow for speaking that foolish word which occasioned those men to put their lives in their hands. Great men should take heed what they say, lest any bad use be made of it by those about them. [3.] Thus he would prevent the like rashness in any of his men for the future. Who would serve his own foolish fancy, and punish himself for entertaining and indulging it, and show that he had sober thoughts to correct his rash ones, and knew how to deny himself even in that which he was most fond of. Such generous mortifications become the wise, the great, and the good. [5.] Thus he would honour God, and give glory to him; the water purchased at this rate, he thought too precious for his own drinking; and it only to be procured out to God as a drink-offer of. If it was the blood of these men, it was God's due, for the blood was always his. [6.] Bishop Patrick speaks of some who think that David hereby showed that it was not material water he longed for, but the Messiah, who had the water of life; who, he knew, should be born at Beth-lehem, which the Philistines therefore should not be able to destroy. 

Lxxv. Dhr. Dav., and ch. that water as very precious, which was got at the hazard of these men's blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits, for the purchasing of which our blessed Saviour shed his blood? Let us not undervalue the blood of the covenant, as they do, that undervalue the blessings of the covenant. 

2. The brave actions of two of them on other occasions. Abishai slew three hundred men at once, 18. But we have not what did many great things. (1.) He slew two Moabites that were lion-like men, so bold and strong, so fierce and furious. (2.) He slew a lion in a pit, either in his own defence, as Samson, or, perhaps, in kindness to the country, a lion that had done mischief. It being in a time of snow, he was more stiff, and the lion more fierce and ravenous, and yet he mastered him. (3.) He slew an Egyptian of great occasion, who was well armed, but Beniaiah attacked him with no other weapon than a walking-staff, dexterously wrested his spear out of his hand, and slew him with it, v. 21. For these, and the like exploits, David preferred him to be captain of the life-guard of standing forces, v. 23.

III. Inferior to the second three, but of great note, were the thirty-one here mentioned by name, v. 24, &c. Asahel is the first, who was slain by Abner in the beginning of David's reign, but lost not his place in this catalogue. Elhanan is the next, brother to Eleazar, one of the first three, v. 9. The surnames here given them, are taken, as it should seem, from the places of their birth or habitation; the Philippian Philistine was originally from Philippi. From all parts of the nation, the most wise and valiant were picked up to serve the king. Several of these here named, we find captains of the twelve courses which David appointed, one for each month in the year, 1 Chron. 27. They that did worthily, were preferred according to their merits. One of them was the son of Alithophichel (v. 54.) the son famous in their time; and was taken at the council-board. But to find Uriah the Hittite bringing up the rear of these worthless, as it revives the remembrance of David's sin, so it aggravates it; that a man who deserved so well of his king and country should be so ill treated. Joab is not mentioned among all these, either, 1. Because he was so great, that he did not need to be mentioned; the first of the first three, sat chief among the captains, but Joab was chosen them as general of the host. Or, 2. Because he was so bad, that he did not deserve to be mentioned; for though he was confessedly a great soldier, and one that had so much religion in him as to dedicate of his spoils to the house of God, (1 Chron. 26. 28.) yet he lost at so much honour by slaying two of David's friends, as ever he got by slaying his enemies.

Christ, the Son of David, has worthies too, who, like David's, are influenced by his example, fight his battles against the spiritual enemies of his kingdom, and in his strength are more than conquerors. Christ's apostles were his immediate attendants, did suffer great things for him, and, at length, came to reign with him. They are mentioned with honour in the New Testament, as these in the Old, especially, Rev. 21. 14. Nay, all the good soldiers of Jesus Christ have their names better preserved than even these worthies have; for they are written in heaven. This honour have all his saints.

CHAP. XXIV.

The last words of David, which we read in the chapter before, were admirably good, but in this chapter we read some of his last works, which were not of the best; yet he repented of his first works again, and so he finished well. We have here, I. His sin, which was numbering the people in the pride of his heart, v. 1. . 9. II. His conviction of the sin, and repentance for it, v. 10. III. The judgment inflicted upon him for it, v. 11. 15. IV. The staying of the judgment, v. 16, 17, V. The erecting of an altar in token of God's reconciliation to him and his people, v. 18. . 29.

1. AND again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 2. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. 3. And Joab said unto the king, Now the Lord thy God add unto the people, how many soever they be, a hundred fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it; but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? 4. Notwithstanding the king's word prevailed
II. Samuel, XXIV.

against Joab, and against the captains of the host: and Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king, to number the people of Israel. 5. And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Arnon, on the right side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of God, and toward Jazer: 6. Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Falshin-hodshin; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon. 7. And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites: and they went out to the south of Judah, even to Beer-sheba. 8. So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king: and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Here we have,

1. The orders which David gave to Joab to number the people of Israel and Judah, v. 1, 2. Two things here seem strange.

1. The sinfulness of this. What harm was there in it? Did not Moses twice number the people, without any harm? Does not political arithmetic come in among the other policies of a prince? Should not the shepherd know the number of his sheep? Does not the Son of David know all his own by name? Might not he make good use of this calculation? What evil has he done, if he do this? Answer. It is certain that it was a sin, and a great sin: but where the evil of it lay is not so certain. (1.) Some think that the fault was, that he numbered them; Does not political arithmetic stand condemned, if they were but of stature and strength able to bear arms; and that was the reason why this account was not enrolled, because it was illegal, 1 Chron. 27. 23. 24. (2.) Others think the fault was, that he did not require the half-shekel which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary, whenever the people were numbered, as a reason for their souls, Exod. 30. 12. (3.) Others think that he did it with a design to impose a tribute upon them for himself, and to be put into his treasury; this is by way of poll, which, when he knew their numbers, he could tell what it would amount to; but nothing of this appears, nor was David ever a raiser of taxes. (4.) This was the fault, that he had no orders from God to do it, nor was there any occasion for the doing of it. It was a needless trouble both to himself, and to his people. Some think that it was an affront to the ancient promise which God made to Abraham, that his seed should be innumerable as the dust of the earth: it savoured of distrust of that promise, or a design to show that it was not fulfilled in the letter of it. He would number those of whom God had said that they could not be numbered. Those know not what they do that go about to disgrace the word of God. (5.) That which was the worst thing in numbering the people, was, that David did it in the pride of his heart, which was Hezekiah's sin in showing his treasures to the ambassadors. [1.] It was a proud conceit of his greatness, in having the command of so numerous a people, as if their increase had been owing to any conduct of his, which was to be ascribed purely to the blessing of God. [2.] It was a proud confidence in his own strength. By publishing among the nations the number of his people, he thought to appear the more formidable; and doubted not, if he should have any war, that he should overpower his enemies with the multitude of his forces; trusting in an arm of flesh, more than he should have done, who had written the book of trusting in God only. God judges not of sin as we do; he appears to us harmless, or, at least, but a small offence, may be a great sin in the eye of God, who sees men's principles, and is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. But his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth.

2. The spring from which it is here said to arise, is yet more strange, v. 1. It is not strange that the anger of God should be raised against Israel; there was cause enough for it, they were unthankful for the blessings of David's government, and strangely drawn in to take part with Absalom first, and afterward with Sheba; we have reason to think that their peace and plenty made them secure and sensual, and for this, God was displeased with them; but that, in this displeasure, he should leave David to number the people, is very strange. We are told (ch. 1. v. 1.) that Satan provoked David to number Israel; Satan, as an enemy, suggested it for a sin, as he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ. God, as a righteous Judge, permitted it, with a design, from this sin of David, to take an occasion to punish other sins of Israel, which he might justly have punished them for without this. But, as before, he brought a blessing upon them for the sin of Saul, so now, a pestilence for the sin of David; that princes may, from these instances, learn, when the judgments of God are abroad, to suspect that their sins are the ground of the controversy, and may therefore repent and reform themselves, which should have a great influence upon national repentance and reformation; and that people may learn to pray for those in authority, that God would keep them from sin; because, if they fall, it is to our loss.

II. The opposition which Joab made to these orders. Even he was aware of David's folly and vain-glory in this design. He observed that David gave no reason for it, only, Number the people, that I may know the number of the people; and therefore endeavours to divert his pride, and in a much more decent manner than he had before endeavoured to divert his passion upon the death of Absalom. He spoke roughly and insultingly, (ch. 19. 5. 7.) but now, as became him, (v. 3.) Now the Lord thy God add unto the people a hundred fold. There is no occasion either to tax them, or enlist or distribute them. They are all as you and I, and it is his wish, that their number might increase, and that the king, though old, might live to see it, and have the satisfaction of it. What then is there of this doing? Pa-ther is not a number—Leave it to the poor to count their flocks. Especially, why should David, who speaks so much of delighting in God, and the exercises of devotion, and who, being old, one would think, should have put away childish things, take a pleasure (so he calls it modestly, but means taking a pride) in a thing of this nature? Note. Many things, not in themselves sinful, turn into sin to us by our inordinate delighting in them. Joab was aware of David's vanity herein, but he himself was not. It would be good for us to have a friend that would faithfully admonish us, when we say or do any thing proud or vain-glorious, for we often do so, and are not ourselves aware of it.
III. The orders executed notwithstanding. The king's word prevailed; (v. 4.) he would have it done. But, for all that, he would not put away the law, lest he be thought to grudge his time and pains in the king's service. It is an unhappiness to great men, to have those about them, that will aid them and serve them in that which is evil; Jeab, according to order, applied himself with some reluctancy to this unpleasant task, and took the captains of the host to help him.

They began in the most distant places; in the east first, on the other side Jordan; (v. 5.) then they went toward Dan in the north; (v. 6.) and to Tyre on the east, and thence to Beer-sheba in the south, v. 7.

Above nine months were spent in taking this account; a great deal of trouble and amazement was occasioned by it in the country; (v. 8.) and the sum total was, at length, brought to the king at Jerusalem, v. 9. Whether the numbers answered David's expectation or no, we are not told, nor whether the account fed his pride or mortified it. They were very many, but, it may be, not so many as he thought they were. They had not increased in Canaan as they had in Egypt, nor were much more than double to what they were when they came into Canaan under Joshua, about 400 years before; yet it is an evidence that Canaan was a very fruitful land, that so many thousands were maintained within so narrow a compass.

10. And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly, v. 11. For when David was up in the morning, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12. Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 13. So Gad came to David, and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. 14. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait; let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great,) and let me not fall into the hand of man. 15. So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, seventy thousand men. 16. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite. 17. And David spake unto the Lord, when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

We have here David repenting of the sin, and yet punished for it; God repenting of the judgment, and David thereby made more penitent.

1. Here is David's penitent reflection upon, and confession of, his sin in numbering the people. While the numbering was in doing, during all those nine months, we do not find that David was sensible of his sin, (for then he would have countermanded the orders he had given,) but when the account was finished, and laid before him, that very night, his conscience was awakened, and he felt the pain of it, just then when he promised himself the pleasure of it. When he was about to feast on the satisfaction of the numbers of his people, it was turned into the gall of asps within him; sense of the sin cast a damp upon the joy, v. 10. 1. He was convinced of his sin; his heart smote him, before the prophet came to him, (I think it should not be read for, v. 11, but, and when David was up, so it is in the original,) his conscience showed him the evil of what he had done; now that appeared sin, and exceeding sinful, which, before, he saw no harm in. He reflected upon it with great regret, and his heart reproached him for it: it is a good thing, when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it; it is a good sign of a principle of grace in the heart, and a good step toward repentance and reformation. 2. He confessed it to God, and begged earnestly for the forgiveness of it. (1.) He owns he had sinned, sinned greatly, though to others it might seem no sin at all, or a very little one. Their consciences are tender and well informed, see that evil in sin, which others do not see. (2.) He owns he had done foolishly, very foolishly, because he had done it in the pride of his heart; and it was folly for him to be proud of the numbers of his people; when they were God's people, not his, and as many as they were, God could soon make them fewer. (3.) He cries to God for pardon; I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of this sin. 4. If we confess our sins, we may pray in faith that God will forgive them, and take away, by pardoning mercy, that iniquity which we cast away by sincere repentance.

II. The just and necessary correction which he suffered for this sin. David had been full of tossings to and fro, all night, under the sense of this sin, no rest in his bones because of it, and arose in the morning, expecting to hear of God's displeasure against him for what he had done, or designing to speak with Gad his seer concerning it: Gad is called his seer, because he had him always at hand to advise with in the things of God, and made use of him as his confessor and counsellor, but God prevented him, and directed the prophet God what to say to him; (v. 11.) and it is taken for granted, 1. That David did must be chastised for this fault; it is too great a crime, and reflects too much dishonour upon God, to go unpunished, even in David himself; of the seven things that God hates, pride is the first, Prov. 6. 17. Note, These who truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, yet are often made to smart for them in this world. 2. The punishment must answer to the sin. He was proud of the numbers of his people, and therefore the judgment must be chastened with for this sin, must be such as will make them fewer. Note, What we make the matter of our pride, it is just with God to take from us, or imbitter to us; and, some way or other, to make the matter of our
punishment. 3. It must be such a punishment as the people must have a large share in, for God's anger was kindled against Israel, v. 1. Though it was David's sin that immediately opened the sluice, the sins of the people all contributed to the deluge.

... to the punishment that must be inflicted,

(1.) David is bid to choose what rod he will be beaten with, v. 13, 13. His heavenly Father must correct him, but, to show that he does not do it willingly, he gives David leave to make choice whether it shall be by war, famine, or pestilence, three sore judgments, and which greatly weaken and diminish a people. God, by putting him thus to his choice, designed, [1.] To humble him the more for his sin, which was so heinous, and so great, that he came to consider each of these judgments as exceeding dreadful. [2.] To upbraid him with the proud conceit he had of his own sovereignty over Israel: he that is so great a prince, begins to think he may have what he will; "Come," says God, "then, which wilt thou have of these three things"? Compare Jer. 34. 17; 1 proclaim a liberty for you, but it is such a liberty as this of David's, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the sword, to death, death, Or. [3.] To give him some encouragement under the correction, letting him know that God did not cast him out of communion with himself, but that still his secret was with him, and in afflicting him, he considered his frame, and what he could best bear. Or, [4.] That he might the more patiently bear the rod, when it was a rod of his own choosing. The prophet bids him advise with himself, and then tell him what answer he should return to him that sent him. Note, Ministers are sent of God to us, and they must give an account of the success of their embassy; it concerns us therefore to consider, what answer they shall return from us, that they may give up their account of us with joy.

(2.) He excepts only against the judgment of the sword, and, for the other two, he refers himself to God, but intimates his choice of the pestilence rather; (v. 14.) I am in a great strait, and well he might be, when fear, and the fit, and the sore are before him, and if he escape one, he inevitably falls into the other, Jer. 48. 43, 44. Note, Sin brings men into straits; wise and good men often distress themselves by their own folly. [1.] He begs that he may not fall into the hand of men; whatever comes, Let us not flee three months before our enemies; that willully all the glory of David's triumphs, and give occasion to the enemies of God and Israel to have themselves proudly. See Deut. 23. 26, 27. Their tender mercies are cruel; and in three months they will do that damage to the nation, which many years will not repair. But, [2.] He casts himself upon God; Let us fall now into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. Men are God's hand, so they are called, Ps. 17. 14. the sword of his sending, yet there are some judgments which come more immediately from his hand than others, as famine and pestilence; and which of these shall be the scourge, he refers it to God, who chooses the shortest, that he might the sooner testify his being reconciled. But some think that David, by these words, intimates his choice of the pestilence. The hand had not yet recovered the famine under which it smarmed three years upon the Gibonites' account, and therefore let us not be concerned what other way but to be the benefit of our neighbours; hence we read of the reproof of famine; (Ezek. 36. 30.) but, if Israel must be diminished, let it be by the pestilence, for that is falling into the hands of the Lord, who usually inflicted that judgment by the hand of his own immediate servants, the angels, as in the death of the first-born of Egypt. That is a judgment to which David himself, and his own family, lie as open as the meanest subject, but not so, either to famine or sword, and therefore David, tenderly conscious of his guilt, chooses that. Sword and famine will be more welcome as well as another, but, it may be thought, the destroyer is stretched out upon his hand and first most his sword against those who are known to God to be most guilty. This will be the shortest continuance, and he dreads the thought of lying long under the tokens of God's displeasure. It is a dreadful thing, the apostle says, to fall into the hands of the living God; (Heb. 10. 31.) a fearful thing indeed for sinners that have, by their impenitency, shut themselves off from all hope of his mercy: but David, a penitent, dares cast himself into that extremity, hoping he shall find that his mercies are great. Good men, even when they are under God's frowns, yet will entertain no other than good thoughts of him. Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.

(3.) A pestilence is, accordingly, sent, (v. 15.) from Dan to Beer-sheba, from one end of the kingdom to the other, which shows it to come immediately from God's hand, and not from any natural causes: David is then bid to rejoice in the Lord, and not by ordinary means. For the continuance of it, it lasted from morning (this very morning on which it was put to David's choice) to the time appointed, that is, to the third day, so Mr. Poole: or only to the evening of the first day, the time appointed for the evening sacrifice, so Bishop Patrick and others, who reckon that the pestilence lasted but nine hours, and that, in compassion to David, God shortened the time he had first mentioned. The execution the pestilence did, was very severe; there died seventy thousand men, that were all well, and sick, and dead, in a few hours. What a great cry, may we suppose, was there now throughout all the land of Israel, as there was in Egypt when the first-born were slain: but that was at midnight, this, in the day-time, Ps. 91. 6. See the power of the angels, when God gives them commission, either to save or to destroy. Job is nine months in passing with his pen, the angel but nine hours in passing with his sword, through all the coasts and corners of the land of Israel. See how easily God can bring down the proudest sinners, and how much we owe daily to the divine patience. David's adultery is punished, for the present, only with the death of one infant, his pride, with the death of all these thousands, so much does God hate pride. The number that sliowd throughout the land was seven and twenty, seventy thousand and about one in twenty now; we may suppose, David's flesh trembled for fear of God, and he was afraid of his judgments, Ps. 119. 120.

III. God's gracious relaxation of the judgment, when it began to be inflicted upon Jerusalem, v. 16. The angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem, as if he intended to do greater execution there than anywhere else, even to destroy it; the country had drunk of that cup, and now he gives every cup to others, as famine and pestilence; and which of these shall be the scourge, he refers it to God, who chooses the shortest, that he might the sooner testify his being reconciled. But some think that David, by these words, intimates his choice of the pestilence. The hand had not yet recovered the famine under which it smarmed three years upon the Gibonites' account, and therefore let us not be concerned what other way but to be the benefit of our neighbours; hence we read of the reproof of famine; (Ezek. 36. 30.) but, if Israel must be diminished, let it be by the pestilence, for that is falling into the hands of the Lord, who usually inflicted that judgment by the hand of his own immediate servants, the angels, as in the death of
And neither Goil they he and of God's escape; them, was stretching out to destroy, a flaming sword; saw him ready to shear it, upon the orders given him to stay proceedings; seeing this, he spoke, not to the angel, (he knew better than to address himself to the servant in the presence of the Master, or to give that honour to the creature, which is the Creature due,) but to the Lord, and said, Lo, I have sinned. Note. True penitents, the more they receive of God's sparing pardoning mercy, the more humbled they are for sin, and the more resolved against it. They shall be ashamed, when I am pacified toward them. Ezek. 16. 63. Observe, 1. How he criminations himself, as if he could never speak ill enough of his own fault, "I have sinned, and I have done wickedly, man is the criminal, and therefore on me be the cross; Let thy hand be against me, and my father's house; I am the sinner, let me be the sufferer;" so willing was he to accept the punishment of his iniquity, though he was worth ten thousand of them. 2. How he intercedes for the people, whose bitter lamentations made his heart to ache, and his ears to tingle; These sheeps, what have they done? Done! Why they had done much amiss, it was their sin that provoked God. David himself to do as he did; yet, as became a penitent, he is severe upon his own faults, while he extenuates their's. Most people, when God's judgments are abroad, charge others with being the cause of them, and care not who falls by them, so they can escape; but David's penitent and public spirit was otherwise affected. Let this remind us of the grace of our Lord Jesus, who gave himself for our sins, and was willing that God's hand should be against him, that we might escape. The shepherd was smitten, that the sheep might be spared.

18. And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19. And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up, as the Lord commanded. 20. And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him; and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. 21. And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing-floor of thee, to build an altar unto the Lord, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 22. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. 23. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king: and Araunah said unto the king, The Lord thy God accept thee. 24. And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver. 25. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings. So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Here is,
1. A command sent to David, to erect an altar in the place where he saw the angel, v. 18. This was to intone to David. 1. Thus, by his submission and humiliation, God was now thoroughly reconciled to him; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have accepted an offering, and therefore would not have ordered him to build an altar. God's encouraging us to offer to him spiritual sacrifices, is a comfortable evidence of his reconciling us to himself. 2. That peace is made between God and sinners by sacrifice, and not otherwise, even by Christ the great Propitiation, of whom all the legal sacrifices were types. It is for his sake, that the destroying angel is bid to stay his hand. 3. That when God's judgments are grudgingly stayed, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness, to his praise. This altar was to be for thank-offerings. See Isa. 12. 1.

11. The purchase which David made of the ground, in order hereunto, when it was owned was a Jebusite, Araunah by name, proselyted, no doubt, to the Jewish religion, though by birth a Gentile, and therefore allowed, not only to dwell among the Israelites, but to have a possession of his own in a city, Lev. 25. 29, 30. The piece of ground was a threshing-floor, a mean place, yet thus dignified; a place of labour, therefore thus dignified. Now, 1. David went in person to the owner, to treat with him. See his justice, that he would not make much use as it in the present exigence, though the proprietor was an alien, through himself was a king, and though he had express orders from God to rear an altar there, till he had bought it, and paid for it. God hates robbery for burnt-offering. See his humility, how far he was from taking state; though a king, he was now a penitent, and therefore, in token of his self-abasement, he neither sent his servant, nor his representatives, nor himself, but went himself, as was necessary to deal with him, but went himself; (v. 19.) and, though it looked like a diminution of himself, he lost no honour by it; Araunah, when he saw him, went and bowed himself to the ground before him, v. 20. Great men will be never the less respected for their humility, but the more.

2. Araunah, when he understood his business, (v. 21.) gave him more than he desired, not only the ground to build his altar on, but oxen for burnt-sacrifice, and other things that might be of use to him in the service, (v. 22.) and all this, gratis, and a good prayer into the bargain; The Lord thy God accept thee! This he did, (1.) Because he had a generous spirit with a great estate. He gave as a king, (v. 23.) though an ordinary subject, he had the spirit of a prince. In the Hebrew it is, He gave, even the king to the king. (2.) Because he greatly honoured David, though his conqueror, upon the score of his personal merits, and never thought he could do too much to oblige him. (3.) Because he had an affection for Israel, and earnestly desired that the plague might be stayed; and the honour of its being stayed at his threshing-floor he would account a valuable consideration for all he now tendered to David.
3. David resolves to pay the full value of it, and does so, v. 24. Here were two generous souls well met. Araunah is very willing to give; but David is determined to buy, and for a good reason—he will not offer that to God, which cost him nothing. He would not take advantage of the pious Jebusite's generosity; he thanks him, no doubt, for his kind offer, but pays him now fifty shekels of silver, for the floor and the oxen, for the present service, and afterward 600 shekels of gold for the ground adjoining, to build the temple on. Note, Those know not what religion is, all whose care it is, to make it cheap and easy to themselves, and who are best pleased with that which costs them least pains or money. What have we our substance for, but to honour God with it; and how can it be better bestowed?

III. The building of the altar, and the offering of the proper sacrifices upon it; (v. 25.) burnt-offerings, to the glory of God's justice in the execution that had been done; and peace-offerings, to the glory of his mercy in the seasonable staying of the process. Hereupon, God showed (it is supposed by fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices) that he was entreated for the land, and that it was in mercy, that the plague was removed, and in token of God's being reconciled both to prince and people. Christ is our Altar, our Sacrifice; in him alone we may expect to find favour with God, to escape his wrath, and the sword, the flaming sword, of that cherubim, which keeps the way of the tree of life.