AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES, CALLED

GENESIS.

I. We have now before us the Holy Bible, or Book, for so Bible signifies. We call it the Book, by way of eminence; for it is incomparably the best book that ever was written, the Book of books, shining like the sun, in the firmament of learning; other valuable and useful books, like the moon and stars, borrowing their light from it. We call it the Holy Book; because it was written by holy men, and indited by the Holy Ghost; it is perfectly pure from all falsehood and corrupt intention; and the manifest tendency of it is to promote holiness among men. The great things of God’s Law and Gospel are here written to us, that they might be reduced to a greater certainty, might spread further, remain longer, and be transmitted to distant places and ages, more pure and entire than possibly they could be by report and tradition: and we shall have a great deal to answer for, if these things which belong to our hearer, being thus committed to us in black and white, be neglected by us as a strange and foreign thing. Hos. viii. 12

The Scriptures, or Writings of the several inspired penmen, from Moses down to St. John, in which divine light, like that of the morning, shone gradually, (the sacred Canon being now completed,) are all put together in this blessed Bible, which, thanks be to God, we have in our hands, and they make as perfect a day as we are to expect on this side heaven. Every part was good, but altogether very good. This is the light that shines in a dark place, 2 Peter i. 19, and a dark place indeed the world would be, without the Bible.

II. We have before us that part of the Bible which we call the Old Testament, containing the acts and monuments of the Church, from the creation almost to the coming of Christ in the flesh, which was about four thousand years, the truths then revealed, the laws then enacted, the devotions then paid, the prophecies then given, and the events which concerned that distinguished body, so far as God saw fit to preserve to us the knowledge of them. This is called a Testament, or Covenant, (Σατάνας,) because it was a settled declaration of the will of God concerning man in a Federal way, and had its force from the designed death of the great Tector, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. xiii. 8.

It is called the Old Testament, with relation to the New, which does not cancel and supersede it, but crown and perfect it, by the bringing in of that better hope which was typified and foretold in it: the Old Testament still remains glorious, though the New far exceeds in glory, 2 Cor. iii. 9.

III. We have before us that part of the Old Testament, which we call the Pentateuch, or five Books of Moses, that servant of the Lord who excelled all the other prophets, and typified the Great Prophet. In our Saviour’s distribution of the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, or Hagiographa, these are the Law; for they contain not only the laws given to Israel, in the four last, but the laws given to Adam, to Noah, and to Abraham, in the first. These five books were, for ought we know, the first that ever were written; for we have not the least mention of any writing in all the book of Genesis, nor till God bid Moses write, Exod. xvii. 14.; and some think Moses himself never learned to write, till God set him his copy in the writing of the Ten Commandments upon the tables of stone. However, we are sure these books are the most ancient writings now extant, and therefore best able to give us a satisfactory account of the most ancient things.

IV. We have before us the first and longest of those five books, which we call Genesis; written, some think, when Moses was in Midian, for the instruction and comfort of his suffering brethren in Egypt. I rather think he wrote it in the wilderness, after he had been in the Mount with God, where, probably, he received full and particular instructions for the writing of it. And as he framed the tabernacle, so he did the more excellent and durable fabric of this book, exactly according to the pattern shown him in the mount; in which it is better to resolve the certainty of the things herein contained, than into any tradition which possibly might be handed down from Adam to Methuselah, from him to Shem, from him to Abraham, and so to the family of Jacob. Genesis is a name borrowed from the Greek. It signifies the original, or generation; fity is this book so called, for it is a history of originals—the creation of the world, the entrance of sin and death into it, the invention of arts, the rise of nations, and especially the planting of the church, and the state of it in its early days. It is also a history of generations—the generations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, &c. not endless, but useful genealogies. The beginning of the New Testament is called Genesis too, Matt. i. 1. Βίβλος γενεαλογιών. The Book of the Genesis, or Generation, of Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for that Book which shows us our remedy, as this opens our wound. Lord, open our eyes, that we may see the wondrous things both of thy Law and Gospel.
The foundation of all religion being laid in our relation to God as our Creator, it was fit that that book of divine revelation should be handed down to the rude, and rule, of religion in the world, should begin, as it does, with a full and plain account of the creation of the world—in answer to that first inquiry of a good conscience, Where is God my Maker? Job 33. 10. Concerning this, the pagan philosophers wretchedly blundered, and became vain in their imaginations; some asserting the world's eternity and self-existence, others ascribing it to the plurality of atoms: thus the world by wisdom knew not God, but took a great deal of pains to lose him. The holy scripture, therefore, designating by revealed religion to maintain and improve natural religion, to repair the decays of it, and supply the defects of the revival or promulgation of the law of nature; lays down, at first, this principle of the unclouded light of nature. That this world was, in the beginning of time, created by a Being of infinite wisdom and power, who was himself before all things, and all worlds. The entrance into God's word gives this light, Ps. 119. 130. The first verse of the Bible gives us a sure and better, a more satisfying and useful knowledge of the origin of the universe, than all the volumes of the philosophers. The lively faith of humble Christians understands this matter better than the elevated fancy of the greatest wis, Heb. 11. 3.

We have three things in this chapter, I. The general idea of the creation. Gen. 1., 2. 11. A particular account of the several days' work, registered, as in a journal, distinctly and in order. The creation of the light, the first day, v. 3. 5.; of the firmament, the second day, v. 6., 8. of the sea, the third day, v. 9. 13.; of the lights of heaven, the fourth day, v. 14. 19.; of the fish and fowl, the fifth day, v. 20. 23.; of the beasts, v. 24. 25.; of man, v. 26. 28.; and of food for both, the sixth day, v. 29. 30. III. The review and approbation of the whole work, v. 31.

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

In this verse we have the work of creation in its ephison, and in its Embryo.

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

1. The effect produced; the heaven and the earth, that is, the world, including the whole frame and furnishing of the universe, the world and all things therein, Acts 17. 24. The world is a great house, consisting of upper and lower stories, the structure stately and magnificent, uniform and convenient, and every room well and wisely furnished. It is the visible part of the creation that Moses here designs to account for; therefore, he mentions not the creation of angels: but as the earth has not only its riches washed with rivers and brooks, but also its bowels enriched with metals and precious stones, which partake more of its solid nature and are more valuable, though the creation of them is not mentioned here: so the heavens are not only beautified to our eye with glorious lamps which garnish its outside, of whose creation we here read, but they are within replenished with glorious beings, out of our sight, more celestial, and more surpassing them in worth and excellency, than the gold or silver, do the lilies of the field. In the visible world it is easy to observe, (1.) Great variety; several sorts of beings vastly differing in their nature and constitution from each other. Lord, how manifold are thy works, and all good! (2.) Great beauty; the azure sky and verdant earth are charming to the eye of the curious spectator, much more the ornaments of both. How transcendent then must the beauty of the Creator be! (3.) Great exactness and accuracy; to these, that, with the help of microscopes, narrowly look into the works of nature, they appear far more fine than in any of the works of art. (4.) Great fitness; it is not a lump of dust, a sort of inanimate matter, but there is virtue more or less, in every creature; the earth itself has a magnetic power. (5.) Great order; a mutual dependence of being, an exact harmony of motions, and an admirable chain and connexion of causes. (6.) Great mystery; there are phenomena in nature, which cannot be solved, secrets which cannot be fathomed or accounted for. But from what we see of heaven and earth, we may easily enough in fancy entertain an idea of the work of the great Creator, and may furnish ourselves with abundant matter for his praises. And let us make and place, as men, remind us of our duty as Christians, which is, always to keep heaven in our eye, and the earth under our feet.

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

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

4. When this work was produced; In the beginning, that is, in the beginning of time, when that clock was first set a going: time begun with the production of these beings that are measured by time. Before the beginning of time there was none but that Infinite Being that inhabits eternity. Should we ask why God made the world no sooner, we should but ask why so much by work without knowledge; or how could there be sooner or later in eternity? And he did make it in the beginning of time, according to his eternal counsels before all time. The Jewish Rabbins have a saving, that there were seven things which God created before the world, by which they only mean to express the excellency of
Acts see happy and That most God this 2. tertiary; and the provocation would would the mass of matter be blinded to this mind. (2.) That God is sovereign Lord of all, by an uncontestable right. If he be the Creator, no doubt, he is the Owner and Possessor, of heaven and earth. (3.) That with God all things are possible, and therefore happy are the people that have him for their God, and whose help and hope stand in his name, Ps. 121. 2.—124. 8. (4.) That the God we serve is worthy of, and yet is exalted far above, all blessing and praise, Neh. 9. 5. 6. If he made the world, he needs not our services, nor can be benefited by them, Acts 17. 24, 25, and yet he justly requires them, and deserves our praise, Rev. 4. 11. If all is of him, all must be to him.

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

1. A chaos was the first matter; it is here called the earth, (though the earth, properly-taken, was not made till the third day, v. 10.) because it did most resemble that which afterward was called earth, mere earth, destitute of its ornaments, such a heavy unwieldy mass was it; it is also called the deep, both for its vastness, and because the waters which afterward separated from the earth, were now mingled with it. This immense mass of matter was it, out of which all bodies, even the firmament and visible heavens themselves, were afterward produced by the power of the Eternal Word. The Creator could have made his work perfect at first, but by this gradual proceeding he would show what is, ordinarily, the method of his providence and grace. Observe the description of this chaos. (1.) There was nothing in it desirable to be seen, for it was without form, and void. Yehovah and Bohu, confusion and emptiness; so these words are rendered, Isa. 34. 11. It was shapeless, it was useless, it was without inhabitants, without ornaments, the shadow or rough draught of things to come, and not the image of the things, Heb. 10. 1. The earth is almost reduced to the same condition again by that lying in the creation ground, Gen. 3. 17, where it is said, I beheld the earth, and behold it was without form, and void. To those who have their hearts in heaven, this lower world, in comparison with that upper, still appears to be nothing but confusion and emptiness. There is no true beauty to be seen, no satisfying fulness to be enjoyed, in this earth, but in God only. (2.) If there had been anything desirable to be seen, yet there was nothing to see by; for darkness, thick darkness, was upon the face of the deep. God did not create this darkness, (as he is said to create the darkness of affliction, Isa. 45. 7.) for it was only the want of light, which yet could not be said to be wanted, till something was made, that might be seen by; nor needs the want of it be much complained of, when there was nothing to be seen but confusion and emptiness. If the world was made by his word, if he made himself upon the dead child; as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and hovers over them, to warm and cherish them, Matt. 23, 37, as the eagle stirs up her nest, and flutters over her young, (it is the same word that is here used,) Deut. 32. 11. Learn hence, That God is not only the Author of all being, but the Fountain of life, and Spring of motion. Dead matter would be for ever dead, if he did not quicken it. And this makes it credible to us, that God should raise the dead. That power which brought such a world as this, out of confusion, emptiness, and darkness, at the beginning of time, can, at the end of time, bring our vile bodies out of the grave, though it be a land of darkness as darkness itself, and without any order, Job. 10. 22, and can make them glorious bodies.

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

We have here a further account of the first day's work. In which observe, I. That the first of all visible beings which God created, was light; not that by it he himself might see to work, (for the darkness and light are both alike to him,) but that by it we might see his works, and his glory in them, and might work our works while it is day. The works of Satan and his servants are works of darkness; but he that doeth truth, and doeth good, cometh to the light, and coveteth it, that his deeds may be made manifest, John 3. 21. Light is the great beauty and blessing of the universe: like the first-born, it doth, of all visible beings, most resemble its great Parent in purity and power; brightness and beneficence; it is of all things, the most perfect, and the most excellent. Ask not by what we see other things, and are sure that it is, yet we know not its nature, nor can describe what it is, or by what way the light is parted, Job 38. 19. 24. By the sight of it let us be led to, and assisted in, the believing contemplation of Him who is Light, infinite and eternal Light, J John 1. 5, and the Father of Lights, James 1. 17, and who dwells in inaccessible light, 1 Tim. 6. 16. In the new creation, the first thing wrought in the soul, is light: the blessed Spirit captivates the will and affections by enlightening the understanding, so coming into the heart by the door, like the good shepherd whose own it is, while sin and Satan, like thieves and robbers, climb up some other way. They that by sin were darkness, by grace become light in the Lord. And all the light was made by the word of God's power; he said, Let there be Light; he willed and appointed it, and it was done immediately; there was light, such a copy as exactly answered the original idea in the Eternal Mind. O the power of the word of God! He spake, and it was done; done really, effectually, and for perpetuity, not in show only; and to serve a present turn, for he commanded, and it stood fast: with him it was dictum, fac
tum—a word, and a world. The word of God, that is, his will and the good pleasure of it, is quick and powerful. Christ is the Word, the essential eternal Word, and by him the light was produced, for in him was light, and he is the true Light, the Light of the world, 1 John 9:5. The divine light which shone together or reconciled so mightily the power of God, the power of his word, and of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, opening the understanding, scattering the mists of ignorance and mistake, and giving the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, as, at first, God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, 2 Cor. 4:6. Darkness had been perpetually upon the face of fallen man, if the Son of God had not come, and given us an understanding, 1 John 1:5. 3. Though the darkness was now scattered by the light, yet it was not condemned to a perpetual banishment, but takes its turn with the light, and has its place, because it has its use; for as the light of the morning befriended the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriended the repose of the night, and draw the curtains about us, that we may sleep the better; See Job 7:2. God has thus divided time between light and darkness, because he would daily remind us that this is a world of mixtures and changes. In heaven there is perfect and perpetual light, and no darkness at all; in hell, utter darkness, and no gleam of light. In this world, between these two there is a great gulf fixed; but in this world, they are counterchanged, and we pass daily from one to another; that we may learn to expect the like vicissitudes in the providence of God, peace and trouble, joy and sorrow, and may set the one over against the other, and accommodate ourselves to both, as we do to the light and darkness, bidding both welcome, and making the best of both. 4. That God divided them from each other, distinguished them, early day, and the darkness he called Night. He gave them names, as Lord of both; for the day is his, the night also is his, Ps. 74:16. He is the Lord of time, and will be, till day and night shall come to an end, and the stream of time be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. Let us acknowledge God in the constant succession of day and night, and consecrate both to his honor, by working for him every day, and resting in him every night, and meditating in his law day and night. 5. That this was the first day's work, and a good day's work it was; the evening and the morning were the first day. The darkness of the evening was before the light of the morning, that it might serve for a foil to it, to set it off, and make it shine the brighter. This was not only the first day of the world, but the first day of the week. I observe it, to the honour of that day, because the new world began on the first day of the week likewise, in the resurrection of Christ, as the Light of the world, early in the morning. In him, the day-dawning from on high has visited the world; and happy are we, if ever happy, if that Day-star arise in our hearts. 6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. 7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. 3. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. We have here an account of the second day's work, the creation of the firmament: in which observe, 1. The command of God concerning it; Let there be a firmament, and expasion, so the Hebrew word signifies, like a sheet spread, or a curtain drawn out. This includes all that is visible above the earth, between it, and the third heaven; the air, its higher, middle, and lower regions; the celestial globe, and all the spheres and orbs of light above it reaches as high as the place where the stars are fixed, for that is called here the firmament of Heaven, v. 14, 15, and as low as the place where the birds fly, for that also is called the firmament of Heaven, v. 20. When God had made the light, he appointed the air to be the receptacle and vehicle of its beams, and to be as a medium of communication between the invisible and the visible world; for though between heaven and earth there is an inconceivable distance, yet there is not an impassable gulf, as there is between heaven and hell. This firmament is not a wall of partition, but a way of intercourse. See Job 26. 7.—57. 18. Ps. 104. 3. Amos 9. 6. 11. The creation of it. Lest it should seem as if God had only commanded it to be done, and some one else had done it, he adds, As God made the firmament. What God requires of us, he himself works in us, or it is not done. He that commands faith, holiness, and love, creates them by the power of his grace going along with his word, that he may have all the praise. Lord, give what thou commandest, and then command what thou pleasest. The firmament is said to be the work of God's fingers, Ps. 8. 3. Though the vastness of its extent declares it to be the work of his arm stretched out, yet the admirable fineness of its constitution shows it to be a curious piece of art, the work of his fingers. 11. The use and design of it; to divide the waters from the waters, that is, to distinguish between the waters that are wrapped up in the clouds, and those that cover the sea; the waters in the air, and those in the earth. See the difference between these two, carefully observed, Deut. 11. 10, 11, where Canaan is, upon this account, preferred to Egypt, that it not were made fruitful, with the waters that are under the firmament; but Canaan with waters from above, out of the firmament; even the dew of heaven, which tarrieth not for the sons of men, Mic. 5. 7. God has, in the firmament of his power, chambers, store-chambers, whence he watereth the earth, Ps. 104. 15.—65. 9, 10. He has also treasures, or magazines, of snow and hail,
which he hath reserved against the day of battle and war, Job 38. 22, 23. O what a great God is he, who has thus provided for the comfort of all that serve him, and the confusion of all that hate him! It is good among our friends, and bad having him for our enemy.

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

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

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

I. How the earth was prepared to be a habitation for man; by the gathering of the waters together, and the making of the dry land to appear; thus, instead of that confusion which was, v. 2, when earth and water were mixed in one great mass, behold, now, there is order, by such a separation as rendered them both useful. God said, Let it be so, and it was so; no sooner said than done. 1. The waters which had covered the earth, were ordered to retire, and to gather into one place, namely, those hollows which were fitted and appointed for their reception and rest: the waters, thus cleared, thus collected, and thus lodged in their proper place, he called Seas; for though they are many, in distant regions, and washing several shores, yet, in some above ground, or under ground, they have communication with each other, and so they are one, and the common receptacle of waters, into which all the rivers flow, Eccl. 1. 7. Waters and seas often, in scripture, signify troubles and afflictions, Ps. 69. 2, 14, 15, 22, 7. God's own people are not exempted from the common order of the world, so that, though they are under heaven, (there is none in heaven,) and that they are all in the place that God has appointed them, and within the bounds that he has set them. How the waters were gathered together, at first, and how they are still bound and limited by the same Almighty Hand that first confounded them, is elegantly described, Ps. 104. 6... and is there mentioned as matter of reflection, that they that go down to the sea in ships, ought to acknowledge daily the wisdom, power, and goodness, of the Creator, in making the great waters serviceable to man for trade and commerce; and they that tarry at home, must own themselves indebted to him that keeps the sea with bars and doors in its decreed place, and stirs its proud waves, Job 38. 19, 11. 2. The dry land was made to appear, and emerge out of the waters, and was called Earth, and given to the children of men. The earth, it seems, was in being, before; but it was of no use, because it was under water: thus many of God's gifts are received in vain, because they are buried; make them appear, and they become serviceable. We who, to this day, enjoy the benefit of the dry land, (though, since this, it was once deluged, and dried again,) must own ourselves tenants to, and dependents upon, that unlimited Blessing. These havens formed the dry land, out of the sea; 5. Joshua 1. 9.

II. How the earth was furnished for the maintenance and support of man, v. 11, 12. Present provision was now made, by the immediate products of the upstart earth, which in obedience to God's command, was no sooner made, than it became fruitful, and brought forth grass for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man. Provision was likewise made for time to come, by the perpetuating of the several kinds of vegetable life, which have been since thousand times, forfeited! Observe here, 1. That not only the earth is the Lord's, but the fitches thereof, and he is the rightful Owner and sovereign Disposer, not only of it, but of all its furniture. The earth was emptiness, v. 2. but now, by a word's speaking, it is become full of God's riches, and his they are still; his corn and his wine, his wool and his flax, Hos. 2. 3. Though the use of them is allowed to us, the property still remains in him, and to his service and honour they must be used. 2. That common providence is a continued creation, and in it, our Father worketh hitherto. The earth still remains, under the efficacy of this command, to bring forth grass, and herbs, and its annual products; though, being according to the common course of nature, they are not standing miracles, yet they are standing instances of the unwearyed power, and unexhausted goodness, of the world's great Maker and Master. 3. That though God, ordinarily, makes use of the agency of second causes, according to their nature, yet he neither needs them, nor is tied to them; for though the precious fruits of the earth are usually brought forth by the influences of the sun and moon, Deut. 53. 14, yet here we find the earth bearing a great abundance of fruit, probably ripe before the sun and moon were made. 4. That it is good to provide those necessary, before we have occasion to use them; before the beasts and man were made, here were grass and herb pre-
pared for them. God thus dealt wisely and graciously with man; let not man then be foolish and unwise for himself. 5. That God must have the glory of all the benefit we receive from the products of the earth, either for food or physic. It is he that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth, Hos. 2, 21, 22. And if we have, through grace, an interest in him who is the Fountain, when the streams are dried up, and the fig-tree doth not blossom, we may rejoice in him.

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

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

1. In general, v. 14, 15, where we have, 1. The command given concerning them; Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven. God had said, v. 3. Let there be light, and there was light: but that was, as it were, a chaos of light, scattered and confused; now it was collected and modelled, and made into several luminaries, and so rendered both more glorious, and more serviceable. God is the God of order, and not of confusion; and as he is Light, so he is the Father and Former of lights. These lights were to be in the firmament of heaven, that vast expanse which encloses the earth, and is contiguous to all of lesser magnitude, which we have called a candle, puts it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; Luke 8. 16; and a stately golden candlestick the firmament of heaven, from which these candles give light to all that are in the house. The firmament itself is spoken of as having brightness of its own, Dan. xii. 3, but that was not sufficient to give light to the earth; and perhaps, for that reason, it is not expressly said, until the second day's work, in which the firmament was made, that it was good, because, till it was adorned with these lights on the fourth day, it was not become serviceable to man. 2. The use they were intended to be of to this earth. (1.) They must be for the distinction of times, of day and night, summer and winter, which are interchanged by the motion of the sun; whose rising makes day, his setting night; his approach towards our tropic makes summer, his recession to the other, winter: and thus, under the sun, there is a season to every purpose, Eccl. 3. 1. (2.) They must be for the direction of actions. They are for signs of the change of weather, that the husbandman may order his affairs with discretion. Those have been for years, and seasons, and months, and days. Now the causes have begun to work, whether it will be fair or foul, Matt. 16. 2, 3. They do also give light upon the earth, that we may walk, (John 11. 9.) and work, (John 9. 4.) according as the duty of every day requires. The lights of heaven do not shine for themselves, nor for the world of spirits above, they need them not; but they shine for us, and for our pleasure and advantage. Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? a world so insignificant, so small, so unwise, made a viceable place; and yet, when God has set up these lights for us to work by, we sleep, or play, or trifle away the time of business, and neglect the great work we were sent into the world about! The lights of heaven are made to serve us, and they do it faithfully, and shine, in their season, without fail: but we are set as lights in this world to serve God; and do we in like manner, and with like constancy, and with so much faithfulness, as the sun and the moon? How ungrateful and inexcusable are we, if, when our light does not shine before God, as his lights shine before us, Matt. v. 14. We burn our Master's candles; but do not mind our Master's work.

2. In particular, v. 16...18. The lights of heaven are, the sun, moon, and stars; and these are all the work of God's hands. 1. The sun is the greatest light of all, one hundred and sixty-six times greater than the earth, and the most glorious and useful of all the lamps of heaven; a noble instance of the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness, and an invaluable blessing to the creatures of this lower world. Let us learn from Ps. 19. 1...6. how to give unto God the glory due to his name, as the Maker of the sun. 2. The moon is a lesser light, and yet is here reckoned one of the greater lights, because, though, in regard of its magnitude and borrowed light, it is inferior to many of the stars, yet, by virtue of its office, as ruler of the night, and in respect of its usefulness to the earth, it is more excellent than they. Those are most valuable, that are most serviceable; and those are the greater lights, not that have the best gifts, but that humbly and faithfully do the most good with them. Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, Matt. 20. 26. 3. He made the stars also; which are here spoken of, as they appear to vulgar eyes, with a low estimate, as menials, mere servants, and not, as we have been so accustomed to understand them, as sharers in that government, the moon and stars to rule by night. No more is meant, than that they give light, Jer. 31. 35. The best and most honourable way of ruling, is, by giving light, and doing good: those command respect, that live a useful life, and so shine as lights.

Learn from all this, (1.) The sin and folly of that violent inclination, that is so common to the sun, moon, and stars, which some think, took rise, or countenance at least, from some broken traditions in the patriarchal age, concerning the rule and dominion of the lights of heaven. But the account here given of them plainly shows that they are both God's creatures, and man's servants; and therefore it is both a great affront to God, and a great reproach to ourselves, to make deities of them, and give them
divine honours; see Deut. 4. 19. (2.) The duty and wisdom of daily worshipping God who made all these things, and made them to be that to us, which they are. The revolutions of the day and night oblige us to the solemn sacrifice of prayers and praises, every morning and evening.

20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. 21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind. and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. 23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

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

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

II. The blessing of them, in order to their continuance. Life is a wasting thing; its strength is not the strength of stones, it is a candle that will burn out, if it be not first blown out; and therefore the wise Creator not only made the individuals, but provided for the propagating of the several kinds, v. 22. God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply. God will bless his own works, and not forsake them; and what he doeth it shall be for a perpetuity, Eccl. 3. 14. "The providence of God's providence preserves all things, as, at first, his creating power produced them. Fruitfulness is the effect of God's blessing, and must be ascribed to it; the multiplying of the fish and fowl, from year to year, is still the fruit of this blessing. Well, let us give to God the glory of the continuance of these creatures to this day for the benefit of man. See Job 12. 10; It is pity that fishing and fowling, recreations innocent in themselves, should be ever abused to divert any from God and their duty, while they are capable of being improved to lead us to the contemplation of the wisdom, power, and goodness of him that made all these things, and to engage us to stand in awe of him, as the fish and fowl do of us.

24. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

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

26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl
of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

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

1. That man was made last of all the creatures, that it might not be suspected that he had been, any way, a helper to God in the creation of the world, that he who must be for ever humbling and mortifying to him, Where wast thou, or any of thy kind, when I laid the foundations of the earth? Job 38. 4. Yet it was both an honour and a favour to him, that he was made last; an honour, for the method of the creation was, to advance from that which was less perfect to that which was more so; and a favour, for it was not fit he should be lodged in the palace designed for him, till it was completely fitted up, and finished for his reception. Man, as soon as he was made, had the whole visible creation before him, both to contemplate, and to take the comfort of. Man was made the same day that the beasts were, because his body was made of the same earth with theirs; and while he is in the body, he inhabits the same earth with them; God forbid that by indulging the body and the desires of it, we should make ourselves more like the beasts that perish. 2. The method of the creation was a more singular and immediate act of divine wisdom and power than that of the other creatures. The narrative of it is introduced with something of solemnity, and a manifest distinction from the rest: hitherto, it had been said, Let there be light, and Let there be a firmament; or, Let the earth, or waters, bring forth such a thing; but now the word of command is turned into a word of communication, Let us make man in our image, after the image of us. The rest of the creatures were made: this is a work we must take into our own hands." In the former, he speaks as one having authority, in this as one having affection, for his delights were with the sons of men, Prov. 8. 31. It should seem as if this were the work which he longed to be at; as if he had said, "Having at last settled the precipices, let us now apply ourselves to the building of our temple." Man is to be a creature different from all that had been hitherto made. Flesh and spirit, heaven and earth, must be put together in him, and he must be allied to both worlds. And therefore God himself not only undertakes to make, but is pleased so to express himself, as if he called a council to consider of the making of him; Let us make man. The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, consult about it, and concur in it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Into that Great Name we are, with good reason, baptised, for to that Great Name owe our being. Let them rule man, who said, Let us make man.

III. That man was made in God's image, and after his likeness; two words to express the same thing, and making each other the more expressive; image and likeness denote the likest image, the nearest resemblance of any of the visible creatures. Man was not made in the likeness of any creature that went before him, but in the likeness of his Creator; yet still, between God and man there is an infinite distance. Christ only is the express image of God's person, as the Son of his Father, having the same nature. It is only some of God's honour, that is put upon man, who is God's image, only as the shadow in the glass, or the king's impress upon the coin. God's image upon man consists in these three things. 1. In his nature and constitution, not those of his body, (for God has not a body,) but those of his soul. This honour indeed God has put upon the body of man, that the Word was made flesh, the Son of God was clothed with a body like unto our's, and will shortly clothe our's with a glory like unto his. And this we may safely say, That he by whom God made the world, not only the great world, but man the little world, formed the human body, at the first, according to the platform he designed for himself in the fulness of time. But it is the soul, the great soul, of man, that does especially bear God's image. The soul is a spirit, an intelligent, immortal beings; the chief of all attributes and powers, the ornament and crown of man's nature, is being, herein resembling God, the Father of Spirits, and the Soul of the world. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. The soul of man, considered in its three noble faculties, understanding, will, and active power, is perhaps the brightest clearest looking-glass in nature, wherein to see God. 2. In his place and authority. Let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion. As he has the government of the inferior creatures, he is, as it were, God's representative, or vicerey, upon earth; they are not capable of fearing and serving God, therefore God has appointed them to fear and serve man. Yet his government of himself by the freedom of his will, has in it more of God's image than his government of the creatures. 3. In his purity and rectitude. God's image upon man consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, Rom. 3. 19-24; Col. 3. 10. Man was created without spot or blemish, Eph. 5. 27. He had an habitual conformity of all his natural powers to the whole will of God. His understanding saw divine things clearly and truly, and there were no errors or mistakes in his knowledge: his will complied readily and universally with the will of God, without reluctance or resistance: his affections were all regular, and he had no inordinate appetites or passions: his thoughts were easily brought, and his desires fixed and settled, as the light of day is not dimmed by the setting of the sun, or under the influence of the badness of the weather, or ungovernableness in them. All the inferior powers were subject to the dictates and directions of the superior, without any mutiny or rebellion.

Thus holy, thus happy, were our first parents, in having the image of God upon them. And this honour put upon man, at first, is a good reason why we should not speak ill one of another, Jam. 3. 9, nor do ill one to another, Gen. 9. 6, and a good reason why we should not speak evil of our individual brethren, 1 Pet. 4. 8, or the service of sin, and why we should devote ourselves to God's service. But how art thou fallen, O son of the morning! How is this image of God upon man defaced! How small are the remains of it, and how great the ruins of it! The Lord renew it upon our souls by his sanctifying grace!

IV. That man was made male and female, and blessed with the blessing of fruitfulness and increase. God said, Let the male and female be made: and it follows, So God created man; he performed what he resolved. With us, saying and doing are two things; but they are not so with God. He created him male and female, Adam and Eve; Adam, first out of earth, and Eve out of his side. ch. 2. It should seem that of the rest of the creatures, God made many couples, but of man, did not he make one man? (Mal. 2. 15.) though he, at the residence of the Spirit; whence Christ gathers an argument against divorce, Matt. 19. 4, 5. Our first father, Adam, was confined to one wife; and if he had put her away, there was no other for him to marry, which plainly intimated that the bond of marriage was not to be dissolved at pleasure. Angels were not made male and female, for they were not to propagate their kind, (Luke 20. 34., 35.) but man was made so, that the nature might be propagated, and the race continued. Fires and candles, the luminaries of this lower world, because they waste, and go out, have no power to light more; but it is not so with the lights of heaven, stars do not kindle stars. God
made but one male and one female, that all the nations of men might know themselves to be made of one blood, descendants from one common stock, and might thereby be induced to love one another. God, having made man in his image, God, the Author of the moral world, gave him dominion over all the works of his hands. God made a large inheritance; Replenish the earth; that is it, that is bestowed upon the children of men. They were made to dwell upon the face of all the earth, Acts 17. 26. That is the place in which God has set man to be the servant of his providence, in the government of the inferior creatures, and, as it were, the intelligible representatives of God, to be the receiver of God's bounty, which other creatures live upon, but do not know it: to be likewise the collector of his praises in this lower world, and to pay them into the exchanger above, Ps. 145. 10, and (lastly) to be a probationer for a better state. 2. A numerous, lasting family, to enjoy this inheritance; pronouncing a blessing upon them, in the virtue of which their posterity should extend to the utmost corners of the earth, and continue to the utmost period of time. Fruitfulness and increase depend upon the blessing of God: Obed-Edom had eight sons, for God blessed him, 1 Chron. 26. 5. It is owing to this blessing which God commanded at first, that the race of mankind is still in being, and that as one generation passeth away, another cometh.

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

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

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

I. Food provided for man, v. 29. Herbs and fruits, the produce of the ground, and the products of the earth; these were allowed him, but (it should seem) not flesh, till after the flood, ch. 9. 3. And before the earth was deluged, much more, before it was cursed, for man's sake, its fruits, no doubt, were more pleasing to his taste, and more strengthening and nourishing to the body, than marrow and fatness, and all the portion of the king's meat, are now. See here, 1. That which should make us humble. As we are made out of the earth, so we are maintained out of it. Once indeed, man did eat angels' food, bread from heaven: but they died, John 6. 49: it was to them but as food out of the earth, Ps. 104. 14. There is meat that endures to everlasting life; the Lord evermore give it a tenth. 2. That which should make us thankful. The Lord is the body; from him we receive all the supports and comforts of this life, and to him we must give thanks. He gives us all things richly to enjoy, not only for necessity, but plenty, dainties, and varieties, for ornament and delight. How much are we indebted! How careful should we be, as we live upon God's bounty, to live to his glory! 3. That which should make us temperate, and content with our lot. Though Adam had dominion given him over fish and fowl, yet God confined him, in his food, to herbs and fruits; and he never could have enjoyed it. Though afterwards he coveted forbidden fruit, for the sake of the wisdom and knowledge he promised himself from it, yet we never read that he coveted forbidden flesh. If God give us food for our lives, let us not, with murmuring Israel, ask food for our lusts, Ps. 78. 18. Set Dan. 1. 13.

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

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

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

I. The review God took of his work; he saw every thing that he had made: so he does still; all the works of his hands are under his eye. He that made all, sees all; he that made us, sees us, Ps. 139. 1-16. Omniscience cannot be separated from Omnipotence. Known unto God are all his works, Ps. 135. 18. He that understands would always have a reflection upon the copies of his own wisdom, and the products of its own power. God has hereby set us an example of reviewing our works. Having given us a power of reflection, he expects we should use that power, see our way, Jer. 2. 23, and think of it, Ps. 119. 59. When we have finished a day's work, and are entering upon the rest of the night, we should commune with our own hearts about what we have been doing that day; so likewise, when we have finished a week's work, and are entering upon the sabbath rest, we should thus prepare to meet our God; and when we are finishing our life's work, and are entering upon our rest in the grave, that is a time to bring to remembrance, that we may die repenting, and so take leave of it.

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

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

CHAP. II.

This chapter is an appendix to the history of the creation, more particularly explaining, and enlarging upon, that part of the history, which relates immediately to man, the favourite of this lower world. We have in it, I. The institution and sanctification of the sabbath, which was made for man, to further his holiness and comfort, v. 1. 2. A description of the garden of Eden, and the placing of man in it under the obligations of a law and covenant, v. 8. 17. IV. The creation of the woman, her marriage to the man, and the institution of the ordinance of marriage, v. 18. 25.

1. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
original institution of the sabbath-day, and to com-
memorate the work of creation, to the honour of the
great Creator, who is therefore worthy to receive,
on that day, blessing, and honour, and praise, from
all religious assemblies.

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

In these verses,

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

II. Further notice taken of the production of plants
and herbs, because they were made and appointed
to be food for man, v. 5, 6, where observe, 1. The
earth did not bring forth its fruits of itself, by any in-
nate virtue of its own, but purely by the almighty
power of God, which formed every plant and every
herb, before it grew in the earth. Thus grace in
the soul, that plant of renown, grows not of itself in
nature's soul, but is the work of God's own hands.
2. Rain also is the gift of God; it came not by
the Lord God caused it to rain. If rain be wanted, it is
God that withholds it; if rain come plentifully in its
season, it is God that sends it; if it come in a distinc-
ging way, it is God that causeth it to rain upon one
city, and not upon another, Amos 4. 7. 3.

Though God, ordinarily, works by means, yet he is
to the neglect of means, yet we must trust God in
the want of means. 4. Some way or other, God
will take care to water the plants that are of his own
plating. Though, as yet, there was no rain, God
watered the earth, v. 6. He chose to fulfil his purpose by the weakest means,
that the excellency of the power might be of God.
Divine grace descends like a mist or silent dew, and
waters the church without noise, Deut. 32. 2.

III. A more particular account of the creation of
man, v. 7. Man is a little world, consisting of hea-
vend and earth, soul and body; now here we have an
account of the original of both, and the putting of
both together: let us seriously consider it, and say,
to our Creator's praise. We are fearfully and won-
derfully made, Ps. 139. 14. Eluh, in the patri-
archal age, refers to this history, when he says, Job
33. 6, I also am formed out of the clay, and v. 4.
The breath of the Almighty hath given me life, and
ch. 32. 8, in man.—Object in the

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

2. The high original, and yet the admirable ser-
vicelableness, of the soul of man. (1.) It takes its
rise from the heaven of heavens, and from the
breast-plate and forehead of God, Ps. 139. 15,
16. Materialis superabat opus —The workmanship
exceeded the materials. Let us present our bodies
to God as living sacrifices, Rom. 12. 1; as living
temples, 1 Cor. 6. 19; and then these vile bodies
shall shortly be new-formed like Christ's glorious
body. Phil. 3. 21.

3. Though God, ordinarily, works by means, yet he is
to the neglect of means, yet we must trust God in
the want of means. 4. Some way or other, God
will take care to water the plants that are of his own
plating. Though, as yet, there was no rain, God
watered the earth, v. 6. He chose to fulfil his purpose by the weakest means,
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Divine grace descends like a mist or silent dew, and
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When our Lord Jesus anointed the blind man’s eyes with clay, perhaps he intimated that it was he who first formed the man out of the clay; and when he breathed on his disciples, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” he intimated that it was he who first breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life. He that made the soul, is alone able to new-make it.

8. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. 10. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

11. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12. And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx-stone. 13. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. 14. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. 15. And the fourth river is Euphrates. 16. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.

Man consisting of body and soul, a body made out of the earth, and a rational immortal soul the breath of heaven, we have, in these verses, the provision that was made for the happiness of both; he that made him, took care to make him happy, if he could, but he kept himself so, and known when he was well off. That part of man by which he is allied to the world of sense, was made happy; but he was put in the paradise of God: that part by which he is allied to the world of spirits, was well provided for; for he was taken into covenant with God. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified? Man is a worm! Here we have a description of the garden of Eden, which was intended for the mansion and demesne of this great lord, the palace of this prince. The inspired penman, in this history, writing for the Jews first, and calculating his narratives for the infant-state of the church, describes things by their outward sensible appearances, and leaves us, by further discoveries of the divine light, to be led into the divine understanding of the mysteries couched under them. Spiritual things were strong meat, which they could not yet bear; but he writes to them as unto carnal, 1 Cor. 3. 1. Therefore he does not so much insist upon the happiness of Adam’s mind, as upon that of his outward estate. The Mosaic history, as well as the Mosaic law, has rather the patterns of heavenly things, than the heavenly things themselves, Heb. 9. 23.

Observe, That Adam’s appointed for Eden’s residence was a garden; not an ivory house, or a palace overlaid with gold, but a garden furnished and adorned by nature, not by art. What little reason have men to be proud of stately and magnificent buildings, when it was the happiness of man in innocence, that he needed none! As clothes came in with sin, so did houses. The heaven was the roof of Adam’s house; and never was any roof so curiously ceiled and painted: the earth was his floor; and never was any floor so richly inlaid: the shadow of the trees was his retirement, under them were his dining-rooms, his lodging-rooms; and never were any rooms so finely hung as these; Solomon’s, in all their glory, were not arrayed like them. The better we can accommodate ourselves to plain things, God the more pleased is with those artificial delights which have been invented to gratify men’s pride and luxury, the nearer we approach to a state of innocence. Nature is content with a little, and that which is most natural; grace with less; but lust with nothing.

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

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

4. The trees with which this garden was planted.

(1.) It had all the best and choicest trees in common with the rest of the ground. It was beautified and adorned with every tree that, for its height or breadth, its make or colour, its leaf or flower, was pleasant to the sight, and charmed the eye; it was replenished and enriched with every tree that yielded fruit grateful to the taste, and useful to the body; and, so, good for food. God, as a tender father, could not only Adam’s profit, but his pleasure: for there is a pleasure consistent with innocence, nay, there is a true and transcendent pleasure in innocence. God delights in the prosperity of his servants, and would have them easy; it is owing to themselves, if they be uneasy. When Providence puts us into an Eden of plenty and pleasure, we ought to serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart, in due obedience and dependence, to God only. But,(2.) It had two extraordinary trees peculiar to itself; on earth there were not their like. [1.] There was the tree of life in the midst of the garden, which was not so much a memorandum to him of the Fountain and Author of his life, nor perhaps any natural means to preserve or prolong life; but it was chiefly intended to be a sign and seal to Adam,
assuring him of the continuance of life and happiness, even to immortality, and everlasting bliss, through the grace and favour of his Maker: upon condition of his perseverance in this state of innocence and obedience. Of this he might eat and live. Christ is said to be the "Tree of Life," Rev. 2:7; 7:28, and "The Bread of Life," John 6:48, 53. (2.) There was the "Tree of Knowledge of good and evil," so called, not because it had any virtue in it to begot or increase useful knowledge, surely then it would not have been forbidden; but, First, Because there was an express positive revelation of the will of God concerning this tree, so that by it he might know moral good and evil. In what manner he got not to know it. What is it? It is evil to eat of this tree. The distinction between all other moral good and evil was written in the heart of man by nature; but this which resulted from a positive law, was written upon this tree. Secondly, Because, in the event, it proved to give Adam an experimental knowledge of good by the loss of it, and of evil by the same. As the covenant of grace has in it, not only, "Believe and be saved," but also, "Believe not, and be damned," Mark 16:16, so the covenant of innocence had in it, not only, "Do this and live," which was sealed and confirmed by the tree of life, but, "Fall and die," which man was assured of by this other tree; "Touch it at your peril!" so that, in these two trees, God set before Adam good and evil, the blessing and the curse, Deut. 30:19. These two trees were as two serpents. (3.) The rivers with which this garden was watered, ver. 10. These four rivers (or one river branched into four streams) contributed much both to the pleasantness and the fruitfulness of this garden. The land of Sodom is said to be "well-watered every where as the garden of the Lord," ch. 13:10. Observe, That which God plants, he will take care to keep watered. The trees of righteousness are set by the rivers, Ps. 1:3. In the heavenly paradise there is a river infinitely surpassing these; for it is a river of the water of life, not coming out of Eden, as this, but proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, Rev. 22.1. a river that makes glad the city of our God, Ps. 46:4. Hiddekel and Euphrates are rivers of Babylon, which we read of elsewhere; by these the captive Jews sat down and wept, when they were brought to Babylon, and were not only separated from their temple, but they had much more reason to weep, (and so have we,) at the remembrance of Eden; Adam's paradise was their prison; such wretched work has sin made. Of the land of Havilah, it is said, ver. 11,12, that the gold of that land was good, and that there was beryl, and the onyx-stone: surely this is mentioned, that the wealth which the land of Havilah boasted of, might be as a foil to that which was the glory of the land of Eden. The gold of Eden had gold, and precious stones; but Eden had that which was infinitely better, the tree of life, and communion with God. So we may say of the Africans and Indians: "They have the gold, but we have the gospel. The gold of their land is good, but the riches of ours are infinitely better." 

11. The placing of man in this paradise of delight, ver. 15, where observe, 

1. How God put him in possession of it. The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden; so v. 8, 15. Note here, (1.) That man was made out of paradise: for, after God had formed him, he put him into the garden: he was made of common clay, not of paradise-dust. He lived and died in it. He was made to be as God, and to see that all the comforts of his paradise-state were owing to God's free grace. He could not plead a tenant right to the garden, for he was not born upon the premises, nor had any thing but what he received; all boasting was hereby for ever excluded. (2.) The same God that was the Author of his being, was the Author of his bliss: the same hand that made him a living soul, planted the tree of life for him, and settled him in it, that he might be, and was, able to make us happy; he is the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; he, and none but he, can effectually provide for the felicity of b. h. (3.) It adds much to the comfort of any condition, if we have plainly seen God going before us, and putting us into it. If we have not forced providence, but followed it, and taken the hints of direction it has been given by us, we may hope to find a paradise there, where otherwise we could not have expected it; see Ps. 47:4. 

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

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

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. 17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou
shall not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

Observe here,

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

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

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

2. A trial of his obedience, upon pain of the forfeiture of all his happiness; but of the other tree, which stood very near the tree of life, (for they are both said to be in the midst of the garden,) and which was called the tree of knowledge, in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; as if he had said, "Know, Adam, that thou art now upon thy good behaviour, thou art put into paradise upon trial; be observant, be obedient, and thou art made for ever; otherwise thou wilt be as miserable, as now thou art happy." Here, (1.) Adam is threatened with death, in case of disobedience; dying thou shalt die, denoting a sure and dreadful sentence, as, in the former part of this covenant, eating thou shalt eat, denotes a free and full grant. Observe, (1.) That even Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening; fear is one of the handles of the soul, by which it is taken hold of and held. If he then needed this hedge, much more do we now. (2.) The penalty threatened, is death, Thou shalt die, that is, Thou shalt be debarred from the tree of life, and from all the fertility and luxuriance of the garden, and lose all the happiness thou hast, either in possession or prospect; and thou shalt become liable to death, and all the miseries that precede it and attend it. (3.) This was threatened as the immediate consequence of sin. In the day thou eatest, thou shalt die, that is, "Thou shalt become mortal and capable of dying, the grant of immortality shall be recalled, and that defence shall depart from thee. Thou shalt be come obnoxious to death, like a condemned malefactor that is dead in law," (only because Adam was to be the root of mankind, he was reprieved;) "nay, the harbingers and forerunners of death shall immediately seize thee, and thy life, henceforward, shall be a dying life;" and this surety; it is a settled thing, the death that shall be thine. (2.) Adam is tried with a positive law, not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Now it was very proper to make trial of his obedience by such a command as this, [1.] Because the reason of it is fetched purely from the will of the Law-maker. Adam had in his nature an aversion to that which was evil in itself, and therefore he is tried in a thing which was evil, only because it was forbidden; and being in a small thing, it was the more fit to prove his obedience by [2.] Because the restraint of it is laid upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, which, in the corrupted nature of man, are the two great fountains of sin. This prohibition checked both his appetite towards sensitive delights and his ambition of curious knowledge; that his body might be ruled by his soul, and his soul by his God.

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

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

Here we have,

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

1. How God graciously pitied his solitude; It is not good that man, this man, should be alone. Though there was an upper world of angels, and a lower world of brute animals, and between them, yet there being a third world, the natural and rank of beings with himself, none that he could converse familiarly with, he might be truly said to be alone. Now he that made him, knew both him, and what was good for him, better than he did himself, and he said, "It is not good that he should continue thus alone." (1.) It is not for his comfort; for man is a sociable creature, it is a pleasure to him to exchange knowledge and affections with those of his own kind, to be informed, to love and to be beloved. What God here says of the first man, Solomon says of all men, (Eccl. 4. 9, &c.) that two are better than one, and wise to him that is alone. If there were but one man in the world, what a mean
choly man must he needs be: Perfect solitude would turn a paradise into a desert, and a palace into a dungeon. Those therefore are foolish who are selish, and would be placed alone in the earth. (2.) It is not for the increase and continuance of his kind; God could have made a world of men, at first, to replenish the earth, as he replenisheth heaven and earth, a world of angels; but the place would have been too straight for the designed number of men to live together at once; therefore God saw it fit to make up that number by a succession of generations, which, as God had formed man, must be from two, and those male and female; one will be forever one. He made God graciously resolved to provide society for him. The result of this reasoning concerning him, was, this kind resolution, I will make a help meet for him; a help like him, (so some read it,) one of the same nature, and the same rank of beings; a help near him, (so others,) one to cohabit with him, and to be always at hand; a help before him, (so others,) one that he should look upon with pleasure and delight. Note, (1.) That in our best state, we have need of one another, and that other's help; for we are members one of another, and the eye cannot see to the hand, I have no need of thee, 1 Cor. 12. 21. We must therefore be glad to receive help from others, and give help to others, as there is occasion. (2.) That it is God only who perfectly knows our wants, and is perfectly able to supply them all, Phil. 4. 19. In him alone our help is, and in him alone is our help, and with him, and yet complain he wants conversation, would not have been easy and content in paradisal; for Adam himself had no more: yet even before Eve was created, we do not find that he complained of being alone, knowing that he was not alone, for the Father was with him. Those that are most satisfied in God and his favour, are in the best way, and in the best frame, to receive the good things of this life, and shall be sure of them, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good. 11. An instance of the creatures' subjection to man, and his dominion over them, v. 19, 20. Every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, God brought to Adam; either by the ministry of angels, or by a special instinct, directing them to come to man as their master, teaching the ox betimes to know his owner. Thus God gave man liberty and seisin of the fair estate he had granted him, and put him in possession of his dominion over the creatures. God brought them to him, that he might name them, and so might give, 1. A proof of his knowledge, as a creature endued with the faculties both of reason and speech, and so, taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowl of heaven, 1 Tim. 2. 11. And 2. A proof of his power. It is an act of authority to them (Dan. 1. 7.) and of subjection to receive them. The inferior creatures did now, as it were, do homage to their prince at his inauguration, and swear fealty and allegiance to him. If Adam had continued faithful to his God, we may suppose the creatures themselves would so well have known and returned to their master Adam not only as masters, as to have come at his call, at his name, and answered to their names. God gave names to the day and night, to the firmament, to the earth, and sea; and he calleth the stars by their names, to show that he is the supreme Lord of these; but he gave Adam leave to name the beasts and fowls, as their subordinate lord; for, having made him in his own image, he thus puts some of his honour upon him. 111. An instance of the creatures' insufficiency to be a happiness for man: but among them all, for Adam there was not a help meet for him. Some make these to be the words of Adam himself; observing all the creatures come to him by couples to be named, he thus intimates his desire to his Maker. 'Lord, these have all helps meet for them; but what shall I do? Never, never a one, for me.' It is rather God's judgment upon the view: He brought them all together, to see if there was a creature that was suitable for Adam in any of the numerous families of the inferior creatures; but there was none. Observe here, 1. The dignity and excellency of the human nature; on earth there was not its like, nor its peer to be found among all visible creatures; they were all looked over, but it could not be matched among them all. 2. The vanity of this world and the things of it; put them all together, and they will not make an help meet for man. They will not suit the nature of the soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its just desires, nor run parallel with its never-failing duration. God creates a new thing to be an help meet for man—not so much the woman, as the Seed of the woman. 21. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. 22. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made him a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25. And they were both naked, the man, and his wife, and were not ashamed. Here we have, 1. The making of the woman, to be an help meet for Adam. This was done upon the sixth day, as was also the placing of Adam in Paradise, though it is here mentioned after an account of the seventh day's rest; but what was said in general, (ch. 1. 27.) that God made man male and female, is more distinctly related here. Observe, 1. That Adam was first formed, then Eve, (1 Tim. 2. 13.) and she was made of the man, and for the man, (4 Cor. 11. 8. 9) all which are urged there as reasons for the humility, modesty, silence, and submission, of that sex in general, and particularly the subjection and reverence which wives owe to their own husbands. Yet man being made last of the creatures, as the best and most excellent of all, Eve's being made after Adam, and of out of him, puts an honour upon this sex, who shall see the man. 2. That in all, 1 Cor. 11. 7. If man is the head, she is the crown; a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one remove further from the earth. 2. That Adam slept while his wife was making, that no room might be left, to imagine that he had herein directed the steps of the Lord, or been like the seller, Isa. 40. 13. He had been made sensible of his want of a help meet; but God having undertaken to provide him one, he does not afflict himself with
any care about it, but lies down and sleeps sweetly, and one that had cast all his care on God, with a cheerful resignation of himself and all his affairs, to his Maker's will and wisdom; Jehovah-jireh, let the Lord provide when and where he pleases. If we graciously rest in God, God will graciously work for us, and work all for good.

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

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

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

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

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

III. The institution of the ordinance of marriage, and the settling of the law of it, v. 24. The sabbath and marriage were two ordinances instituted in innocency; the former for the preservation of the church, the latter, for the preservation of the world of mankind. It appears by Matthew 19. 4, that it was G. d. himself who said here, "A man must leave all his relations, to cleave to his wife;" but whether he spake it by Moses, the penman, or by Adam, who spake, v. 23, is uncertain; it should seem, it are the words of Adam, in God's name, laying down this law to all his posterity. See here how great the virtue of a divine ordinance is; the bonds of it are stronger even than those of nature. To whom can we be more firmly bound than to the fathers that begat us, and the mothers that bare us? Yet the son must quit them, to be joined to his wife, and the daughter forget them, to cleave to her husband, Ps. 45. 10, 11. See how necessary it is that children should take their parents' consent along with them in their marriage; and how unjust they are to their parents, as well as unfaithful, if they marry without it; for they rob them of their right to them, and interest in them, and alienate it to another, fraudulently and unaturally. See what need there is both of prudence and prayer in the choice of this relation, which is so near and so lasting. That had need be well done, which is to be done for life. See how firm the bond of marriage is, not to be divided and weakened by having many wives, Deut. 20. 17. Not to be broken or cut off by divorce, for any cause, but fornication, or voluntary desertion. See how dear the affection ought to be between husband and wife; such as there is to our own bodies, Eph. 5. 28. They two are one flesh; let them then be one soul.

IV. An evidence of the purity and innocence of that state wherein our first parents were created, v. 5. They were both naked; they needed no clothes for defence against cold; for God, who knows no injury to them; they needed none for ornament, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these; nay, they needed none for decency, they were naked, and had no reason to be ashamed.

They knew not what shame was, so the Chaldee reads it. Blushing is now the colour of virtue, but it was not then the colour of innocence. They that have not their conscience, might well have no shame in their faces, though they had no clothes to their backs.

CHAP. III.

The story of this chapter is perhaps as sad a story (all things considered) as any we have in all the Bible. In the foregoing chapters, we have had the pleasure, comfort, and holiness of our first parents, the grace and favour of God, and the peace and beauty of the whole creation, all good, very good; but here the scene is altered. We have here an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of the creation disturbed, and its beauty sullied and suffused, all bad, very bad. Is it then the most fair gold found? O that our hearts were deeply affected with this record! For we are all nearly concerned in it; let it not be to us as a tale that is told. The general contents of this chapter were, Rom. 5. 12. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. More particularly, we have here, I. The innocent tempted, v. 1. 5. II. The tempted transgressed, v. 6. 8. III. The transgressors condemned, v. 9. 10. IV. Upon their assignation convicted, v. 11. 13. Upon their conviction sentenced, v. 11. 19. V. After sentence, reprieved, v. 20. 21. VI. Notwithstanding their reprieve, executed, v. 22. 23. A part of this chapter was used, Eph. 2. 15. 16. Upon their assignation convicted, v. 11. 13. Upon their conviction sentenced, v. 11. 19. After sentence, reprieved, v. 20. 21. Notwithstanding their reprieve, executed, v. 22. 23. Apart of this chapter was used.

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

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

1. The tempter, and that was the Devil, in the shape and likeness of a serpent. It is certain it was the Devil that beguiled Eve, the Devil and Satan is the old serpent, Rev. 12:9, a malignant spirit, by creation an angel of light, and an immediate attendant upon God; but self-willed, and apostate from his first state, and a rebel against God's crown and dignity. Multitudes of them fell; but this that attacked our first parents, was surely the prince of the devils, the ringleader in rebellion: no sooner was he a sinner than he was a Satan, no sooner a traitor than a tempter, as one enraged against God and his glory, and envious of man and his happiness. He knew he could not destroy man, but by deceiving him.

Adam could not curse Israel, but he could tempt Israel, Rev. 2. 14. The same therefore which Satan had to play, was, to draw our first parents to sin, and so to separate between them and their God. Thus the Devil was, from the beginning, a murderer, and the great mischief-maker. The whole race of mankind had here, as it were, but one neck, and at that Satan struck. The adversary and enemy is first declared one.

2. It was the Devil in the likeness of a serpent. Whether it was only the visible shape and appearance of a serpent, as some think these were of which we read, Exod. 7. 12, or whether it was a real living serpent, actuated and possessed by the Devil, is not certain; by God's permission it might be either. The Devil chose to act his part in a serpent, (1.) Because it is a fercious creature, has a spotted double skin, and then went erect. Perhaps it was a flying serpent, which seemed to come from on high as a messenger from the upper world, one of the nephilim; for the fiery serpents were flying, Isa. 4. 29.

Many a dangerous temptation comes to us in gay fine colours that are but skin-deep, and seems to come from above; for Satan can seem an angel of light. And, (2.) Because it is a subtle creature; that is, above the notice of many. Many instances are easy of the subtlety of the serpent, both to do mischief, and to secure himself in it when it is done. We are bid to be wise as serpents. But this serpent, as actuated by the Devil, no doubt, was more subtle than any other; for the Devil, though he had lost the sanctity, retains the sagacity, of an angel, and is wise to do evil. He knew of more advantage by making use of the serpent, than we are aware of. Observe, there is not an thing by which the Devil serves himself and his own interest more than by unsanctified subtlety. What Eve thought of this serpent speaking to her, we are not likely to tell, when I believe she herself did not know what to think of it. At first, perhaps, she supposed it might be a good angel, and yet, afterward, might suspect something amiss. It is remarkable that the Grecian idolaters did many of them worship the Devil in the shape and form of a serpent; thereby showing their adherence to that apostate spirit, and wearing his colours.

11. The person tempted was the woman, now alone, and at a distance from her husband, but near the tree of the promise.

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

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

1. He questions whether it was a sin or no, to eat of this tree, and whether really the fruit of it were forbidden. Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of the tree of life: 2. He suggests it to be a fruit of great advantage, to be sure of, by making it a piece of news, pray, is it true; has God forbidden you to eat of this tree? Thus he would begin a discourse, and draw her into a parley, that she would be safe, need to be suspicious, and shy of talking with the tempter. (2.) He quotes the command literally, as if it were a prohibition, not only of that tree, but of all; God had said, Of every tree ye may eat, except one. He, by aggravating the exception, means to aggravate the prohibition. Has God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree? The divine law cannot be reproached, unless it be first misrepresented. (3.) He seems to speak it tauntingly, upbraiding the woman with her shyness of meditating with that tree; as if he had said, You are so nice and cautious, and so very precise, because God has said, Ye shall not eat. The Devil, as he is a liar, so he is a scoffer, from the begin
ning; and the scoffers of the last days are his chil-
dren. (4.) That which he aimed at in the first
onset, was, to take off her some of the objections
de the command. "Surely, you are mistaken, it
cannot be that God should tie you out from this tree;
we would not do so unreasonable a thing." See
here, That it is the nobility of Satan to blemish the
reputation of the divine law, as uncertain, or reasons-
able, and so to draw people to sin; and that it is
therefore our wisdom to keep up a firm belief of,
and a high respect for the word of God. He
hath not lie, nor take his word in vain, nor be drunk, &c.?" "Yes, I am sure he
has, and it is well said, and by his grace I will abide
by it, whatever the tempter suggests to the con-
trary."

Now, in answer to this question, the woman
gives him a plain and full account of the law they were
under, v. 2, 3. Where observe, [1.] It was her
work to draw the precept with the sanction.
She might have perceived by his question, that
he had no good design, and should therefore have
started back with a Get thee behind me, Satan, thou
avt an offence to me. But her curiosity, and per-
haps her surprise, to hear a serpent speak, led her
into further talk with him. Note, It is a dangerous
thing to treat with a temptation, which ought at
first to be rejected with disdain and abhorrence.
The worst of it is, so easily would it seem to be
being surrendered. Those that would be kept from
harm, must keep out of harm's way. See Prov. 14.
7.—19. 27. [2.] It was her wisdom to take notice
of the liberty God had granted them, in answer to
his sly insinuation, as if God had put them into
paradise, only to tantalize them with the sight of fair
but forbidden fruits. "Ye, says she, we may
eat of the fruit of the trees, thanks to our Maker,
we have plenty and variety enough; allowed us.
Note, To prevent our being uneasy at the restrains
of religion, it is good often to take a view of the
liberties and comforts of it. [3.] It was an instance
of her resolution, that she adhered to the command,
and faithfully repeated it, as of unquestionable cer-
tainty. "God hath said, I am confident he hath said it,
Ye shall not eat of the fruit of this tree;" and that
which the temptation of the devil had insinuated
have been with a good intention, not (as some think)
tactily to reflect upon the command as too strict, (Touch not, taste not, handle not,) but to make a
fence about it: "We must not eat, therefore we will not touch. It is forbidden in the highest degree,
and the authority of the prohibition is sacred to us."
[4.] She seems a little too wavering about the threaten-
ing, and is not so particular and faithful in the repe-
tition of it, as God had said, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; all she makes of it is, Lost we die. Note, Vawering faith, and wavering resolutions give great advantage to the
tempter.

2. He denies that there was any danger in it;
though it might be the transgressing of a precept, yet
would not be the incurring of a penalty. "Ye shall
die, says he, so the word is, in direct contradiction to what God
had said. Either, (1.) "It is not certain that ye
shall die," so some. "It is not so sure as ye are
made to believe it is." Thus Satan endeavours to
shock that which he cannot overthrow, and invad-
es the force of divine threatenings by questioning
the certainty of them: and when once it is supposed
that there may be falsehood in any order of
any word of God, a door is then opened to downright
infidelity. Satan teaches men first to doubt, and
then to deny; he makes sceptics first, and so by
degrees makes them atheists. Or, (2.) "It is certain
ye shall not die," so others. He avers his contra-
diction with the same phrase of assurance that God
hath used in ratifying the threatening. He began
to call the precept in question, v. 1, but finding
that the woman adhered to it, that he quitted that battery,
and made his second onset upon the third error,
where he perceived her to waver; for he is quick to
spy all advantages, and to attack the wall where it is
weakest, Ye shall not surely die. This was a lie,
and a downright lie; for, [1.] It was contrary to the
word of God, which we are sure is true; see 1 John
2. 21, 27. It was such a lie as gave the lie to God
and his precepts. [2.] It was contrary to his own know-
ledge; which he held them to be, in his disobedience and rebellion, he said that which he
knew, by weak experience, to be false. He had
broke the law of his creation, and had found, to his
cost, that he could not prosper in it; and yet he tells
us that his parents they shall not die. He conceals
his own misery, that he might draw them into the like:
thus he still deceives sinners into their own ruin.
It was a lie to them, though they sin they shall not die;
and gains credit rather than God, who tells them, The
wages of sin is death. Now hope of impunity is
a great support to all iniquity, and impertinency in:
It shall have peace, though I walk in the imagi-
nation of my heart, Deut. 29. 19.

3. He promises them advantage by it, v. 5. Here
he follows his bow, and it was a blow at the root, a
fatal blow to the tree we are branches of. He
not only says, you shall be as gods, which would
bring ruin upon them, but add, you shall be like
himself, thus binding himself to save them from harm; but
(if they would be such fools as to venture upon the
security of one that was himself a bankrupt)
he undertakes they shall be gainers by it, unspeak-
able gainers. He could not have persuaded them
to run the hazard of ruining themselves, if he had not
suggested to them a great probability of mending
themselves thereby. [1.] He insinuates to them the great improve-
ments they would make by eating of this fruit. And
he suits the temptation to the pure state they were
now in, proposing to them, not any carnal pleasures or gratifications, but intellectual delights and satisfac-
tions. These were the baits with which he cover-
ed his hook. [1.] "Your eyes shall be opened; you shall have
much more of the power and pleasure of self-examen-
tion, and that upon a noble principle; you shall fetch a
larger compass in your intellectual views, and see
further into things than now you do." He speaks
as if now they were but dim-sighted, and short-
sighted, in comparison of what they would be then.
[2.] "You shall be as gods, as Elohim, mighty gods;
not only omniscient, but omnipotent too:" or, "You
shall be as God himself, equal to him, rivals with
him; you shall be sovereigns, and no longer subordinates;
self-sufficient, and no longer dependent." This is not
an absurd suggestion! As if it were possible for crea-
tures of yesterday to be like their Creator that was
from eternity. [3.] "You shall know good and evil,
that is, every thing that is desirable to be known." To
support this part of the temptation, he abuses the
name given to this tree; it was intended to teach
the practical knowledge of good and evil; but, there is,
of duty andknowledge of good and evil, and it would prove the spec-
"tmental knowledge of good and evil, that is, ef-
happiness and misery. In these senses, the name
of the tree was a warning to them not to eat of it;
but he perverts the sense of it, and wrests it to their
destruction, as if this tree would give them a specu-
lativestore knowledge of the natures, kinds, and
originals, of good and evil. And, [4.] All the
"In the day ye eat thereof, you shall find a
sudden and immediate change for the better." Now
an all these insinuations, he aims to beguile them.
First, Discontent with their present state, as if it
were not so good as it might be, and should be
Note, No condition will of itself bring contentment,
unless the mind be brought to it. Adam was not
good for food, ch. 2. 9. Now, in her eye, this was like all the rest; it seemed as good for food as any of them, and she saw nothing in the colour of its fruit, that threatened death or danger; it was as pleasant to the sight as any of them, and therefore, "What hurt could it do to them? Why should this be forbidden them rather than any of the rest?"

Note, When there is thought to be no more harm in forbidden fruit than in other fruit, sin lies at the door, and Satan soon carries the day. Nay, perhaps, it seemed to her to be better for food, more grateful to the taste, and more nourishing to the body, than any of the rest, and to her eye it was more pleasant than any. We are often lured into snares by an inordinate desire to have our senses gratified. Or, if it had nothing in it more inviting than the rest, yet it was the more coveted, because it was prohibited. Whether it were so in her or not, we find that in us, that is, in our flesh, in our corrupt nature, there dwells a strange spirit of contradiction, Nirmor in settim—We desire what is forbidden.

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

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

1. She saw; she should have turned away her eyes from beholding vanity; but she enters into temptation, by looking with pleasure on the forbidden fruit. Observe, A great deal of sin comes in at the eye. At these windows Satan throws in these fiery darts which pierce and poison the heart. The eye affects the heart with guilt as well as grief. Let us therefore, wisdom by Job 15:33, keep our eyes, not to look on that which we are in danger of lustning after, Prov. 23. 31. Matth. 5. 28. Let the fear of God be always to us a covering of the eyes, ch. 20. 16.

2. She took; it was her own act and deed. The Devil did not take it, and put it into her mouth, whether she would or no; but she herself took it. Therefore, wisdom, if you make no except with your eyes, not to look on that which we are in danger of lustning after, Prov. 23. 31. Matth. 5. 28. Let the fear of God be always to us a covering of the eyes, ch. 20. 16.

3. She did eat; when she looked, perhaps she did not intend to take, or when she took, not to eat; but it ended in that. Note, There is no sin such as sin, that a man cannot stop himself when he will; the beginning of it is as the breaking forth of water, 6 which it is hard to say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, not in paradise, nor the angels in their first state, Jude 6. Secondly, Ambition of preferment, as if they were fit to be gods. Satan had ruined himself by desiring to be like the Most High, Isa. 14. 12. 14. and therefore seek to infect our first parents with the same desire, that he might ruin them too.

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

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

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

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

1. She saw no harm in this tree, more than in any of the rest. It was said of all the rest of the fruit trees with which the garden of Eden was planted, that they were pleasant to the sight, and
and no further." Therefore it is our wisdom to suppress the first motions of sin, and to leave it off, before it be meddled with. *Ostia princeps*-Vul. minchefs in the bud.

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

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

III. The immediate consequences of the transgression. Shame and fear seiz'd the criminals, *ipsa facto*-in the fact itself; these came into the world along with sin, and still attend it.

1. *Shame* seiz'd them unseen, v. 7, where observe,

(1.) The strong convictions they fell under, in their own consciences; *The eyes of them both were opened.* It is not meant of the eyes of the body: they were opened before, as appears by this, that the sin came in at them; Jonathan's eyes were enlightened by eating forbidden fruit, 1 Sam. 14. 27, that is, he was refreshed and revived by it; but their's were not so. Nor is it meant of any advances made hereby in true knowledge; but the eyes of their consciences were opened, their hearts smote them for what they had done. Now, when it was too late, they saw the fearful heft of their fault. They saw the happiness they had fallen from, and the misery they were fallen into. They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited, his likeness and image lost, dominion over the creatures gone. They saw their natures corrupted and depraved, and felt a disorder in their own spirits which they had never before been conscious of. They saw themselves in their members warrenting against the law of their minds, and captivating them both to sin and wrath. They saw, as Balam, when *his eyes were opened,* (Num. 22. 31.) the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and perhaps they saw the serpent that had abused them, insulting over them. The text tells us, they saw that they were naked, that is, [1.] They were stripped, deprived of all the ornaments and ensigns of honour, degraded from their dignity, and disgraced in the highest degree, had open to the contempt and reproach of heaven, and earth, and their own consciences. Now, see here, First, what a dishonour and dishonourment sin is; it makes mischief wherever it is admitted, sets men against themselves, disturbs their peace, and destroys all their comforts: sooner or later, it will have shame, either the shame of true repentance which ends in glory, or that shame and everlasting contempt, to which the wicked shall rise at the great day; sin is a reproach to any people. Secondly, What the folly of setting feet on foot, to be bare and naked, especially parents, when he tempted them, that their eyes should be opened; and so they were, but not as they understood it; they were opened, to their shame and grief, not to their honour or advantage. Therefore, when he speaks fair, believe him not. The most matchless mischievous harms often excuse themselves with this, that they are only equivocal; but God will not be mocked. [2.] The very shift they made, to palliate these convictions, and to arm themselves against them; they sewed, or platted *fig-leaves* together; and, to cover, at least, part of their shame from one another, they made themselves aprons. See here what is commonly the folly of these that have sinned, [1.] That they are more solicitous to save their credit before men, than to obtain in their peril from God; they are backward to confess their sin, and very desirous to conceal it, as much as may be; I have sinned, yet honour me. [2.] That the excuses men make, to cover and extenuate their sins, are vain and frivolous; like the apparens of fig-leaves, they make the matter the better, but the worse; the shame, thus hid, becomes the more
slamful; yet thus we are all apt to cover our transgressions as Adam, Job 31. 33.

2. Fear seized them immediately upon their eating the forbidden fruit, v. 8. Observe here,
   (1.) What was the consequence of their sin; they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. It was the approach of the Judge, that put them into a fright; and yet he came in such a manner, as made it formidable only to guilty consciences. It is supposed that he came in a human shape, and that he who judged the world now, was the same that shall judge the world at the last day, even that man with authority, v. 26. (It should seem,) in no other similitude than that in which they had seen him when he put them into paradise; for he came to convince and humble them, not to amaze and terrify them. He came into the garden, not descending immediately from Heaven in their view, as afterward on mount Sinai, (making either thick darkness his pavilion, or the flaming fire his chariot,) but he came into the garden, as one that was still willing to be familiar with them. He came walking, not running, not riding upon the wings of the wind, but walking deliberately, as one slow to anger; teaching us, when we are ever so much provoked, not to be hot or hasty, but to speak and act considerately, and not rashly. He came in the cool of the day, not in the night, when all fears are doubly fearful, not in the heat of the day, when he came not in the heat of his anger, Ps. 119. 6. Nor did he come suddenly upon them; but they heard his voice at some distance, giving them notice of his coming, and, probably, it was a still small voice, like that in which he came to inquire after Elijah. Some think they heard him discoursing with himself concerning the sin of Adam, and the judgment now to be passed upon him; others, that in their answer, the word that he gives them. Is 8. 19, 20. How shall I give thee up? Or rather, they heard him calling for them, and coming toward them.

(2.) What was the effect and evidence of their fear; they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God: a sad change! Before they had sinned, if they had heard the voice of the Lord God coming toward them, they would have run from him, Ps. 147. 5. But God, with a humble joy welcomed his gracious visit; but now that it was otherwise, God was become a terror to them, and then, no marvel that they were become a terror to themselves, and full of confusion; their own consciences accused them, and set their sin before them in their colours; their fig-leaves failed them, and would do them no service; God was come forth against them as an enemy, and the whole creation was at war with them; and as yet, they knew not of any mediator between them and an angry God, so that nothing remained but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. In this fright, they hid themselves among the bushes; having offended, they fled for the same. Knowing themselves guilty, they durst not stand a trial, but abandoned themselves to flight. See here,

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

[2.] The folly of sinners, to think it either possible, or desirable, to hide themselves from God: can they conceal themselves from the Father of lights? Ps. 139. 7, 8. Jer. 23. 24. Will they withdraw themselves from the Fountain of Life, who alone can give help and happiness? Jev. 2. 8.

[3.] The fear that attend sin; all that amazing fear of God's appearances, the accusations of conscience, the approaches of trouble, the assaults of inferior creatures, and the arrests of death which is common among men, all these are the effect of sin. Adam and Eve, who were partners in the sin, were sharers in the shame and fear that attended it; and though hard pressed in their circumstances, after they had been a little longer in paradise, could they not animate or fortify one another: miserable comforters they were become to each other!

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

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

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

2. The trembling answer which Adam gave to this question, v. 10, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I did not see God; yet in effect confesses it, by owning his shame and fear, but it is the common fault and folly of these that have done an ill thing, when they are questioned about it, to acknowledge no more than what is so manifest that they cannot deny it. Adam was afraid, because he was naked; not only unarmed, and therefore afraid to contend with God, but unclad, and therefore afraid so much as to appear before him. We have reason to be afraid of approaching to God, if we be not clothed and fenced with the righteousness of Christ; for a thing but that, will be armour of proof, and cover the shame...
of our nakedness. Let us therefore put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and then draw near with humble boldness.

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

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

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

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

1. Adam lays all the blame upon his wife. “She gave me of the tree, and pressed me to eat it, which I did only to oblige her;” a frivolous excuse. He ought to have taught her, not to have been taught by her; and it was no hard matter to determine which of the two must be ruled by, his own or her husband’s wife. Learn hence, never to be brought to sin by that which will not bring us off in the judgment: let not that bear us up in the commission, which will not bear us out in the trial: let us therefore never be overcome by impatience to act against our consciences, nor ever displease God, to please the best friend we have in the world. But this is not the worst of it; he not only lays the blame upon his wife, but expresses it so as tacitly to reflect on God himself: “It is the woman which thou gavest me, and gavest to be with me as my companion, my guide, and my acquaintance; she gave me of the tree, else I had not eaten of it.” Thus he imputes that God was necessary to his sin: he gave him the woman, and she gave him the fruit; so that he seemed to have it but at some ruin of one whom he had had. Note, There is a strange proneness in those that are tempted, to say they are tempted of God; as if our abusing God’s gifts would excuse our violation of God’s laws. God gives us riches, honours, and relations, that we may serve him cheerfully in the enjoyment of them; but if we take occasion from them to sin against him, instead of blaming Providence for putting us into such a condition, we must blame ourselves for perverting the gracious designs of Providence therein.

2. Eve lays all the blame upon the serpent; The serpent beguiled me. Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own; a sign that it is a scandalous thing. Those that are willing enough to take the pleasure and profit of sin, are backward enough to take the blame and shame of it. The serpent, that subtle creature of thy making, which thou didst permit to come into paradise, he beguiled me, or, made me to err; for our sins are our errors. Learn hence, (1.) That Satan’s temptations are all beguiling, his arguments are all fallacies, his allurements are all cheats; when he speaks fair, believe him not. Sin deceives us, and, by deceiving, cheats us. It is by the deceitfulness of sin, that the heart is hardened; see Rom. 11. 10. (2.) That though Satan subtly drew us into sin, yet it will not justify us in sin: though he is the tempter, we are the sinners; and indeed it is our own lust that draws us aside and entices us, Jas. 1. 14. Let it not therefore lessen our sorrow and humiliation for sin, that we are beguiled into it; but rather let it increase our self-indignation, that we should suffer ourselves to be beguiled by a known cheat and a sworn enemy. Well, this is all the prisoners at the bar have to say, why sentence should not be passed, and execution awarded, according to law; and this all is next to nothing, in some respects, worse than nothing.

14. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life.

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

The sentence passed upon the tempter may be considered,

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

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

2. He is here laid under man's reproach and enmity. (1.) He is to be for ever looked upon as a vile and despicable creature, and a proper object of scorn and contempt; 'Upon thy belly shalt thou go, no longer upon feet, nor half erect, but thou shalt crawl along, thy belly crawling to the earth;' an expression of a very object miserable condition, Ps. 44. 25; 'and thou shalt not avoid eating dust with thy meat.' His crime was, that he tempted Eve to eat that which she should not; his punishment was, that he was necessitated to eat that which he would not. Dust thou shalt eat; denoting not only a base and despised condition, but a mean and pitiful spirit: it is said of those whose courage is departed from them, that they 'left the condition of a son of man.'

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

3. A gracious promise is here made of Christ, as the Deliverer of fallen man from the power of Satan; though it was expressed to the serpent, yet it was expressed in the hearing of our first parents, who, doubtless, took the hints of grace here given them, and saw a door of hope opened to them; else, had they been following the serpent's counsel, they must have been overwhelmed. Here was the dawning of the gospel-day: no sooner was the wound given, than the remedy was provided and revealed; here, in the head of the book, as the word is, (Heb. 10. 7.)
in the beginning of the Bible, it is written of Christ, that he should do the will of God. By faith in this promise, we have reason to think, our first parents, and the patriarchs before the flood, were justified and saved; and to this promise, and the benefit of it, instantly serving God day and night, they hoped to come. Notice is here given them of three things concerning Christ.

1. His incarnation; that he should be the Seed of the woman, the Seed of that woman; therefore he grace gave, Luke 3, goes so high as to show him to be the son of Adam, but God does the woman the honour to call him rather her seed, because she it was whom the Devil had beguiled, and on whom Adam had laid the blame; herein God magnifies his grace, in that though the woman was first in the transgression, yet she shall be saved by child-bearing, (as some read it,) that is, by the promised Seed which shall descend from her, 1 Tim. 2. He was likewise to be the seed of a woman only, a virgin; that he might not be tainted with the corruption of our nature; he was sent forth, made of a woman, Gal. 4. 4, that this promise might be fulfilled. It speaks great encouragement to sinners, that their Saviour is the Seed of the woman, bone of our bone, Heb. 2. 11. 14. Man is therefore sinful and unclean, because he is born of a woman, (Job 25. 4,) and therefore his days are full of trouble, Job 12. But the Seed of the woman was made sin and a curse for us, so saving us from both.

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

3. His victory over Satan thereby. Satan had now trumped upon the woman, and insulted over her; but the Seed of the woman should be raised up in the fulness of time to avenge her quarrel, and to trample upon him, to spoil him, to lead him captive, and to triumph over him, Col. 2. 15. He shall bruise his head, that is, he shall destroy all Satan’s temptations, rescued souls out of his hands, cast him out of the body of people, dispossessed the strong man armed, and divided the spoil; by his death, he gave a fatal and incurable blow to the Devil’s kingdom, a wound to the head of this beast, that can never be healed. As his spell gets greater strength, so Satan’s power is greatly checked, Rev. 20. 2. By his grace, he tries Satan under his people’s feet, Rom. 16. 20, and will shortly cast him into the lake of fire, Rev. 20. 10. And the Devil’s perpetual overthrow will be the complete and everlasting joy and glory of the chosen remnant.

16. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

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

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

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

Lastly, Observe here, how mercy is mixed with
wrath in this sentence; the woman shall have sorrow, but it shall be in bringing forth children, and the pain thereof shall be upon her; for in pain shalt thou bring forth children. And I will multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and shalt be in pain all the days of thy life. To thee also in thy desire, when thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt be cursed above all.: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

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

1. His habitation, by this sentence, cursed. **Cursed is the ground for thy sake:** and the effect of that curse is, **Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee.** It is here intimated that his habitation should be changed; he should no longer dwell in a distinguished, blessed, paradise, but should be removed to common ground, and that, cursed. The ground, or earth, is here put for the whole visible creation, which, by the sin of man, is made subject to vanity, the several parts of it being not so serviceable to man's comfort and happiness, as they were designed to be when they were made, and would have been if he had not sinned. God gave the earth to the children of men, designing it to be a comfortable dwelling to them; but sin has altered the property of it, it is now cursed for man's sin; that is, it is a dishonourable habitation, it bespeaks man mean, that his foundation is in the dust; it is a dry and barren habitation, its spontaneous productions are now weeds and briers, something nauseous or noxious; what good fruits it produces, must be extorted from it by the ingenuity and industry of man. Fruitfulness was its blessing; for man's service, ch. 1. 11. 29; and now barrenness was its curse, for man's punishment. It is not what it was in the day it was created. Sin turned a fruitful land into barrenness; and man, being become as the wild ass's colt, has the wild ass's lot. Job 39. 6: the wilderness for his habitation, and the barren land his dwelling, Ps. 68. 6. Had not this curse been, in part, removed, for aught I know, the earth had been a paradise; it was for the sake of something else that thorns and thistles. The ground is cursed, that is, doomed to destruction, at the end of time, when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt-up for the sin of man, the measure of whose iniquity will then be full, 2 Pet. 3. 7, 10. But observe a mixture of mercy in the sentence. Adam, who was cursed for the serpent was, v. 14, but only the ground for his sake. God had bles-sings in him, even the holy seed; Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it, Isa. 65. 8. And he had bles-sings in store for him; therefore he is not directly and immediately cursed, but, as it was, at second hand. 2. He is yet above ground; the earth does not open, and swallow him up; only it is to what it was as he continues alive, notwithstanding its degeneracy from its primitive purity and rectitude, so the earth continues to be his habitation, notwithstanding its degeneracy from its primitive beauty and fruitfulness. 3. This curse upon the earth, which cut off all expectations of a happiness in things below, might direct and quicken him to look for bliss and satisfaction only in things above.

1. His employments and engagements are all im-bittered to him.

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

2. His food shall from henceforth become (in comparison with what he had in Eden) a bitter herb. (1.) The matter of his food is changed: he must now eat the herb of the field, and must no longer be feasted with the delicacies of the garden of Eden: having by sin made himself like the beasts that perish, he is justly turned to be a fellow-commoner with them, and to eat grass as oxen; till he know that the heavens do rule. (2.) There is a change in the manner of his eating it; in sorrow, (v. 17.) and in the sweat of his face, (v. 19.) he must eat of it. Adam could not but eat in sorrow all the days of his life, remembering the forbidden fruit he had eaten, and the guilt and shame he had contracted by it. Observe [1.] That human life is exposed to many miseries and calamities, which very much imitate the poor remains of its pleasure and delights: some never eat with pleasure, (Job 21. 23.) through sickness or melancholy; all, even the best, have cause to eat with sorrow for sin, and all, even the happiest in this world, have some allays to their joy: troops of diseases, disasters, and deaths, in various shapes, entered the world with sin, and still ravage it. [2.] That the righteousness of God is to be acknowledged in all the sad consequences of sin; Wherefore then should a living man complain? Yet, in this part of the sentence, the righteousness of God is only implied, and the weariness and toilsomeness of the face, but his till shall make his rest the more welcome when he returns to his earth, as to his bed; he shall grieve, but he shall not stare; he shall have sorrow, but in that sorrow he shall eat bread, which
shall strengthen his heart under his sorrows. He is not sentenced to eat dust as the serpent, only to eat the herb of the field.

3. His life also is but short; considering how full of trouble his days are, it is in favour to him, that they are few; yet death being dreadful to nature, (the whole life he has to reckon with,) it was, (as the metaphor of the fall) a "return to the ground out of which thou wast taken;" thy body, that part of thee which was taken out of the ground, shall return to it again: for dust thou art." That points to,(1) The first original of his body; it was made of the dust, may, it was made dust, and was still so; so that there needed no more than to recall the grant of immortality, and to withdraw the holiness it was given in, and then he would, of course, return to dust. Or, (2.) To the present corruption and degeneration of his mind; Dust thou art, that is, "Thy precious soul is now lost and buried in the dust of the body, and the mire of the flesh; it was made spiritual and heavenly, but it is become carnal and earthy." His doom is therefore read; "To dust thou shalt return. Thy body shall be forsook by thy soul, and become itself a lump of dust; and then it shall be lodged in the grave, the proper place for it, and mingle itself with the dust of the earth," our dust, Ps. 104. 29, Earth to earth, dust to dust. Observe here, [1.] That man is a mean frail creature, little as dust, the small dust of the balance; light as dust, altogether lighter than vanity; weak as dust, and of no consistency, our strength not the strength of stones; he that made us, considers how much and remembers that we are dust. Ps. 103. 14. Man is indeed the chief part of the dust of the world, Prov. 8. 26, but still he is dust. [2.] That he is a mortal dying creature, and hastening to the grave. Dust may be raised, for a time, into a little cloud, and may seem considerable while it is held up by the wind that raised it; but when the force of that is spent, it falls again, and returns to the earth out of which it was raised; such a thing is man; a great man is but a great mass of dust, and must return to his earth. [3.] That sin brought death into the world; if Adam had not sinned, he had not died, Rom. 5. 12. God intrusted Adam with a spark of immortality, which he, by a patient continuance in well-doing, might have blown up into an everlasting flame; but he foolishly blew it out by wilful sin; and now death is the wages of sin, and sin the sting of death. We may learn from this sentence upon our first parents, which we are all so nearly concerned in, and feel from, to this day, till we have considered two things. First, How fitly the sad consequences of sin upon the soul of Adam and his sensual race, were represented and figured out by this sentence, and perhaps were more intended in it than we are aware of. Though that misery only is represented, which is the external, which is a pattern of spiritual miseries, the curse that entered into the soul. 1. The pains of a woman in travail represent the terrors and pangs of a guilty conscience, awakened to a sense of sin; from the conception of lust, these sorrows are greatly multiplied, and, sooner or later, will come upon the sinner like pain upon a woman in travail, which cannot be avoided. 2. The state of a mother is compared to travail, the second part of which presents that loss of spiritual liberty and freedom of will, which is the effect of sin. The dominion of sin in the soul is compared to that of a husband, Rom. 7. 1. 5; the sinner's desire is towards it, for he is fond of his slavery, and it rules over him. 3. The curse of barrenness which was brought upon the earth, and its produce of brickers and thorns, are a fit representation of the barrenness of a corrupt and sinful soul in that which is good, and its fruitfulness in evil. It is all grown over with thorns, and nettles cover the face of it; and therefore it is nigh unto cursing, Heb. 6. 8. 4. The toil and sweat bespeak the difficulty which, through the infirmity of the flesh, man labours under, in the service of God, and the work of religion; so hard is it now become to enter into the kingdom of heaven. 5. The imbittering of his food to him bespeaks the soul's want of the comfort of God's favour, which is life, and the bread of life. 6. The soul, like the body, returns to the dust of this world, its tendency is that way; it has an earthy taint, John 3. 31. Secondly, How admirably the satisfaction our Lord Jesus made by his death and sufferings, answered to what was foretold of first parents! 1. Did trafficking pains come in with sin? We read of the travail of Christ's soul, Isa. 53, 11, and the pains of death he was held by, are called First, Acts, 2. 24, the pains of a woman in travail. 2. Did subjection come in with sin? Christ was made under the law, Gal. 4. 4. 3. Did the curse come in with sin? Christ was made a curse for us, did a cursed death, Gal. 3. 13. Did thorns come in with sin? He was wounded for us, Is. 53. 5. 4. Did the sweat come in with sin? He sweats, Luke 22. 44. 5. Did sweat come in with sin? He sweats for us, as it had been great drops of blood. 6. Did sorrow come in with sin? He was a man of sorrows, his soul was, in his agony, exceeding sorrowful. 7. Did death come in with sin? He became obedient unto death. Thus is the plasher as wide as the wound; blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

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

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

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

We have here a further instance of God's care concerning our first parents, notwithstanding the
sin. Though he correct his disobedient children, and put them under the marks of his displeasure, yet he does not disinherit them, but, like a father, provides the herb of the field for their food, and coats of skins for their clothing; thus the father provided for the returning prodigal, Luke 15. 22, 23. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have done this for them. Observe, 1. That those came in with sin; we had had no occasion for them, either for defence or decency, if sin had not made us naked to our shame. Little reason therefore we have to be proud of our clothes, which are but the badges of our poverty and infamy. 2. That when God made clothes for our first parents, he made them warm and strong, but coarse and very plain, not robes of scarlet, but coats of skin. Their clothes were made, not of silk and satin, but plain skins, not trimmed, nor embroidered, none of the ornaments which the daughters of Zion afterwards invented, and prided themselves in. Let the poor that are meanly clad, learn hence to be content; having food and a covering, let them be content; they are as well done to, as Adam and Eve were; and let the rich that are finely clad, learn hence not to make the putting on of apparel their adorning, 1 Pet. 3. 3. That God is to be acknowledged with thankfulness, not only in giving us food, but in giving us clothes also, ch. 29. 20. The wood and the flax are his, as well as the corn and the wine, Hos. 2. 9, 4. Those coats of skin had a signification. The beasts whose skins they were, must be slain, slain before their eyes, to show them what death is, and (as it is Exel. 3. 18.) that they may see that they themselves are beasts, mortal, and dying. It is supposed that they were slain, not for food, but for sacrifice, to typify the Great Sacrifice, which in the latter end of the world, should be offered once for all, thus the first thing that was a sacrifice was a sacrifice for Christ in a figure, who is therefore said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. These sacrifices were divided between God and man, in token of reconciliation; the flesh was offered to God, a whole burnt-offering, the skins were given to man for clothing; signifying that Jesus Christ having offered himself to God a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, we are to clothe ourselves in his righteousness, as a garment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear. Adam and Eve made for themselves aprons of fig-leaves, a covering too narrow for them to wrap themselves in, Is. 28. 20. Such are all the rags of our own righteousness. But God made them coats of skins, large, and strong, and durable, and fit for them; such is the righteousness of Christ, therefore put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But whether he did send him out, when he turned him out of Eden? He might justly have chased him out of the world, Job 18. 18, but he only chased him out of the garden. He might justly have cast him down to hell, as the angels that sinned were, when they were shut out from the heavenly para
Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel: and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiler of the ground.

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

1. The names of their two sons. 1. Cain signifies possession; for Eve, when she bare him, said, with joy and thankfulness, and great expectation, I have gotten a man from the Lord. Observe, Children are God's gifts, and he must be acknowledged in the building up of our families. It justifies sometimes our comfort in them, when we see them coming to us from the hand of God, who will not forsake the works and gifts of his own hand, though Eve bare him with the sorrows that were the consequence of sin, yet she did not lose the sense of the mercy in her pains. Comforts, though allayed, are more than we deserve; and therefore our complaints must not drown our thanksgivings. Moreover, that Eve had a childless son was no diminution of the promised Seed, and that therefore she thus triumphed in him; it may indeed be read, I have gotten a man, the Lord; God-man. If so, she was wretchedly mistaken, as Samuel, when he said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before me, 1 Sam. 16. 6. When children are born, who can foresee what they will prove? He that was thought to be a man, the Lord, or, at least, a man from the Lord, and was the object of the world's expectation, was his son; and their expectation was a constant and irreparable disappointment.

2. Abel signifies vanity; when she thought she had obtained the promised Seed in Cain, she was so taken up with that possession, that another son was as vanity to her. To those who have an interest in Christ, and make him their all, other things are as nothing at all. It intimates likewise, that the longer we live in this world, the more we may see of the vanity of it; what, at first, we are fond of, as a possession, afterward we see cause to be dead to, as a trifle. The name given to this son is put upon the whole race, Ps. 36. 5. Every man is at his best estate, Abel, vanity. Let us labour to see both ourselves and others so. Childhood and youth are vanity.

The employment of Cain and Abel. Observe, 1. They both had a calling. Though they were heirs apparent to the world, their birth noble, and their race enormous large; yet they were not brought up in idleness. God gave their father a calling, even in innocency, and he gave them one. Note, It is the will of God that we should every one of us have something to do in this world. Parents ought to bring up their children to business: Give them a Bible, and a calling; (said good Mr. Dodd) and God be with them. 2. Their employments were differen...
of religion and the relief of the poor; thus we must now bring our offering with an upright heart; and with such sacrifices God is well-pleased. 4. That hypocrites and evil doers may be found going as far as the best of God's people in the external services of religion. Cain brought an offering with Abel; nay, Cain's offering is mentioned first, as if he were the more forward of the two. A hypocrite may, possibly, hear as many sermons, say as many prayers, and give as much alms, as a good christian; and yet, for want of some short of acceptance with God. The Pharisee and Publican went to the temple to pray, Luke 18. 10.

II. The different success of their devotions. That which is to be aimed at in all acts of religion, is, God's acceptance; we speed well if we attain that, but in vain do we worship if we miss of that, 2 Cor. 3. 9. Perhaps to a stander-by, the sacrifices of Cain and Abel would have seemed both alike good. Adam accepted them both, but God did not, who sees not as man sees. God had respect to Abel and to his offering, and showed his acceptance of it, probably, by fire from heaven; but to Cain and to his offering he had not respect. We are sure there was a good reason for this difference; the Governor of the world, though an absolute sovereign, does not act arbitrarily in dispensing his smiles and frowns.

1. There was a difference in the characters of the persons offering. Cain was a wicked man, led a bad life, under the reigning power of the world and the flesh; and thence his sacrificial offering was an offering to the Lord, Prov. 15. 8, a vain oblation, Isa. 1. 13. God had no respect to Cain himself, and therefore no respect to his offering, as the manner of the expression intimates. But Abel was a righteous man, he is called righteous Abel, Matth. 23. 35, his heart was upright, and his life was pious; he was one of those whom God's countenance, beholds, Ps. 11. 7. and whose prayer is therefore his delight, Prov. 15. 29. God had respect to both to his offering as a holy offering. The tree must be good, else the fruit cannot be pleasing to the heart-searching God.

2. There was a difference in the offerings they brought. It is expressly said, Heb. 11. 4, Abel's was a more excellent sacrifice than Cain's: either, (1.) In the nature of it. Cain's was only a sacrifice of acknowledgement offered to the Creator; the meat-offering was the firstfruits of the ground. But Abel's sacrifice was for the remission; and, for aught I know, might have been offered in innocency: but Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, the blood whereof was shed in order to remission; thereby owning himself a sinner, deprecating God's wrath, and imploring his favour in a Mediator; or, (2.) In the qualities of the offering. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, any thing that came next to hand, what he had not occasion for himself, or what was not marketable; but Abel was curious in the choice of his offering; not the lame, or the lean, or the refuse, but the firstlings of the flock, the best he had, and the fat thereof, the best of those best. Hence the Hebrew doctors give it for a general rule, that every thing that is for the name of the good God, must be the best and best. It is fit that he who is the first and best should have the first and best of our time, strength, and service.

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

II. Cain’s displeasure at the difference God made between his sacrifice and Abel’s. Cain was very wroth, which presently appeared in his very looks, for his countenance fell; which bespeaks, not so much his grief and discontent, as his malice and rage. His sullen churlish countenance, and a down-look, betrayed his passionate resentments; he carried ill nature in his face, and the show of his countenance expressed against him. This anger bespeaks, 1. His enmity to God, and the indignation he had conceived against him for making such a difference between his offering and his brother’s. He should have been angry at himself for his own infidelity and hypocrisy, by which he had forfeited God’s acceptance; and his countenance should have fallen in repentance and holy shame, as the Publican’s, who would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, Luke 18. 13. But instead of that, he flies out against God, as if he were partial and unfair in distributing his smiles and frowns, and as if he had done him a deal of wrong. Note, It is a certain sign of an unhumbled heart, to quarrel with those rebukes which we have, by our own sin, brought upon ourselves. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then, to make bad worse, his heart fretteth against the Lord, Prov. 19. 5. 9. His own anger is a murderer who hath no hope to be publicly owned. Though his brother had no thought of having any slur put upon him, nor did now insult over him to provoke him, yet he conceived a hatred of him as an enemy, or, which is equivalent, a rival. Note, (1.) It is common for those who have rendered themselves unworthy of God’s favour by their presumptuous sins, to have indignation against those who are dignified and distinguished by it. The Pharisees walked in this way of Cain, when they neither entered into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffered those that were entering, to go in, Luke 11. 53. Their eye is evil, because their master’s eye, and the eye of their fellow-servants, are good. (2.) Envy is a sin that commonly carries with it, both its own discovery in the paleness of the looks, and its own punishment in the rottenness of the bones.

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

God is here reasoning with Cain, to convince him of the sin and folly of his anger and discontent, and to bring him into a good temper again, that further mischief might be prevented. It is an instance of God’s patience and condescending good- ness, that he would deal thus tenderly with so bad a man, in so bad an affair. He is not willing that any should perish, that is, that any should continue in sin. Thus he that in the father’s day of old had argued the case with the elder son, Luke 15. 28. &c. And God with those Israelites, who said, The way of the Lord is not equal, Ezek. 18. 23. God puts Cain himself up, inquiring into the cause of his discontent, and considering whether it were indeed a just cause, Why is thy countenance fallen? Observe,

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

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

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

1. That he had no reason to be angry at God, for he had proceeded according to the settled and invariable rules of government, suited to a state of sin and corruption, and had not interfered with any blessing and the curse; and then renders to them according to their works, and differences them according as they difference themselves—so shall their dooms be. The rules are just, and therefore his ways, according to these rules, must needs be equal, and he will be justified when he speaks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

9. And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know it may be proper to state, for the information of some readers, that the LXX. Version, in translating the Old Testament, supposed to be the work of seventy-two Jews who usually called in a round number, the Seventy, and who made this selection, at the desire of Ptolemy Philadelphus, about 200 years before Christ. —Christ and his Apostles usually quote from this version.
not: Am I my brother's keeper? 10. And he said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. 12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

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

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

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

III. The conviction of Cain, v. 19. God gave no answer to Cain's question, but rejected his plea as false and frivolous; "What hast thou done? Thou makest a light matter of it; but hast thou considered what an evil thing it is; how deep the stain, how heavy the burden, of this guilt is? Thou thinkest to conceal it; but it is to no purpose, the evidence against thee is clear and incontestable, the voice of thy brother's blood cries. He speaks as if the blood of Abel was but his witness and persecutor; because God's own knowledge testified against him, and God's own justice demanded satisfaction. Observe here, 1. Murder is a crying sin, none more so. Blood calls for blood, the blood of the murderer; as the Lord said, in the dying words of Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24. 22. The Lord look upon it, and require it; or in those of the scales under the altar, Rev. 6. 10. How long, Lord, holy and true? The patient sufferers are cursed, pardi. Father, forgive them; but their blood cries for vengeance. Though they hold their peace, their blood has a loud and constant cry, which the ear of the righteous God is always open to. 2. The blood is said to cry from the ground, the earth, which is said, v. 11, to open her mouth to receive his brother's blood from his hand. The earth did, as it were, blush to see her own face stained with such blood, and, therefore, opened her mouth to hide it, which she could not hinder. When the heavens revealed his iniquity, the earth also rose up against him, (Job 20. 27.) and groaned for being thus made subject to vanity, Rom. 8. 20, 22. Cain, it is likely, buried the blood and the body, to conceal his crime; but murder will not. He did not bury them so deep but the cry of them reached heaven. 3. In the original, the word is blood of thy brother's blood, not only of Abel's blood, but the blood of all his blood; the blood of all his blood relations descended from him. Or, the blood of all the seed of the woman, who should, in like manner, seal the truth with their blood: Christ puts all on one score, Matt. 23. 35. Or, because account was kept of every drop of blood shed. How well it is for us, that the blood of Christ speaks better things than that of Abel! Heb. 12. 24. Abel's blood cried for vengeance, Christ's blood cries for pardon.

IV. The sentence passed upon Cain, v. 15. v. 18. And now art thou cursed from the earth, v. 11. Observe here, 1. He is cursed, separated to all evil, laid under the wrath of God, as it is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18. Who knows the extent and weight of a divine curse, how far it reaches, how deep it pierces? God's pronouncing a man cursed makes him so to all those for whose children he is cursed indeed. The curse for Adam's disobedience terminated on the ground, Cursed is the ground for thy sake; but that for Cain's rebellion fell immediately upon himself, Thou art cursed; for God had mercy in store for Adam, but none for Cain. We have all deserved this curse, and it is only in Christ that believers are saved from it, and inherit the blessing, Gal. 3. 10, 13. He is cursed from the earth. Thence the cry came up to God, thence the curse came upon Cain. God could have taken vengeance by an immediate stroke from heaven, by the sword of an angel, or by a thunderbolt; but he chose to make the earth the avenger of blood; to continue him upon the earth, and not immediately to cut him off, and yet to make even that his curse. The earth is always near us, we cannot but think of that if it were the executioner of divine wrath, it is unavoidable; it is sin, that is, the punishment of sin, lying at the door. Cain found his punishment there, where he chose his portion, and set his heart.

Two things we expect from the earth; and this curse both are denied to Cain, and taken from him, sustenance and settlement. (1.) Sustenance cut off from the earth is miserable, and this from him, when he departed from him in his enjoyments, and particularly in his calling; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength. Note, Every creature is to us what God makes it; a com-
fort or a cross; a blessing or a curse. If the earth yield not her strength to us, we must therein acknowledge God's righteousness; for we have not yielded our strength to him. The ground was cursed before, to Adam, but it was now doubly cursed to Cain. That part of it which fell to his share, and which he had the occupation of, was made unfruitful and uncomfortable to him by the blood of Abel. Note, The wickedness of the wicked brings a curse upon all they do, and all they have, Deut. 28. 15. &c. and that curse imbibers all they have, and disappoints them in all they do. (2.) Settlement on the heart. In him it burned. A fugitive and a vagabond shall thou be in the earth. By this he was condemned. [1.] To perpetual disgrace and reproach among men. It should be ever looked upon as a scandalous thing to harbour him, converse with him, or show him any countenance. And justly was a man that had divested himself of all humanity, abhorred and abandoned by all mankind, and made infamous. [2.] To perpetual disquietude and horror in his own mind. His own guilty conscience should haunt him wherever he went, and make him Major-missabib, a terror round about. What rest can those find, what settlement, that carry their own disturbance with them in their bosoms wherever they go? they must needs be fugitives, that are thus tossed. There is not a more restless fugitive upon earth, than he that is continually pursued by his own guilt, nor a viler vagabond than he that is at the mercy of his own conscience. This was the sentence passed upon Cain; and even in this there was mercy mixed, insomuch, as he was not immediately cut off, but had space given him to repent; for God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish.

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

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

1. Here is Cain's complaint of the sentence passed upon him, as hard and severe. Some make him to speak the language of despair; and read it, Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven; and so what he says, is a reproach and affront to the mercy of God, which those only shall have the benefit of, that hope in it. There is forgiveness with the God of pardons for the greatest sins and sinners; but they forfeit it, who despair of it. Just before, Cain made nothing of his sin; but now, he is in the opinion of his own heart, and all the world, driven to despair. We cannot think too ill of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable. But Cain seems rather to speak the language of indignation; My punishment is greater than I can bear; and so, what he says, is a reproach and affront to the justice of God, and a complaint, not of the greatness of his sin, but of the extremity of his punishment, as if that were disproportionate to his merit. Instead of justifying God, he condemns him; not accepting the punishment of his iniquity, but quarrelling with it. Note, Imperfect unamiable hearts are therefore not reclaimed by God's rebukes, because they think themselves wronged by them; and it is an evidence of great hardness to be more concerned about our sufferings than about our sins. He asks God to take this death only, not this sin, Exod. 10. 17; so was Cain's here. He is a living man, and yet complains of the punishment of his sin, Lam. 3. 39. He thinks himself rigorously dealt with, when really he is favourably treated; and he cries out of wrong, when he has more reason to wonder that he is out of hell. Woe unto him that thus strives with his Maker, and enters into judgment with his judge.

2. Now to justify this complaint, observe his descendants upon the sentence. 1. He sees himself excluded by it from the favour of God; and concludes that, being cursed, he was hid from God's face; which is indeed the true nature of God's curse; damned sinners find it so, to whom it is said, Depart from me, ye cursed. Those are cursed indeed, that are for ever shut out from God's love and care, and from all hopes of his grace. 2. He sees himself expelled from all the comforts of this life; and concludes that, being a fugitive, he was, in effect, driven out this day from the face of the earth. As good have no place on earth, as not have a settled place. Better rest in the grave, than not rest at all.

3. He sees himself excommunicated by it, and cut off from the church, and forbidden to attend on public ordinances. His hands being full of blood, he may bring more vain oblations, Isa. 1. 15. Perhaps, he means that he was driven out of the face of the earth, for, being shut out of the church, which none had yet deserted, he was hid from God's face, being not admitted to come with the sons of God to present himself before the Lord. 4. He sees himself exposed by it to the hatred and ill-will of all mankind. It shall come to pass, that every one that finds me, shall slay me. There are none of all mankind, but he, that has enemies; he goes in peril of his life, at least how thinks so; for, a man in debt, thinks every one he meets, a bailiff. There were none alive but his near relations; yet even of them he is justly afraid, who had himself been so barbarous to his brother. Some read it, Whosoever finds me, shall slay me; not only, Whosoever among men, but Whosoever among all the creatures: seeing himself thrown out of God's protection. He is driven out of the face of the earth, for, being shut out of the church. Note, Unpardonable guilt fills men with continual terrors,Prov. 28. 1. Job 15. 20, 21. Ps. 53. 5. It is better to fear and not sin, than to sin and then fear. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this word of Cain should be read as a wish: Now, therefore, let it be that any that finds me, may kill me. Being bitter in his soul, he longs for death, but it comes not, Job 3. 20 ...22, as those under spiritual torments do, Rev. 9. 5, 6.

II. Here is God's confirmation of the sentence; for when he judges, he will overcome, v. 15. Observe, 1. How Cain is protected in wrath by this declaration, notified, we may suppose, to all that little world which was then in being. Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold; because thereby the sentence he was under (that he should be a fugitive and a vagabond) would be defeated. Condemned prisoners are under the special protection of the law; they that are appointed sacrifices to public justice, must not be sacrificed to private revenge. God having said, in Cain's case, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, it had been a daring usurpation for any man to take the sword out of God's hand, a contempt put upon an express declaration of God's mind, and therefore, avenged upon. God, having condemned Cain, we have no authority for protecting and prolonging the lives even of very wicked men. God deals with some, according to that prayer, Ps. 59. 11. Slay them not, lest my
people forget; scatter them by thy power. Had Cain been slain immediately, he had been forgotten, Excl. 8. 10; but now he lives, a more fearful and lasting monument of God's justice, hanged in chains, as it were. 2. How he is marked in wrath; The Lord set a mark upon Cain, to distinguish him from the rest of mankind, and to notify that he was the man that murdered his brother, whom nobody must hurt, but every body must hoot at. God shewed him, (as some mofadators are burnt in the chork,) and put upon him such a visible and indelible mark of infancy and disgrace, as would make all wise people shun him, so that he could not be otherwise than a fugitive and a vagabond, and the escurring of all things.

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

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

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

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

1. He chose his land. He went and dwelt on the east of Eden, somewhere distant from the place where Adam and his religious family resided, distinguishing himself and his accursed generation from the holy seed, his camp from the camp of the saints and the beloved city, Rev. 20. 9. On the east of Eden, the champaign, ware with the flaming sword; ch. 3. 24. there he chose his lot, as if to defy the terrors of the Lord. But his attempt to settle was in vain; for the land he dwelt in, was to him the land of Nod, that is, shaking, or trembling, because of the continual restlessness and unseasiness of his own spirit. Note. Those that depart from God, cannot find rest any where else. When Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, he never rested after. Those that shall themselves abandon themselves to a perpetual trembling; "Return therefore to thy rest, O my soul, to thy rest in God; else thou art for ever restless." 2. He builded him a city for a habitation, v. 17. He was building a city, so some read it, ever building it, but a curse being upon him and the work of his hands, he could not finish it. Or, as we read it, he builded a city, in token of a fixed separation from the church of God, to which he had no thoughts of ever returning. This city was to be the head quarters of the apostacy. Observe here, (1.) Cain's defence of the divine sentence. God said he should be a fugitive and a vagabond; had he resisted, and not submitted to his sentence, the curse might have turned into a blessing, as that of the tribe of Levi was, that they should be divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel; but his impatient unhumbled heart walking contrary to God, and resolving to fix, in spite of heaven, that which might have been a blessing, turned into a curse. (2.) See what was Cain's choice, after he had forsaken God; he pitched upon a settlement in this world, as his rest for ever. They who looked for the heavenly city, cast a stone, chose to dwell in tabernacles, but Cain, as one that minded not that city, built him one on earth. They that are cursed of God, are apt to seek their settlement and satisfaction here below, Ps. 17. 14. (3.) See what method Cain took to defend himself against the terrors with which he was perpetually haunted. He undertook this building, to divert his thoughts from the consideration of his own misery, and to make himself the companion of a guilty conscience with the noise of axes and hammers. Thus many baffle their convictions, by thrusting themselves into a hurry of worldly business. (4.) See how wicked people often get the start of God's people, and out-go them in outward prosperity. Cain and his cursed race dwell in a city, while Adam and his blessed family dwell in tents; we cannot judge of love or hatred by all that is before us, Excl. 9. 1, 2.

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

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

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

1. His marrying of two wives. It was one of the degenerate race of Cain, who first transgressed that original law of marriage, that two only should be one flesh. Hitherto, one man had but one wife at a time; but Lamech had two. From the beginning it was not so, Mal. 2. 15. Matthew 19:4.

2. That these who desert God's church and ordinances, fly themselves open to all manner of temptation. 2. That when a bad custom is begun by bad men, sometimes men of better characters are,
through unwarranted drawn to include them. Jacob, David, and many others, who were otherwise remarkable, were saved in this sin which Lamech had begun.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Observe,

1. How haughtily and imperiously he speaks to his wives, as one that expected a mighty regard and observance. Here is a breach of that mutual love, which the wives of Lamech, No marvel that he who had broken one law of marriage, by taking two wives, broke another, which obliged him to be kind and tender to those he had taken, and to give honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel. Those are not always the most careful to do their own duty, that are highest in their parts of reverence from others, and most frequent in calling upon their relations to know their place, and do their duty.

2. How bloody and barbarous he was to all about him. I have slain, or, (as it is in the margin,) I would slay a man in my own wound, and a young man in my hurt. He owns himself a man of a fierce and cruel disposition, that would lay about him with utter cruelty, and kill all that stood in his way both men and woman, or a yearling, as he himself were in danger to be wounded and hurt in the conflict. Some think, because (v. 24,) he compares himself with Cain, that he had murdered some of the holy seed, the true worshippers of God, and that he acknowledges this to be the wounding of his conscience, and the hurt of his soul; and yet that like Cain, he continued impenitent, trembling and yet unhumbled. Or, his wives, knowing what manner of spirit he was of, how apt both to give and to resent provocation, were afraid lest somebody or other would be the death of him. "Never fear," says he, "I defy any man to set upon me; I will slay him, be he a man, or a young man."

Note, It is a common thing for fierce and bloody men to glory in their shame, (Philip. 3. 19,) as if it were both their safety and their honour, that they should see how many lives are sacrificed to their angry resentments, nor how much they are hated, provided they may be feared. Oderint, damme mutuant—Let them hate, provided they fear.

3. How impiously he presumes even upon God’s protection in his wicked way, v. 24. He had heard that Cain should be avenged seven-fold, v. 13; that is, if any man should dare to kill Cain, he should be severely reckoned with, and punished, for so doing, though Cain deserved to die a thousand deaths for the murder of his brother; and hence he infers, that if any one should kill him for the murders he had committed, God would much more avenge his death. As if the special care God took to prolong and secure the life of Cain, for special reasons peculiar to his case, and indeed for his sorcer punishment, as the beings of the damned are continued—as if this care were for designed for a protection to all murderers. Thus Lamech haughtily argues, "If God provided for the safety of Cain, much more for mine; who, though I have slain many, yet never slew my own brother, and upon no provocation, as he did." Note, The reproof of some sinners, and the patience God exercised toward them, are often abused to the hardening of others in the like sinful ways, Ecc. 8. 11. But though justice strike, no fearful judgment can therefore be sure but that they may be taken away with a swift destruction. Or, if God should hear long with those who thus presume upon his forbearance, they do but hereby treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Now this is all we have upon record in scripture concerning the family and posterity of cursed Cain, till we find them all cut off and perishing in the universal deluge.

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

This is the first mention of Adam in the story of this chapter. No question, the murder of Abel,
and the impenitence and apostasy of Cain, were a very great grief to him and Eve; and the more, because their own children and in their right shape, and his thoughts did reprove them. Their folly had given sin and death entrance into the world; and now they smarted by it, being, by means thereof, deprived of both their sons in one day, ch. 27. 45. When parents are grieved by their children's wickedness, they should take occasion thence to lament that corruption of nature which was derived from them, and which is the root of bitterness. But here we have that which was a relief to our first parents in their affliction.

I. God gave them to see the rebuilding of their family, which was sorely shaken and weakened by that sad event. For, 1. They saw their seed, another seed instead of Abel, v. 25. Observe God's kindness and tenderness toward his people, in his providential dealings with them; when he takes away one comfort from them, he gives them another instead of it; which may prove a greater blessing to them than that which in which they thought their lives were bound up. This other seed was he in whom the church was to be built up and perpetuated; and he comes instead of Abel; for the succession of professors is the revival of the martyrs, and as it were the resurrection of God's slain witnesses. Thus we are baptized for the dead, 1 Cor. 15. 29; that is, we are, by baptism, admitted into the church, for or in the room of those who, by death, shall never be lost for want of heirs. This son, by whom the church is built up, is Seth, who is, set, settled, or placed; because, in his seed, mankind should continue to the end of time, and from him the Messiah should descend. While Cain, the head of the apostasy, is made a wanderer, Seth, from whom the true church was to come, is one fixed. In Christ and his church is the only true settlement. 2. They saw their seed's seed, v. 26. To Seth was born a son called Enos, that general name for ancestors we were taught to use; and we, in our miseries, as members of man's estate, most sensible of these, both in ourselves and our children. We are never so settled, but we must remind ourselves that we are frail. 2. God gave them to see the reviving of religion in their family, v. 26. Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord. It is small comfort to a good man to see his children's children, if he do not, withal, see the evidence that they are his, by their sealing and consecration to the concern of his. Doubtless, God's name was called upon before, but now, 1. The worshippers of God began to stir up themselves to do more in religion than they had done; perhaps not more than they had been done at first, but more than they had been done of late, since the defection of Cain. Now, men began to worship God, not only in their closets and families, but in public assemblies and solemn observances. Now, there was so great a reformation in religion, that it was as it were, a new beginning of it. Then may refer, not to the birth of Enos, but to the whole foregoing story; then, when men saw in Cain and Lamech the sad effects of sin, by the workings of natural conscience; then, they were so much the more lively and resolute in religion. The worse others are, the better we should be, and the more zealous. 2. The worshippers of God began to distinguish themselves; the margin reads it, Then began men to be called by the name of the Lord, or, to call themselves by it. Now, that Cain and those who had deserted religion, had built a city, and began to declare for impiety and idolatry, and in themselves the Sons of men; these that adhered to God, began to declare for him and his worship, and called themselves the Sons of God. Now began the distinction between professors and profane, which has been kept up ever since, and will be while the world stands.

CHAP. V.

This chapter is the only authentic history extant of the first age of the world, from the creation to the flood, containing (according to the verity of the Hebrew text) 1656 years, as may easily be computed by the ages of the Patriarchs, before they begat that son, through whom the line was to descend to the Messiah; 1. of those which the apostle calls endless genealogies, 1 Tim. 1. 4, for Christ who was the end of the Old Testament law, was also the end of the Old Testament genealogies; toward him they looked, and in him they centered. The genealogy here recorded, is inserted briefly in the pedigree of our Saviour, Luke 3. 36. 38, and is of great use, to show that Christ was the Seed of the woman, that was promised. We have here an account of I. Concerning Adam, v. 1. 5. II. Seth, v. 5. III. Enos, v. 9. 11. IV. Cainan, v. 12. 14. V. Mahaleel, v. 15. 16. VI. Jared, v. 18. 20. VII. Enock, v. 21. 24. VIII. Methuselah, v. 25. 27. IX. Lamech and his son Noah, v. 28. 22. All scripture being given by inspiration of God, is probable, though not all alike profitable.

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

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

I. His creation, v. 1. 2. Where we have a brief rehearsal of what was before at large related concerning the creation of man. This is what we have need frequently to hear of, and carefully to acquaint ourselves with. Observe here, 1. That God created man. Man is not his own maker, therefore he must not be his own master: but the Author of his being must be the Director of his motions and the centre of them. 2. That there was a day in which God created man; he was not from eternity, but of yesterday; he was not the first-born, but the junior of the creation. 3. That God made him in his own likeness, righteous and holy, and therefore, undoubtedly, happy; man's nature resembled the divine nature more than that of any of the creatures of this lower world. 4. That God created them male and female, (v. 2.) for their mutual comfort as well as for the preservation, and increase of their
And Adam and Eve were both made immediately by the hand of God, both made in God’s like ess; and therefore between the sexes there is not that great distance and inequality which some imagine. 5. That God blessed them. It is usual for parents to bless their children; so God, the common Father, blessed his; but earthy parents can only beg a blessing from God. But it is God’s business to bless; and God, who has a claim to the blessing of his creatures, refers chiefly to the blessing of increase, not excluding other blessings. 6. That he called their name Adam. Adam signifies earth, red earth. Now, (1.) God gave him this name. Adam had himself named the rest of the creatures, but he must not choose his own name, lest he should assume some glorious poutous title. But God gave him a name which would be a continual memorandum to him of the mention of his own name, and this he did to look unto the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged, Isa. 51. 1. These have little reason to be proud, who are so near akin to dust. (2.) He gave this name both to the man and to the woman. Being, at first, one by nature, and afterward, one by marriage, it was fit they should both have the same name, in token of their union. 

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

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

And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos: 7. And Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters: 8. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died. 9. And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan: 10. And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters: 11. And the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died. 12. And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel: 13. And Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters: 14. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died. 15. And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared: 16. And Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters: 17. And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died. 18. And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch: 19. And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: 20. And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.

We have here all that the Holy Ghost thought fit to leave upon record concerning five of the patriarchs before the flood, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared. There is nothing observable concerning the rest of the patriarchs, nor of the patriarchs before Methuselah, but that we have reason to think they were men of eminence, both for prudence and piety, in their day: but, in general, I. Observe how largely and expressly their generations are recorded. This matter, one would think, might have been delivered in fewer words; but it is certain that there is not one idle word in God’s books, whatever there is in men’s. It is thus brought near, and intelligible to the meanest capacity: when we are informed how old they were when they begat such a son and, and how many years they lived after, a very little skill in arithmetic will enable a man to tell how long they lived in all; yet the Holy Ghost sets down the sum total, for the sake of those that have not even so much skill as that. 2. To show the pleasure God takes in the names of his people: we find Cain’s generation numbered in hundreds, ch. 5. 15. But this account of the holy seed is enlarged upon, and given in words at length, and not in figures: we are told how long they lived, that lived in God’s fear, and when they died, that died in his favour: but as for others, it is no matter. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.

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

Concerning each of them, except Enoch, it is said, and he died. It is implied in the numbering of the years of their life, that their life, when their number of days is completed, came to an end: and yet it is still repeated, and he died: to show that death passed upon all men without exception, and that it is good for us particularly to observe and improve the deaths of others for our own edification. Such a one was a strong healthful man, but he died; such a one was a great and rich man, but he died: such a one was a wise politic man, but he died; such a one was a very good man, perhaps a very useful man, but he died. 4. That which is especially observable, is, that they all lived very long; not one of them died till they had seen the revolutions of almost eight hundred years, and some of them lived much longer; a great while for an immortal soul to be imprisoned in a house of clay. The present life surely was not to
them such a burthen as, commonly, it is now, else they would have been weary of it; nor was the future life so clearly revealed then as it is now under the gospel, else they would have been impatient to remove to it: long life to the pious patriarchs was a blessing, and made them blessings. 1. Some natural causes may be assigned for their long life in those first ages of the world. It is very probable that the earth was more fruitful, the productions of it more strengthening, the air more healthful, and the influences of the sun more beneficial before the flood than they were after. Though man was driven out of paradise, yet the earth itself was then paradisical; a garden, in comparison with its present wilderness state: and some think that their great knowledge of the creatures, and of their usefulness both for food and medicine, together with their sobriety and temperance, contributed much to it; yet we do not find that those who were intemperate, as many were, Luke 17. 27, were as short-lived as intemperate men generally are now. 2. It must chiefly be resolved into the power and providence of God; he prolonged their lives, both for the more speedy replenishing of the earth, and for the more effectual preservation of the knowledge of God and religion, then, when there was no written word, but tradition was the channel of its conveyance. All the patriarchs here, except Noah, were born before Adam died; so that from him they might receive the knowledge of the creation, paradise, the fall, the promise, and those divine precepts which concerned religious worship and a religious life: and if any mistake arose, they might have recourse to him while he lived, as to an oracle, for the rectifying of it, and, after his death, to Methuselah, and others, that had conversed with him: so great was the care of Almighty God to preserve in his church the knowledge of his will, and the purity of his worship.

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

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

1. His gracious conversation in this world, which is twice spoken of, v. 22, Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah: and again v. 24, Enoch walked with God, which denotes, (1.) True religion; what is godliness, but walking with God? The ungodly and profane are without God in the world, they walk contrary to him; but the godly walk with God, which presupposes reconciliation to God, for two cannot walk together, except they be agreed, Amos 3. 3, and includes all the parts and instances of a godly, righteous, and sober life: to walk with God, is to set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under his eye. It is to live a life of communion with God, both in ordinances and in the uses of religious exercises; it is to make God's word our rule, and his glory our end, in all our actions; it is to make it our constant care and endeavour in every thing to please God, and in nothing to offend him; it is to comply with his will, to concur with his designs, and to be workers together with him: it is to be followers of him as dear children. (2.) Eminent religion. He was translated from the world, and did not continue after God, as all good men do, but he walked with God, as if he were in heaven already: he lived above the rate, not only of other men, but of other saints; not only good in bad times, but the best in good times.

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

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

4. His glorious removal to a better world: as he did not live like the rest, so he did not die like the rest, v. 21. He was not taken, as it is explained, Heb. 11. 3. He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him. Observe,

1. When he was thus translated. (1.) What time of his life it was: when he had lived but three hundred and sixty-five years, (a year of years,) which, as men's ages went then, was in the midst of his days: for there was none of the patriarchs, before the flood, that did not live more than double that time: but why did God take him so soon? Surely, because the world, which was now grown corrupt, was not worthy of him; or, because he was so much above the world, and so weary of it, as to desire a speedy removal out of it; or, because his work was done, and dene the sooner to his mind and Henry, who is thus addressed to the world, or Noah, who is likewise said to walk with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming, Jude 14, Behold, the Lord cometh with his holy myrio- rials. Now the Holy Spirit instead of saying, Enoch lived, says, Enoch walked with God; for it is the life of a good man to walk with God. This was, [1.] The business of Enoch's life, his constant care and work; while others lived to themselves and the world, he lived to God. [2.] It was the joy and support of his life; communion with God was to him better life than itself; To me to live is Christ, Phil. 1. 21.

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

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4. His glorious removal to a better world: as he did not live like the rest, so he did not die like the rest, v. 21. He was not taken, as it is explained, Heb. 11. 3. He was translated that he should not see death, and was not found because God had translated him. Observe,

1. When he was thus translated. (1.) What time of his life it was: when he had lived but three hundred and sixty-five years, (a year of years,) which, as men's ages went then, was in the midst of his days: for there was none of the patriarchs, before the flood, that did not live more than double that time: but why did God take him so soon? Surely, because the world, which was now grown corrupt, was not worthy of him; or, because he was so much above the world, and so weary of it, as to desire a speedy removal out of it; or, because his work was done, and dene the sooner to his mind and Henry, who is thus addressed to the world, or Noah, who is likewise said to walk with God, he was a preacher of righteousness, and prophesied of Christ's second coming, Jude 14, Behold, the Lord cometh with his holy myrio- rials. Now the Holy Spirit instead of saying, Enoch lived, says, Enoch walked with God; for it is the life of a good man to walk with God. This was, [1.] The business of Enoch's life, his constant care and work; while others lived to themselves and the world, he lived to God. [2.] It was the joy and support of his life; communion with God was to him better life than itself; To me to live is Christ, Phil. 1. 21.

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for God took him. (1.) He was not any longer in this world; it was not the period of his being, but of his being here; he was not found, so the apostle explains it from the LXX, not found by his friends, who sought him, as the sons of the prophets sought Elijah, 2 Kings 2. 17; not found by his enemies, who, some think, were in quest of him, to put him to death in their rage against him for his eminent piety: it appears by his prophecy, "And I will send you a prophet before the great day of the Lord coming," that he was un expected, and his friends, who spoke hard speeches, and, probably did hard things too, against God's people, Jude 15, but God hid Enoch from them, not under heaven, but in heaven. (2.) God took him body and soul to himself in the heavenly paradise, by the ministry of angels, as, afterward, he took Elijah. He was changed, as those saints shall be, that will be found alive at Christ's second coming. Whenever a good man dies, God will, if he so wills it, and thinks it best for him hence, and receives him to himself. The apostle adds concerning Enoch, that before his translation, he had this testimony that he pleased God, and this was the good report he obtained. Note, [1.] Walking with God, ples ses God. [2.] We cannot walk with God, so as to please him, but by faith. [3.] God himself will put an honour upon those that by faith walk with him so as to please him, and he will be particular in their reward; and it denotes before angels and men at the great day: they have not this testimony before the translation, yet shall have it after. [4.] Those whose conversation in the world is truly holy, shall find their removal out of it truly happy. Enoch's translation was not only an evidence to faith of the reality of a future state, and of the possibility of the body's existing in glory in that state; but it was an encouragement to the saints: all that walk with God, that they shall be for ever with him: signal piety shall be crowned with signal honours.

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

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

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

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

1. His name, with the reason of it: Noah signifies rest; his parents gave him that name, with the prospect of his being a more than ordinary blessing to his generation. This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.

2. His comfortable hopes of some relief by the birth of this son: This same shall comfort us; which denotes not only the desire and expectation which parents generally have concerning their children, that when they grew up, they will be comforts to them, and helpers in their business, though they often prove otherwise; but it denotes also an apprehension and prospect of something more: very probably, there were some prophecies that went before him, as a person that should be wonderfully serviceable to his generation, which they so understood as to conclude that he was the promised Seed, the Messiah that should come: and then intimates that a covenant-interest in Christ as our's, and the believing expectation of his coming, furnish us with the best and surest comforts, both in reference to the wrath and curse of God which we have deserved, and to the toils and troubles of this present time which we are often complaining of. "Is Christ our's? Is heaven our's? This same shall comfort us."

2. His children, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. These Noah begat, (the eldest of these,) when he was 500 years old. Shem was the eldest, ch. 10. 21; but Shem is put first, because on him the covenant was entailed, as appears ch. 9. 26, where God is called the Lord God of Shem; to him, it is probable, the birth-right was given, and from him, it is certain, both Christ the Head, and the church the body, were to descend; therefore he is called Shem, which signifies a name, because in his propriety the name of God should always remain, till he should come out of his line, whose name is above every name; so that in putting Shem first, Christ was in effect put first, who in all things must have the pre-eminence.
The most remarkable thing we have upon record concerning the old world, is, the destruction of it by the universal deluge, which took place after the story of Noah, where we have it. I. The abounding iniquity of that wicked world, v. 1., 5., and v. 11., 12. II. The righteousness of God's just resentment of that abounding iniquity, and his holy resolution to punish it, v. 6., 7. III. The special character of the man Noah. 1. In the character given of him, v. 8., 10. 2. In the communication of God's purpose to him, v. 13., 17. 3. In the directions he gave him to make an ark for his own safety, v. 14., 16. 4. In the employing of him for the preservation of the rest of the creatures, v. 18., 21. Lastly, Noah's obedience to the instructions given him, v. 22. And this concerning the old world is written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the new world are come.

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

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

1. The increase of mankind. Men began to multiply upon the face of the earth. This was the effect of the blessing, ch. 1. 25, and yet man's corruption so abused and perverted this blessing, that it turned into a curse. Thus sin takes occasion by the mercies of God to be the more abominable. Prov. 29. 16. When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increases. The more sinners, the more sin; and the multitude of offenders embolden men: infectious diseases are more destructive in populous cities; and sin is a spreading leprosy. Thus in the New Testament church, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring, Acts 5. 1, and we read of a nation that was the image of their prince. Isa. 9. 3.

Numerous families need to be well governed, lest they should become wicked families.

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

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

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

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

The reason of that resolution; For that he also is flesh, that it is not always fitting to strive against the flesh, when it is not to the advantage of the Spirit. Hence, in the case of Moses, God was pleased to intercede for Israel; and so was his servant, with respect to the church, to give them a more liberal dispensation than he was otherwise prepared for, even at the expense of his own life, Deut. 3. 24. Or, (2.) He who strives too long, is apt to be worn out by the exertions he makes, and the fruits they produce are very small. The case of our Lord Jesus Christ is a caution to us, that we may not make long and constant use of our own strength, when another is provided for us in the Spirit, and to strive no more. None lose the Spirit's strivings, but those that have first forfeited them.

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

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

We have here a farther account of the corruption of the old world. When the sons of God had matched with the daughters of men, though it was very displeasing to God, yet he did not immediately
cut them off, but waited to see what the issue of these marriages would be, and which side the children would take after; and it proved, (as it usually does,) that they took after the worst side. Here is, 1. The temptation they were under to oppress and do violence; they were giants, they were men of renown; they became too hard for all about them to carry all before them. 1. With their great bulk, as the sons of Anak, Num. 13. 33, and 2. With their great name, as the king of Asse, Isa. 37. 11. These made them the terror of the mighty in the land of the living; and thus armed, they daringly insulted the rights of all their neighbours, and trampled upon all that is just and sacred. Note, Those that have so much power over others as to be able to oppress them, have come so near to power over themselves as not to oppress; great might is a very great snare to many. This degenerate race slighted the honour their ancestors had obtained by virtue and religion, and made themselves a great name by that which was the perpetual ruin of their good name.

II. The charge exhibited and proved against them, v. 5. The evidence produced was incontrovertible. 1. The heart that is instead of a thousand witnesses. God sees all the wickedness that is among the children of men; it cannot be concealed from him now, and if it be not repented of, it shall not be concealed by him shortly. Now, what did God take notice of? 1. He observed all the streams of sin that flowed along in men's lives, and the breadth and depth of those streams; he saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. Observe the connection of this with what goes before; the oppressors were mighty men, and men of renown; and then God saw that the wickedness of man was great. Note, The wickedness of a people is great, indeed, when the most notorious sinners are men of renown among them.

Things are bad, when bad men are not only honoured notwithstanding their wickedness, but honoured for their wickedness, and the vilest men exalted; wickedness is then great, when great men are wicked. Their wickedness was great, that is, abundance of sin was committed in all places, by all sorts of people; and such sin was in its own nature most gross, and heinous, and provoking; and committed daringly, and with a defiance of heaven; nor was any care taken by those who had power in their hands, to restrain and punish it. This God saw, and it grieved his heart, and made him to repent for it as a very nefarious and unbecoming practice of God the Judge; those that are most conversant in the world, though they see much wickedness in it, yet they see but little of that which is; but God sees all, and judges aright concerning it, how great it is, nor can he be deceived in his judgment.

2. He observed the fountain of sin that was in men's hearts: any one might see that the wickedness of man was great; for they were giants, they were men of renown; but God's view went further; he saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. A sad sight, and very offensive to God's holy eye! This was the bitter root, the corrupt spring; all the violence and oppression, all the luxury and wantonness, that were in the world, proceeded from the corruption of nature; just conceived them, Jan. 1. 15. See Math. 13. 19. (1.) The thoughts of the heart were so; thought is sometimes taken for the settled judgment or opinion, and that was bribed, and biased, and misused; sometimes for the workings of the fancy, and those were always either vain or vile, either weaving the spider's web, or hatching the cocciete's eggs. (2.) The imagination of the thoughts of the heart was so, that is, their designs and devices were wicked. They did not do evil only through carelessness, as these that walk at all adventures, not heeding what they do; but they did evil deliberately, and designedly, contriving how to do mischief. It was bad indeed; for it was only evil, continually evil, and every imagination was so. There was no good that could be found among them. There was not at any time: the stream of sin was full, and strong, and constant; and God saw it; see Ps. 14. 1. 5.

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

Here is, 1. God's resentment of man's wickedness; he did not see it as an unconcerned spectator, but as one whose heart was interested by it. God is ever so father sees the folly and stubbornness of a rebellious and disobedient child, which not only angers him, but grieves him, and makes him wish he had been written childless. The expressions here used, are very strange. It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, that he had made a creature of such noble powers and faculties, and had put him on this earth, which he built and furnished for him to be a convenient, comfortable habitation for him; and it grieved him at his heart. These are expressions after the manner of men, and must be understood as so as to reflect upon the honour of God's immutability or felicity.

1. It does not bespeak any passion or uneasiness in God; (nothing can create disturbance to the eternal mind;) but it bespeaks his just and holy displeasure against sin and sinners; against sin as odious to his holiness, and against sin as obnoxious to his justice. He is pressed by the sins of his creatures, Amos 2. 13, wearied, Isa. 43. 24, broken, Ezek. 6. 9, grieved, Ps. 93. 10, and here, grieved to the heart, as men are when they are wronged and abused by these they have been very kind to, and therefore repent of their kindness, and wish they had never fostered that snake in their bosom, which now hisses in their face, and stings them to the heart. Does God thus hate sin? And shall we hate it? Has our sin grieved him to the heart? And shall not we be grieved and pricked to the heart for it? O that this consideration might humble us, and shame us, and that we may look on him whom we thus have grieved, and mourn! Zech. 12. 10. 2. It does not bespeak any change in God's mind; he is as he is from eternity, and can turn him. With him there is no want of holiness, and none of those attributes of his nature which require that he should be constant and unchangeable. But it bespeaks a change of his ways; when God had made man upright, he rested and was refreshed, Exod. 31. 17, and his way toward him was such as showed he was pleased with the work of his own hands; but now that man was apostatized, he could not do otherwise than show himself displeased; so that the change was in man, not in God. God repented that he had made man; but we never see him repenting that he redeemed man, though that was done at this expense of much greater expense, because special and effectual grace is given to secure the great ends of redemption; so that those gifts and callings are without repentance, Rom. 11. 29.

11. God's resolution to destroy man for his wickedness, v. 7. Observe, 1. When God repented that he had made man, he resolved to destroy man.
Thus they that truly repent of sin, will resolve, in the 
strength of God's grace, to mortify sin, and to 
de destroy it, and so to undo what they have done 
amiss; we do but mock God in saying that we are 
sorry for our sin, and that it grieves us to the heart, 
if we continue to indulge it. In vain do we pretend 
a change of our mind, if we do not evidence it by a 
change of our way. 2. He resolves to destroy man. 
and so ungrateful to his Creator, that he will 
wipe off man from the earth, (so much,) as dirt or 
filth is wiped off from a place which should be 
clean, and is thrown to the dung-hill, the proper 
place for it. See 2 Kings 21. 13. These that are 
the spots of the places they live in, are justly wiped 
away by the judgments of God. I will blot out 
man from the earth, (so others,) as those lines are 
botted out of a book, which displase the author; 
or, as the name of a citizen is blotted out of the 
rolls of the freemen, when he is dead, or disfri-
anchised. 3. He speaks of man as his own creature 
then, when he resolves upon his ruin, Man whom I 
have created; "Though I have created him, that 
shall not excuse him."
Isa. 27. 11. He that made 
him, will not save him; he that is our Creator, if 
he shall not be our Ruler, will be our Destroyer. Or, 
"Because I have created him, and he has been so 
ungrateful and so ungrateful to his Creator, that he 
will destroy him;" those forfeit their lives that 
do not answer the end of their living. 4. Even the 
brute creatures were to be involved in this destruc-
tion, Beasts and creeping things, and the fowl of the 
air. These were made for man, and therefore 
must be destroyed with man; for it follows, It re-
teneth me that I have made them; for the end of 
their creation also was frustrated: they were made, 
that man might serve and love God with them 
and therefore were destroyed, because he had serv-
ed his lusts with them, and made them subject to 
vanity. 5. God took up this resolution concerning 
men, after his Spirit had been long striving with 
them in vain. None are ruined by the justice of 
God but those that hate to be reformed by the grace 
of God.

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

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

5. When God was displeased with the rest of the 
world, he favoured Noah, v. 8. But Noah found 
grace in the eyes of the Lord. This vindicates God's 
justice in his displeasure against the world, and 
shows that he had strictly examined the character 
of every person in it, before he pronounced it uni-
versally corrupt; for, there being one good man, he 
founds out, and smiled upon him. It also mag-
nifies his grace towards Noah, that he was made a 
vessel of God's mercy, when all mankind besides 
became the generation of his wrath: distin-
guishing favours bring under peculiarly strong obli-
gations. Probably, Noah did not find favour in the 
eyes of men; they hated and persecuted him, because 
both by his life and preaching he condemned the 
world; but he found grace in the eyes of the Lord, 
and that was honour and comfort enough. God made 
more account of Noah than of all the world besides; 
and though Noah himself was more truly honour-
able than all the giants that were in these days, who 
became mighty men, and men of renown. Let this 
be the top of your ambition, to find grace in the eyes 
of the Lord; herein let us labour, that present or 
absent, we may be accepted of him, 2 Cor. 5. 9. 
These are highly favoured, whom God favours.

2. When the rest of the world was corrupt and 
wicked, Noah kept his integrity, v. 9. These 
are the generations of Noah: this is the account we 
have to give of him; Noah was a just man. This cha-
racter of Noah comes in here either, (1.) As the 
reason of God's favour to him: his singular piety 
and perfection justified him, and qualified him for 
love and mercy. J. The God of mercy, to those 
that show and prove to be loving kindness. Those that would find grace in the eyes of 
the Lord, must be as Noah was, and do as Noah 
did; God loves those that love him; or (2.) As the ef-
effect of God's favour to him: it was God's good-will 
to him that produced this good work in him; he was 
a very good man, but he was no better than the 
grace of God made him, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Now ob-
serve his character; [1.] He was a just man, that 
justified before God by faith in the promise 
of God's grace; as the seed of Abraham, Exod. 6. 
12; for he was an heir of the righteousness which 
is by faith, Heb. 11. 7. He was sanctified, and had 
right principles and dispositions implanted in him; 
and he was righteous in his conversation, one that 
made conscience of rendering to all their due, to God 
his due, and to men their. Note, None but a 
downright honest man, can find favour with God;
that conversation which will be pleasing to God, 
which is such as is acceptable and pleasing, I will 
serve him, and walk with him, and do his will, 
and be not only honest, but devout: he walked, that is, 
his acts with God, as one always under his eye; he lived a life of commu-
ion with God; it was his constant care to conform 
to himself, to the will of God, to please him, and to 
approve himself to him. Note, God looks down upon 
these with an eye of favour, who sincerely look up 
to him with an eye of faith. But, [4.] That which 
crowns his character, is, that thus he was, and thus 
he did, in his generation, in that corrupt degenerate 
world, in which he lived; we are not only 
righ-
gious, when religion is in fashion; but it is an evi-
dence of strong faith and resolution, to swim against 
a stream to heaven, and to appear for God, when no 
one else appears for him; so Noah did, and it is upon 
record, to his immortal honour.

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

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

1. All kind of sin was found among them, for, v. 11, 
it is said that the earth was (1.) Corrupt before God, 
that is, in the matters of God's worship; either they 
had other gods before him, or, they worshipped him 
by images, or, they were corrupt and wicked in de-
spite and contempt of God, daring him and defying 
him to his face. (2.) The earth was also filled with 
violece, and iniquity; there was no order nor govern-
ment; no man was safe in the possession of that which 
he had the most clear and incontestable right to, no 
not the most innocent life, nothing but murders, rapes, 
and rapine. Note, Wickedness, as it is the shame of the human nature
s—It is the ruin of human society; it takes away conscience and the fear of God, and men become beasts and devils to one another, like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. Sin fills the earth with violence, and so turns the world into a wilderness, into a cock-pit.

2. The proof and evidence of it were undeniable; for God looked upon the earth, and was himself an eye-witness of the corruption that was in it, of which before, v. 5. The righteous judge in all his judgments proceeds upon the infallible certainty of his own omniscience, Ps. 53. 13.

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

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

Here it appears indeed that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord; God's favour to him was plainly intimated to him, that he said to him, v. 8. 16, where his name is mentioned five times in five lines, when once might have served to make the sense clear, as if the Holy Ghost took a pleasure in perpetuating his memory: but it appears much more in what he says to him in these verses—the informations and instructions here given him.

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

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

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

2. God here makes Noah the man of his coven¬ant, another Hebrew periphrasis of a friend, v. 18, But with thee will I establish my covenant. 1. The covenant of for¬ever; that the course of nature shall be continued to the end of time, notwithstanding the breaking of the previous promise, the flood was a new flood. God's promise was immediately made to Noah and his sons, ch. 9. 8, &c. They were as trustees for all this part of the creation, and a great honour was thereby put upon him and his. 2. The covenant of grace; that God would be to him a God, and that out of his seed God would take to himself a people. Note, (1.) When God makes a covenant, he establishes it, he makes it sure, he makes it good; his are evermost covenants. (2.) The covenant of grace has in it the recompense of singular services, and the fountain and foundation of all distinguishing favours; we need
III. God here makes Noah a monument of sparing mercy, by putting him in a place to secure himself in the approaching deluge, that he might not perish with the rest of the world. I will destroy them, says God, with the earth, v. 13. But make thee an ark; I will take care to preserve thee alive. Note, Singular piety shall be recompensed with distinguishing mercy, from the highest mercies of God. This will add much to the honour and happiness of glorified saints, that they shall be saved, when the greatest part of the world is left to perish.

Now, 1. God directs Noah to make an ark, v. 14.. 16. This ark was like the hull of a ship, fitted not to sail upon the waters, (there was no occasion for that, when there should be no shore to sail to,) but to be borne in waters, waiting for their full. God could have secured Noah by the ministration of angels, without putting him to any care or pains or trouble, himself; but he chose to employ him in making that which was to be the means of his preservation, both for the trial of his faith and obedience, and to teach us that none shall be saved by Christ, but those only that work out their salvation; we cannot do it without God, and he will not work it for us. (2.) He made it three stories high within. (3.) He must divide it into cabins, with partitions, places fitted for the several sorts of creatures, so as to lose no room. (4.) Exact dimensions are given, that he might make it proportionable, and might have room enough in it to answer the intention, and no more. Note, [1.] Those that work for God, must take the pains, and provide for God's service. [2.] It is fit that he who appoins us our habitation, should fix the bounds and limits of it. (5.) He must pitch it within and without; without, to shed off the rain, and to prevent the water from soaking in; within, to take away the ill smell of the beasts, when kept close. Observe, God does not bid him paint it, but pitch it. If God give us habitations that are safe, and warm, and wholesome, we are more careful to be thankful, than they are not magnificent or nice. (6.) He must make a little window toward the top, to let in light, and (some think) that through that window he might behold the desolations to be made in the earth. (7.) He must make a door in the side of it, by which to go in and out.

2. God promises Noah, that he and his should be preserved alive in the ark, v. 15. Thou shalt come into the ark. What do you think of this? What God promises to his own in his promise, we are all became, if we do not put faith in it. The happiness of those children who have godly parents; their parents' piety often procure them temporal salvation, as here; and it further them in the way to eternal salvation, if they improve the benefit of it.

IV. God here makes Noah a great blessing to the world, and herein makes him an eminent type of the Messiah, though not the Messiah himself, as his parents expected, ch. 5. 32. God made him a preacher to the men of that generation. As a watchman, he received the word from God's mouth, that he might give them warning, Ezek. 3. 17. Thus while the long-suffering of God waited, by his spirit in Noah, he preached to the old world, who, when St. Peter wrote, were spirits in prison, 1 Pet. 3. 18., 20, and herein he was a type of Christ, who, in a land and age where all flesh had corrupted their way, went about preaching repentance, and warning men of a deluge of wrath coming.

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

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

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

1. As an effect of his faith in the word of God, God had told him he would shortly drown the world; he believed it, feared the threatened deluge, and, in that fear, prepared the ark. Note, We ought to mix faith with the revelation God has made of his wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; the threatenings of the word are not false alarms. Much might have been objected against the credibility of this warning given to Noah. "Who could believe that the wise God, who made the world, should so soon make it again; who had drawn the waters off the dry land, ch. 1. 9, 10, should cause them to cover it again? How would this be reconciled with the promise of God, which is one of his works, especially that the innocent creatures should die for man's sin? Whence would water be sufficient to deluge the world? And, if it must be so, why should notice be given of it to Noah only?" But Noah's faith triumphed over all these corrupt reasonings. 2. As an act of obedience to the command of God, he was careful with flesh and blood, many objections would have been raised against it. To rear a building, such a one as he never saw, so large, and of such exact dimensions, would put him upon a great deal of care, and labour, and expense; it would be a work of time, the vision was for a great
while to come; his neighbours would ridicule him for his credulity, and he would be the song of the drunkards; his building would be called Noah's folly; if the worst came to the worst, as we say, each would fare as well as his neighbours. But these, and a thousand such objections, Noah by faith got over; his obedience was ready and absolute. Ne., he did not grumble, v. 8, 9, the filthy, without murmuring and disputing. God says, Do this, and he does it: it was also punctual and persevering; he did all exactly according to the instructions given him, and having begun to build, did not give off till he had finished it: so did he, and so must we.

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

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

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have the performance of what was foretold in the foregoing chapter, both concerning the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of Noah; for we may be sure that no word of God shall fall to the ground. There we left Noah busy about his ark, and full of care to get it finished in time, while the rest of his neighbours were laughing at him for his pains. Now here we see what was the end thereof; the end of his care, and of their carelessness. And this famous period of the old world gives us some idea of the state of things, when the world that now is, shall be destroyed by fire, as that was by water. See 2 Pet. 3. 6, 7. We have, in this chapter, I. God's gracious call to Noah to come into the ark, v. 1, and to bring creatures that were to be preserved with him, v. 2, in consideration of the deluge at hand, v. 4. II. Noah's obedience to this heavenly vision, v. 5. When he was six hundred years old, he came with his family into the ark, v. 6, 7, and brought forth every living creature in pairs, of which is repeated, v. 15, 16, to which is added God's tender care to shut him in. III. The coming of the threatened deluge, v. 10, the causes of it, v. 11, 12, the prevalence of it, v. 17, 18. IV. The dreadful desolations that were made by it in the death of every living creature upon earth, except those that were in the ark, v. 21, 23. V. The continuance of it in full sea, before it began to ebb, one hundred and fifty days, v. 24.

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

Vol. I.—I
Here are necessary orders given concerning the brute creatures that were to be preserved alive with Noah in the ark, v. 2, 3. They were not capable of receiving the warning and directions themselves; as man was, who herein is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. The ark was therefore endued with foresight; therefore man is charged with the care of them: being under his dominion, they must be under his protection; and though he could not secure every individual, yet he must carefully preserve every species, that no tribe, no not the least considerable, might entirely perish out of the creation.

Observe in this, 1. God's care for man, and for his comfort and benefit; we do not find that Noah was solicited of this man by God to continue his happiness, or to act in a manner that should suit his happiness more than we do ourselves. Though God saw that the old world was very provoking, and foresaw that the new one would be little better; yet he would preserve the brute-creatures for man's use: Doth God take care for oxen? Gen. 9. 9. Or was it not rather for man's sake that this care was taken? 2. Even the unclean beasts (which were least valuable and profitable) were saved; the ark was not for the benefit of the human race only, but for the support of their domestick animals. Every one that has a farm, and keeps horses and oxen, is more concerned about the care of them than about the salvation of his brethren: the mercy is over all his works, and not only over those that are of the most eminence and use.

3. Yet more of the clean were preserved than of the unclean, (1.) Because the clean were most for the service of man; and therefore, in favour to him, more of them were preserved, and are still preponderated.

Thank be to God, that there are not herds of lions as there are of oxen, nor flocks of tigers as there are of sheep. (2.) Because the clean were for sacrifice to God; and therefore in honour to him, more of them were preserved, three couple for breed, and the odd seventh for sacrifice, ch. 8. 20. God gives us six for one earthly things, as in the distribution of the days of the week, that in spiritual things we should all be for him. What is devoted to God's honour, and used in his service, is particularly blessed and increased.

III. Here is notice given of the now imminent approach of the flood, v. 4. Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain. 1. "It shall be seven days yet, before I do it." After the 120 years were expired, God grantst them a reprieve of seven days longer; both to show how slow he is to anger, and that punishing work is his strange work, and also to give them some further space for repentance; but all in vain; these seven days were troublesome to the rest; they continued secure and sensate until the day that the flood came. 2. "It shall be but seven days." While Noah told them of the judgment at a distance, they were tempted to put off their repentance, because the vision was for a great while to come; but now he is ordered to tell them that it is at the door, that they have but one week more to turn them in, but one sabbath more to improve; to quit the rest, they could not, nor did they wish to quit; but God wills the things that belonged to their peace, which otherwise would soon be hidden from their eyes. But it is common for those who have been careless of their souls during the years of their health, when they have looked upon death at a distance, to be as careless during the days, the seven days, of their sickness, when they see it approaching, their hearts being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

5. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. 6. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. 7. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. 8. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth. 9. There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. 10. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

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

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

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

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

11. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

12. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

1. The date of this great event; this is carefully recorded, for the great certainty of the story. 2. It was in the 600th year of Noah's life, which, by computation, appears to be 1656 years from the creation. The years of the old world are reckoned, not by the reigns of the giants, but by the lives of the patriarchs; saints are of more account with God than princes: The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. Noah was now a very old man, even as men's years went then. Note, (1.) The longer we live in the world, the more we see of the miseries and calamities of it; it is therefore spoken of as the privilege of those that die young, that their eyes shall not see the evil which is coming.
2 Kings 22. 20. (2.) Sometimes God exercises his old servants with extraordinary trials of obedient patience. The oldest of Christ's servants must not promise themselves a discharge from their warfare, till death discharge them. Still they must gird on their harness, and not boast as though they had put it off. As the year of the deluge is recorded, so is this. 2. We are told that it was in the second month of the second year of the flood, that Noah had a harvest just before, from which to victual his ark. 

11. The second causes that concur'd to this deluge; in the self-same day that Noah was fixed in the ark, the inundation began. Note, 1. Desolating judgments come not, till God has provided for the security of his own people; see ch. 15. 22. I can do nothing till thou be come hither: and we find, Rev. 7. 3, the winds are held till the servants of God are sealed. 2. When good men are removed, judgments are not far off; for they are taken away from the evil to come, Isa. 57. 1. When they are called into the chambers, hidden in the grave, hidden in heaven, then God is coming out of his place to punish, Isa. 26. 20, 21. It was done on that day, that fatal day to the world of the ungodly. 1. The fountains of the great deep were broken up. Perhaps there needed no new creation of waters; what were already made to be, in the common course of providence, blessings to the earth, were now by an extraordinary act of divine power, made the ruin of it. God has laid up the deep in storerooms, (Ps. 33. 7,) and now he broke up those store landmarks, mounds, and fenses; and the waters of the sea returned to cover the earth, as they had done at first, ch. 1. 9. Note, All the creatures are ready to fight against sinful man, and any of them is able to be the instrument of his ruin, if God do but take off the restraints by which they are held in, during the day of God's patience. 2. The windows of heaven were opened, and the waters which were above the firmament fell upon the world, the sea returning to cover the earth, which God has reserved against the day of trouble, the day of battle and war, Job 38. 22, 23. The rain, which ordinarily descends in drops, then came down in streams, or showers, as they call them in the Indies, where clouds have been often known to burst, as they express it there, when the rain descends in a much more violent torrent than we have ever seen in this globe. We read of thunder and rain, and clouds, and showers, and snows, and hail, Gen. 2. 3; 16. 35; and other phenomena, in the Psalms 78. 24; 81. 8, that God breaks up the waters in his thick clouds, and makes the clouds to rain upon the earth. [Isa. 45. 17.] God made the world in six days, but he was forty days in destroying it; for he is slow to anger; but out though the destruction came slowly and gradually, yet it came effectually. Now learn from this, (1.) That all the creatures are at God's disposal, and that he makes what use he pleases of them, whether for correction, or for his hand, or for mercy, as Elish speaks of the rain, Josh 37. 12, 15. (2.) That God often makes that which should be for our welfare, to become a tare, Ps. 69. 22. That which usually is a comfort and benefit to us, becomes, when God pleases, a scourge and a plague to us. Nothing is more needful or useful in waters, both the springs of the earth, and the waves of heaven, than what is now turned to the harmful, nothing more destructive: every creature is to be what God makes it. (3.) That it is impossible to escape the righteous judgments of God, when they come against sinners with commission; for God can arm both heaven and earth against them; see Job 20. 27. God can surround men with the messengers of his wrath, so that if they look upward, it is with horror and amazement; if they look to the earth, behold, trouble and darkness, Isa. 8. 21, 22. Who then is able to stand before God, when he is angry? (Lastly,) In this destruction of the old world by water, God gave a specimen of the final destruction of the world that now is, by fire; we find the apostles setting the one of these over against the other, 2 Pet. 3. 6, 7. As there are waters unkindled, and unquenchable, and that give out no smoke, nothing can answer to these; so there are fires unquenchable, and that give forth no smoke, that are kindled or put, but with great solemnity, to the world that there are subterraneous fires too; and fire often falls from heaven, many desolations are made by lightning; so that when the time predetermined comes, between these two fires the earth and all the works therein shall be burnt up; as the flood was brought upon the old world out of the fountains of the great deep, and through the windows of heaven.

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

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

1. It is thus repeated, for the honour of Noah, whose faith and obedience herein shone so bright, by which he obtained a good report, and who here in appeared so great a favourite of Heaven, and so great a blessing to all posterity; but that this preservation was as a new creation; a life remarkably protected, is, as it were, a new life.

2. The great universality and hospitality between the creatures ceased, for the present, and ravenous creatures were not only so mild and manageable, as that the wolf and the lamb lay down together, but so strangely altered, as that the lion did eat straw like an ox, Isa. 11. 6, 7, yet, when this present occasion was over, the restraint was taken off, and they were still of the same kind as ever; for the ark did not after this constitution. 

Here is retired to the church, that externally conform to the laws of that
ark, may yet be unchanged; and then it will appear, one time or other, what kind they are after.

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

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

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

We are here told,

1. How long the flood was increasing; forty days, v. 17. The profane world which believed not that it was a true parenthesis when it came, flattered themselves with hopes that it would soone abate, and never come to extremity; but still it increased, it prevailed. Note, (1.) When God judges, he will over come. If he begin, he will make an end; his way is perfect both in judgment and mercy. (2.) The gradual approaches and advances of God's judgments, which are designed to bring sinners to repentance, are often abused to the hardening of them in their presumption.

To what degree they increased; they rose so high, that not only the low countries were deluged, but, to make sure work, and that none might escape, the tops of the highest mountains were overflowed, fifteen cubits, that is, seven yards and a half. So that in vain was salvation hoped for from hills or mountains, Jer. 3. 25. None of God's creatures are so high, but his power can overlap them; and he will make them know the wherein they deal proudly, he is above them. Perhaps the highest mountains were washed down by the strength of the waters, which helped much toward the prevailing of the waters above them; for it is said, Job 12. 15, He sends out the waters, and they not only overflow, but overturn, the earth. Thus the refuge of lies was swept away, and the waters overflowed the hiding-place of those sinners, (Isa. 28. 17,) and in vain they fly to them for safety, Rev. 6. 16. Now all the hills and the lands were removed, and nothing stood a man in stead but the covenant of peace, Isa. 54. 10. There is no place on earth so high as to set men out of the reach of God's judgments, Jer. 49. 16. Obad. 3. 4. God's hand will find out all his enemies, Ps. 21. 8. Observe how exactly they are fathom'd, (fifteen cubits,) not by Noah's plummet, but by his knowledge who weigheth the waters by measures, Job 28. 23. 24.

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

21. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man:

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

Here is,

1. The general destruction of all flesh by the waters of the flood. Come and see the desolations which God makes in the earth, Psal. 46. 8, and how he lays heaps upon heaps. Never did death triumph, from his first entrance unto this day, as it did then. Come, and see Death upon his pale horse, and hell following with him, Rev. 6. 7, 8. All the cattle, fowl, and creeping things, died, except the few that were in the ark. Observe how this is repeated, All flesh died, v. 21. All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was on the
dry land, v. 22. Every living substance, v. 23. And why so? Man only had done wickedly, and justly is God's hand against him; but these sheepe, what have they done? I answer, (1.) We are sure God did them no wrong; he is the sovereign Lord of all life, for he is the sole Fountain and Author of it. He that made them as he pleased, might as well have made them as he pleased, and who shall say unto him, Why hast thou done this? May he not do what he will with his own, which were created for his pleasure? (2.) God did admirably serve the purposes of his own glory by their destruction, as well as by their creation. Herein his holiness and justice were greatly magnified; by this he hastes sin, and is highly displeased with sinners, when even the inferior creatures, hand and foot, serve as a part of his possession, and because they have been abused to be the servants of sin, are destroyed with him. This makes the judgment the more remarkable, the more dreadful, and consequently, the more expressive of God's wrath and vengeance. The destruction of the creatures was their deliverance from the bondage of corruption, which deliverance the whole creation now begins to enjoy. The destruction of the sinners was likewise an instance of God's wisdom. As the creatures were made for man when he was made, so they were multiplied: and therefore, now that mankind was reduced so small a number, it was fit that the beasts should proportionably be reduced, otherwise they would have had the dominion, and would have replenished the earth, and the remnant of mankind that was left would have been overpowered and preserved. See how God considered this in another case, Exod. 25. 29. Lest the beast of the field multiply against thee. 2. All the men, women, and children, that were in the world, (except what were in the ark,) died. Every man, v. 21, and v. 23, and perhaps they were as many as are now upon the face of the earth, if it be more. (1.) We may easily imagine what terror and consternation seized on them when they saw themselves surrounded. Our Saviour tells us, that till the very day that the flood came, they were eating and drinking, Luke 17. 26, 27. They were drowned in security and sensuality, before they were drowned in those waters; crying, Peace, peace, to themselves; deaf and blind to all divine warnings. In this sense I commonly preach to them, as I Sam. 30. 16. 17. But O what an abatement were they in then! Now they see and feel that which they would not believe and fear, and are convinced of their folly when it is too late; now they find no place for repentance, though they seek it carefully with tears. (2.) We may suppose that they tried all ways and means possible for their preservation, but all in vain. Some climb to the tops of trees or mountains, and some on their terraces, and thought they should be safe. But when the flood reaches them, at last, and they are forced to die with the more deliberation. Some, it is likely, clinging to the ark, and now hope that that may be their safety, which they had so long made their sport. Perhaps some get to the top of the ark, and hope to shift for themselves there; but either they perish there for want of food, or, by the quicker despatch, aPAR, upon their terraces they die of the stroke. Others may be, hoped to prevail with Noah for admission into the ark, and pleaded old acquaintance, Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? Hast thou not taught in our streets? "Yes," might Noah say, "I have, many a time, to little purpose. I taught, but ye refused; ye set at nought all my counsel, Prov. 1. 24, 25, and now it is not in my power to help you: God has shut the door, and I cannot open it." Thus it will be at the great day. Neither climbing high in an outward profession, nor claiming relation to good people, will bring men to heaven, Matt. 7. 22—23. 8, 9. Those that are not found in Christ, the Ark, are certainly undone, for ever; salvation itself cannot save them. See Isa. 10. 3. (3.) We may suppose that some of those who perished in the deluge, had themselves assisted Noah, or were employed by him, in the building of the ark, and yet were not so wise as by repentance to secure themselves a place in it. Thus wicked ministers, though they may have been instrumental to help others to heaven, will themselves be thrust down to hell. Let us now pause awhile, and consider this tremendous judgment! Let our hearts meditate upon it, and say, (1.) This is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; who can stand before him when he is angry? Let us see, and say, It is an evil thing, and a bitter, to depart from God. The sin of sinners will, without repentance, be their ruin, first or last; if God be true it will. Though hand join in hand, yet the wicked shall not go unpunished. The flood of God's displeasure will overtake them. The Chal. 8. 21, 22, 23. Noah found a flood upon the world of the ungodly, 2 Pet. 2. 5. Eliphaz appeals to this story as a standing warning to a careless world, Job. 22, 15, 16, Hast thou marked the old way, which wicked men have trodden, which were cut down out of time, and sent into eternity, whose foundation was overthrown with the flood? 11. The special preservation of Noah and his family, v. 23. Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark, and were only overflown with the flood. Those, when all about him were monuments of justice, thousands falling on his right hand, and ten thousands on his left, he was a monument of mercy; only with his eyes might he behold and see the record of the wicked, Ps. 91. 7, 8. In the floods of great waters, they did not come nigh him, Ps. 32. 6. We have reason to think, that while the long-suffering of God waited, Noah was only preached to, but prayed for, that wicked world, and would have turned away the wrath; but his prayers return into his own bosom, and are answered only in his own escape; which is plainly referred to, Ezek. 14. 14. Noah, Daniel, and Job, shall but deliver their own souls. A mark of honour shall be set on intercessors. 2. He built a city. Noah remains alive, and that is all; he is, in effect, buried alive; coopered up in a small place, that he might have no possibility of escape to the sun, or to the rain, the increasing flood, and the shrieks and outrages of his perishing neighbours—his heart overwhelmed with melancholy thoughts of the desolations made: but he comforts himself with this, that he is in the way of duty, and in the way of deliverance. And we are taught, Jer. 45. 4, 5, that when desolating judgments are abroad, we must not seek great or pleasant things to ourselves, but reckon it an unspacious favour, if we have our lives given us for a prey.

CHAP. VIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left the world in ruins, and the church in straits; but in this chapter, we have the repair of the one, and the enlargement of the other. The scene alters, and another state of things begins to be presented to us, and the brighter side of that cloud which there appeared so black and dark: for though God contemns him, he will not contend for ever, nor his wrath, we have here, I. The earth made new, by the recess of the waters, and the appearing of the dry land, now a second time, and both gradual. 1. The increase of the waters is stayed, v. 1, 2. 2 They begin to be abated, v. 3. 3. 4. After sixty days' ebbing, the ark rests, v. 4. After sixty days' ebbing, the tops of the mountains appeared above water, v. 5. After forty days' ebbing, and twenty days before the mountains appeared, Noah began to send out his spares, a raven and a dove, to gain intelligence, v. 6, 12. 6. This page is blank.
months after the appearing of the tops of the mountains, the waters were gone, and the face of the earth was dry, v. 13, though not dried so as to be fit for man till almost two months after, v. 14. II. Man placed anew upon the earth. In which, 1. Noah's discharge and departure out of the ark, v. 15, 19. 2. His sacrifice of praise, which he offered to God upon his enlargement, v. 20. 3. God's acceptance of his sacrifice, and a sign of it, v. 22. III. God brings him round the world again, v. 21, 22. And thus, at length, mercy rejoices against judgment.

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

Here is,

1. An act of God's grace. God remembered Noah and every living thing. This is an expression after the manner of men; for not any of his creatures, however much those Israelites valued them, are forgotten of God, Isa. 49, 15, 16. But 1. The whole race of mankind, except Noah and his family, was now extinguished, and gone into the land of forgetfulness, to be remembered no more; so that God's remembering Noah was the return of his mercy to mankind, of whom he would not make a full end. It is a strange expression, Ezek. 3, 13. When I have accomplished my fury in the midst of the earth, then shall the Holy One of Israel, and the One in whom there is no blemish, be seen. Then the demands of divine justice had been answered by the ruin of those sinners; he had ceased him of his adversaries, Isa. 1, 24, and now his spirit was quieted, Zech. 6, 8, and he remembered Noah and every living thing. He remembered mercy in wrath, Hab. 3, 2, remembered the days of old, Isa. 53, 11, remembered the holy seed, and then remembered Noah.

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

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

II. An act of God's power over wind and water; neither of which is under man's control, but both at his beck. Observe, 1. He commanded the wind, and said to that, G2, and it went, in order to the carrying off of the flood.
Noah and his sons; for there were none besides to see them; it is probable that they had looked through the window of the ark every day, like the longing mariners, after a tedious voyage, to see if they could discover land, or as the prophet's servant, 1 Kings 18. 43, 44, and at length they spy ground, and enter the day of the discovery in their journal. They felt ground above forty days before they saw it, according to Dr. Lightfoot's computation, whence he infers that if the waters decreased proportionably, the ark drew eleven cubits in water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. The ground dried, (v. 14.) so as to be a fit habitation for Noah. Observe, Though Noah saw the ground dry the first day of the first month, yet God would not suffer him to go out of the ark till the twenty-seventh day of the same month; because Noah, being somewhat weary of his restraint, would have quitted the ark at first, but God, in kindness to him, ordered him to stay so much longer. Note, God consults our benefit, rather than our desires;
for he knows what is good for us better than we do for ourselves, and how long it is fit our restri"nt should continue, and desired means should be delayed. We would go out of the ark before the ground is dried; and perhaps, if the door be shut, are ready to remove the covering, and to climb up some other way; but we should be satisfied that God’s time of showing mercy is certainly the best time, when the mercy is ripe for us, and we are ready for it.

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

Here is, 1. Noah’s dismissal out of the ark, v. 15. 17. Observe, 1. Noah did not stir till God bid him. As he had a command to go into the ark, (ch. 7. 1.) so, how tedious soever his confinement there was, he would wait for a command to go out of it again. Note, We must in all our ways acknowledge God, and set him before us in all our remembrance. The reason God protected them first follow God’s direction, and submit to his government. Those that steadfastly adhere to God’s word as their rule, and are guided by his grace as their principle, and take hints from his providence to assist them in their application of general directions to particular cases, may in faith see him guiding their motions in their march through this wilderness. 2. Though God detained him long, yet at last he gave him his discharge; for the time is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, it shall shew the truth, (Hab. 2. 3.) it shall not lie. 3. God had said, Come into the ark, which intimated that God went in with him; now he says, not, Come forth, but Go forth, which intimates that God, who went in with him, stood with him all the while, till he sent him out safe; for he has said, I will not leave thee. 4. Some observe, that when they were ordered into the ark, the men and the women were mentioned separately, ch. 6. 18. Thou and thy sons, and thy wife and thy sons’ wives; whence they infer that, during the time of mourning, they were apart, and their wives apart, Zech. 12. 12. But now God did as it were new marry them, sending out Noah and his wife together, and his sons and their wives together, that they might be fruitful and multiply. 5. Noah is ordered to bring the creatures out with him; that having taken the care of feeding them so long, and been at so much pains about them, he might have the honour of leading them forth by their armies, and receiving their homage. 11. Noah’s departure when he had his dismissal. As he would not go out without leave, so he would not, out of fear or honour, stay in when he had leave, but was in all points observant of the heavenly vision. Though he had been now a full year and ten days a prisier in the ark, yet when he found himself preserved there, not only for a new life, but for a new world, he saw no reason to complain of his long confinement. Now observe, 1. Noah and his family came out alive, though one of them was a wicked Ham, whom, though he escaped the flood, God’s justice could have taken away by some other stroke. But they are all alive. Note, When families have been long continued together, and no breaches made upon them, it must be looked upon as a distinguishing favour, and attributed to the Lord’s mercies. 2. Noah brought out all the creatures that went in with him, except the raven and the dove, who, probably, were ready to meet reproaches at their coming out. Noah was able to give a very good account of himself: for all that were given him he had lost none, but was faithful to him that appointed him, pro hac vice—on this occasion, high steward of his household.
and the sacrifices of righteousness, by pious devotion, and a pious conversation.

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

For.

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

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

(1.) That this judgment should never be repeated. Noah might think, "To what purpose should the world be repaired, when, in all probability, for the wickedness of it, it will quickly be in like manner ruined again?" "No," says God, "it shall never be."

It was said, ch. 6. 6. It repented the Lord that he had made man; and the Lord said, I will put an end to man. Presently he had destroyed man; neither means a change of his mind, but both a change of his way. It repented him concerning his servants, Deut. 32. 36. Two ways this resolve is expressed: [1.] I will not again curse the ground, Hebrew, I will not add to curse the ground any more. God had cursed the ground upon the first entrance of sin (ch. 3. 17.); when he had drowned it, he had added to that curse; but now he determines not to add to it any more.

[2.] Neither will I again smile any more every living thing, that is, it was determined that whatever ruin God might bring upon particular persons, or families, or countries, he would never again destroy the whole world, till the day shall come when time shall be no more. But the reason of this resolve is very surprising, for it seems the same in effect with the reason given for the destruction of man, Gen. 9. 17. The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. But there is this difference; there it is said, The imagination of man's heart is evil continually; that is, His actual transgressions continually cry against him; here it is said, It is evil from his youth or childhood. It is bred in the bone, he brought it into the world with him, he was shapen and received in it. Now, one would think, it should follow,

"Therefore that guilty race shall be wholly extinguished, and I will make a full end." No: Therefore I will no more take this severe method; for, first, He is rather to be pitied, for it is the all the effect of sin dwelling in him; and it is but what might be expected from such a degenerate race: he is called a transgressor from the womb, and therefore it is strange that he deals so very treacherously.

8. God's reasoning, that he is flesh, corrupt and sinful, Ps. 78. 39. Second, He will be utterly ruined; for if he be dealt with according to his deserts, one flood must succeed another till all be destroyed. See here, 1. That outward judgments, though they may terrify and restrained men, yet cannot, of themselves, sanctify and renew them; the grace of God must work with those judgments. Man's nature was as sinful after the deluge as it had been before. That God's good-ness takes occasion from man's badness to magnify itself the more; his reasons of mercy are all drawn from himself, not from any thing in us. (2.) That the course of nature should never be discontinued, v. 22. While the earth remaineth, and man upon it, there shall be summer and winter, not all night, as probably it was while the rain was descending. Here, [1.] It plainly intimates that this earth is not to remain always; it, and all the works in it, must shortly be burnt up; and we look for new heavens and a new earth, when all these things must be dissolved. But, [2.] As long as it does remain, God's providence will carefully preserve the regular succession of times and seasons, and to each its place. To this we owe it, that the world stands, and the wheel of nature keeps its track. See here how changeable the times are, and yet how unchangeable. First, The course of nature always changing. As it is with the times, so it is with the events of time, they are subject to vicissitudes, day and night, summer and winter, counterchanged. In heaven and hell it is not so, but on earth God will set the one over against the other. Secondly, Yet never changing, it is constant in this inconstancy; these seasons have never ceased, nor shall cease, while the sun continues such a steady measure of time, and the moon such a faithful witness in heaven. This is God's covenant of the day and of the night, the stability of which is mentioned for the confirming of our faith in the covenant of grace, which is no more changeable, Jesus Christ being the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, the same, Heb. 13:8. He promised to the creature made good, and thence may infer that his promises to all believers shall be so.

CHAP. IX.

Both the world and the church were now again reduced to a family, the family of Noah, of the affairs of which this chapter gives us an account, which we are the more concerned to take cognizance of, because from this family we are all descendants. Here is, 1. The covenant of providence settled with Noah and his sons, v. 1-11. In this covenant, 1. God promises them to take care of their lives, so that (1.) They shall replenish the earth, v. 1. 7. (2.) They shall be safe from the insults of the brute creatures, which should stand in awe of them, v. 2. (3.) They should be allowed to eat flesh for the support of their lives, and they shall eat of every creature, v. 3. 4. (4.) The world should never be drowned again, v. 11. 2. God requires of them to take care of one another's lives, and of their own, v. 5. 6. 11. The seal of that covenant, namely, the rainbow, v. 12-17. 3. A particular passage of a story concerning Noah and his sons is conditioned some prophecies that related to after-times. 1. Noah's sin and shame, v. 20, 21. 2. Ham's impudence and impurity, v. 22. 3. The pious modesty of Shem and Japheth, v. 23. 4. The curse of Canaan, and the blessing of Shem and Japheth, v. 24-27. 4. The age and death of Noah, v. 28, 29.

1. And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. 2. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered. 3. Every moving thing that liveth, shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things; 4. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. 5. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the
hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man: 6.
Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of
God made he man: 7. And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the
earth, and multiply therein.

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

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

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

2. A grant of power over the inferior creatures, v. 2. He grants, (1.) A title to them. Into your hands they are delivered, for your use and benefit. (2.) A dominion over them, without which the title would be useless. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast. This former grant, ch. 1. 28, only with this difference, that man in innocence ruled by love; fallen man rules by fear. Now this grant remains in force, and thus far we have still the benefit of it. [1.] That these creatures which are any way useful to us, are reclaimed, and we use them either for service, or food, or both, as they are capable. The nurse and ox patiently submit to the bridle and yoke, and the sheep is dumb both before the shearer, and before the butcher; for the fear and dread of man are upon them. [2.] These creatures that are any way hurtful to us are restrained, so that though now and then man may be hurt by some of them, yet they do not combine together to rise up in rebellion against man, else God could by these destroy the world as effectually as he did by a deluge in it. See God's merciful judgments, Ezek. 14. 6. 11. What is it that keeps the man of war, hounds and bears, and lions out of our streets, and confines them to the wilderness, but this fear and dread? Nay, some have been tamed, James 3. 7.

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

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

1. Man must not prejudice his own life by eating that food which is unwholesome and prejudicial to his health, v. 4. Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, that is, raw flesh, shall ye not eat, as the beasts of prey do. It was necessary to add this limitation to the grant of liberty to eat flesh, lest, instead of nourishing their bodies by it, they should ruin them. God gave them a law to show, (1.) That though they were lords of the creatures, yet they were subjects to the Creator, and under the restraint of his law. (2.) That they must not be greedy and hasty in taking their food, but stay the preparing of it; not like Saul's soldiers, 1 Sam. 14. 32, nor voracious eaters of flesh, Prov. 23. 26. (3.) That they must not be barbarous and cruel to them, though they might be lords, but not Tyrants; they might kill them for their profit, but not torment them for their pleasure; nor fear away the members of a creature while it was yet alive, and eat that. (4.) That during the continuance of the law of sacrifices, in which the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11, (signifying that the life of the sacrifice was accepted for the life of the sinner,) blood must not be looked upon as
a common thing, but must be poured out before the Lord, 2 Sam. 23, 16, either upon his altar, or upon his earth. But now that the great and true sacrifice is offered, the obligation of the law ceases with the reason of it.

2. Man must not take away his own life, v. 5. Your blood of your lives will I require. Our lives are not our own, but the blood of him whose image we bear; and, therefore we must not shed the blood of our own pleasure, but they are God's, and we must resign them at his pleasure; if we any way hasten our own deaths, we are accountable to God for it.

3. The beasts must not be suffered to hurt the life of man; at the hand of every beast will I require it. To show how tender God was of the life of man, though he had lately made such destruction of beasts, he would have no beast touch a man. This was confirmed by the law of Moses, Exod. 21. 28, and I think it would not be unsafe to observe it still. Thus God showed his hatred of the sin of murder, that men might hate it the more, and not only punish, but prevent it. And see Job 5. 23.

4. Wilful murderers must be put to death. This is the sin which is here designed to be restrained by the terror of punishment. (1.) God will punish murderers even to the third and fourth generation, will I require the life of man; that is, I will avenge the blood of the murdered upon the murderer, 2 Chron. 24. 22. When God requires the life of a man at the hand of him that took it away unjustly, the murderer cannot render that, and therefore must render his own in lieu of it, which is the only way left of making restitution. Note, The righteous God will certainly make inquisition for blood, though men may hide it. God will not long leave those in hell that have availed themselves of the easiness of being allowed in this world or in the next, he will both discover concealed murders, which are hidden from man's eye, and punish avowed and justified murders, which are too great for man's hand. (2.) The magistrate must punish murderers, v. 6. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, whether upon a sudden provocation, or having premeditated it, (for rash anger is heart-blood as well as malice proper,) Matt. 5. 21, 22. by man shall his blood be shed, that is, by the magistrate, or whoever is appointed or allowed to be the avenger of blood. There are those who are ministers of God for this purpose, to be a protection to the innocent, by being a terror to the malicious and evildoers, and they must not hear the sword in vain, Rom. 13. 14. Before the flood, as it should seem by the story of Cain, God took the oath from him which he had given him, that he would not commit this wickedness to men, or to his posterity, and that he would not have any other atonement than God himself. See Gen. 4. 9. He made him a promise that the waters of Noah should no more return to cover the earth, Isa. 54. 9. This promise of God keeps the sea and clouds in their decreed place, and sets them gates and bars, hitherto they shall come, Job 38. 10, 11. If the sea should flow but for a few days, as it does twice every day for a few hours, what desolation would it make! And how destructive would the clouds be, if they showered rain every hour through long! But God, by flowing seas, and sweeping rains, shows what he could do in wrath; and yet, by preserving the earth from being deluged between both, shows what he can do in mercy, and will do in truth. Let us give him the glory of his mercy in promising, and truth in performing. This promise does not hinder, I. But that God may bring other ways of judging man to account, as he has here bound himself not to use this any more, yet he has other arrows in his quiver. 2. Not but that he may destroy particular places and countries by the inundations of the sea or rivers. 3. Nor will the destruction of the world at the last day by fire, be any breach of his promise. Sin that drowned the old world will burn this.

8. And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 9. And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you: 10. And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth: 11. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

Here is, 1. The general establishment of God's covenant with this new world, and the extent of that covenant, v. 9, 10. Where observe, 1. That God is graciously pleased to deal with man in the way of a covenant; wherein God greatly magnifies his condescending favour, and greatly encourages man's duty and obedience, as a reasonable and gainful service. 2. That all God's covenants with man are of his own making, I, behold, I. It is thus expressed, both to raise our admiration, ("Behold, and wonder, that though God be high, yet will he take this respect to man," and to confirm our assurances of the validity of the covenant. "Behold, and see, I make it; I that am faithful, and able to make it good." 3. That God's covenants are established firmer than the pillars of heaven, or the foundations of the earth, and cannot be disannulled. 4. That God's covenants are made with the covenanters and with their seed; the promise is to them and their children. 5. That these may be taken into covenant with God, and receive the benefits of it, who yet are not capable of restipulating, or giving their own consent. For this covenant is made with every living creature, every beast of the earth.
you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: 13. I do set
my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a
token of a covenant between me and the
earth. 14. And it shall come to pass, when
I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow
shall be seen in the cloud: 15. And I will
remember my covenant, which is between me
and you and every living creature of all flesh;
and the waters shall no more become a
flood to destroy all flesh. 16. And the
bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look
upon it, that I may remember the everlasting
covenant between God and every living
creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.
17. And God said unto Noah, This is the
token of the covenant, which I have estab-
lished between me and all flesh that is upon
the earth.

Articles of agreement among men are sealed,
that the covenants may be more solemn, and the
performance of the covenants the more sure to
mutual satisfaction; God therefore being willing
to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of
his councils, has confirmed his covenant
by a seal, (Heb. 6. 17.) which makes the foun-
dations we build on, stand sure, 2 Tim. 2. 19.
The seal of this covenant of nature was natural enough;
it was the rainbow, which, it is likely, was seen in
the clouds before, when second causes concurred,
but not in the eye of the covenant, till now that
it was made so by a divine institution. Now con-
cerning this seal of the covenant, Observe,
1. This seal is affixed with repeated assurances
of the truth of that promise which it was designed
to be the ratification of. I set my bow in the cloud,
(v. 13.) it shall be seen in the cloud, (v. 14.) that
the eye may affect the heart, and confirm the faith;
and it shall be the token of the covenant (v. 12, 13.;
and I will remember my covenant, that the waters
shall no more become a flood, v. 15. Nay, as if the
Eternal Mind needed a seal so; for, (to use the
words of Vincent) "I will set my bow in the cloud,
and it shall be for a token of the everlasting
covenant, v. 16. Thus here is line upon line, that
we might have a sure and strong consolation, who
have laid hold on this hope. 2. The rainbow appears
then when the clouds are most disposed to wet, and
returns after the rain; then when we have most rea-
son to fear the rain prevailing, God shows this seal
of the promise that it shall not prevail. Thus God
obviates our fears with such encouragements as are
both suitable and seasonable. 3. The thicker the
cloud, the brighter the bow in the cloud. Thus as
threatening afflictions abound, encouraging consola-
tions much more abound, 2 Cor. 1. 5. 4. The
rainbow appears when one part of the sky is clear,
which intimates mercy remembered in the midst of
wrath; and the clouds are hemmed as it were with
the rainbow, that it may not overcast the light for
the bow is coloured rain, or the edges of a cloud
gilded. 5. The rainbow is the reflection of the
beams of the sun, which intimates that all the glory
and significance of the seals of the covenant are
derived from Christ the Sun of righteousness, who is
also described with a rainbow about his throne
(Rev. 4. 3.) and a rainbow upon his head (Rev. 10.
1.) which bespeaks not only his majesty, but his medi-atorship. 6. The rainbow has fiery colours in
it, to signify, that though God will not again drown
the world, yet when the mystery of God shall be
finished, the world shall be consumed by fire.

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

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

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

II. Noah's sin and shame. He planted a vine-
yard; and when he had gathered his vintage
probably, he appointed a day of mirth and feasting
in his family, and had his sons and their children
with him, to rejoice with him in the increase of his
house, as well as in the increase of his vineyard; and
we may suppose he prefaced his feast with a sacrifice
to the honour of God. If that was omitted, it was
just with God to leave him to himself, that he who
did not begin with God, might end with the beasts;
but we charitably hope the case was different. And perhaps he appointed this feast, with a design, at the close of it, to bless his sons, as Isaac, ch. 27. 3. 4. That I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee. At this feast, he drank of the wine; for who plenteeth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit of it? But he drank too liberally, more than his head at this age would bear; for he was drunken. We have reason to believe, that he was not taken before this, as is supposed, to observe how he came now to be overtaken in this fault. It was his sin, and a great sin, so much the worse for its being so soon after a great deliverance; but God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, (2 Chron. 32. 31.) and has left this miscarriage of his upon a record, to teach us, 1. That the fairest copy that ever more man wrote since the fall, had its blots and false strokes. 2. That he was overcome in his generations (ch. 6. 9.); but this shows that it is meant of sincerity, not a sinless perfection. 2. That sometimes those, who, with watchfulness and resolution, have by the grace of God, kept their integrity in the midst of temptation, have, through security, and carelessness, and neglect of the grace of God, been surprised into sin, when the hour of temptation has been over. Noah, who had kept sober in drunkennes once, is now drunken in sober manias. Let him that thinks he stands take heed. 3. That we have need to be very careful when we use God's good creatures plentifully, lest we use them to excess. Christ's disciples must take heed, lest at any time their hearts be overcharged, Luke 21. 34. Now the consequence of the son's sin was shame. He was uncovered within his tent, made naked to his shame, as Adam when he had eaten forbidden fruit. Yet Adam sought concealment; Noah is destitute of thought and reason, that he seeks no covering. This was a fruit of the vine, that Noah did not think of. Observe here the great evil of the sin of drunkenness. (1.) It discovers men; what infirmities they have, they betray when they are drunk-en, and what secrets they are intrusted with, are then easily got out of them. Drunken porters keep open gates. (2.) It disgraces men, and exposes them to contempt. As it shows them, so it shames them. Men say and do that when drunken, which, when they are sober, they would blush at the thoughts of, Hab. 2. 13, 16. III. Ham's impudence and impiety: (v. 22.) He saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren. To see it accidentally and involuntarily, would not have been a crime; but, 1. He pleased himself with the sight, as the Egyptians looked upon the day of their brethren. (Obad. 12.) pleased and insulting. Perhaps Ham had sometimes been himself drunken, and reproved for it by his good father, whom he was therefore pleased to see thus overcome. Note, It is common for those who walk in false ways themselves, to rejoice at the false steps which they sometimes see others make. But charity rejoices not in iniquity, nor can true penitents, that are sorry for their own sins, rejoice in the sins of others. 2. He told his two brethren; he was well aware, that what was done in the street, as the word is, in a scornful deriding manner, that his father might never seem vile unto them. It is very wrong, (1.) To make a jest of sin, (Prov. 14. 9.) and to be puffed up with that for which we should rather mourn, 1 Cor. 5. 2. And (2.) To publish the faults of any, especially of parents, whom it is our duty to honour. Noah was not only a good man; but had been a good father to him; and this was no way for him to speak of his father's tenderness. Ham is here called the father of Canaan, which intimates that he who was himself a father, should have been more respectful to him that was his father. IV. The pious care of Shem and Japheth to cover their poor father's shame, v. 23. They not only would not see it themselves, but provided that no one else might see it; herein setting us an example of charity with reference to other men's sin and shame; we must not only say, A confederacy, with these that proclaim it, but we must be careful to conceal it, or however to make the best of it, so doing as we would be done by. 1. There is a mantle of love to be thrown over the faults of all. Pet. 4. 8. Beside that, there is a robe of reverence to be thrown over the faults of parents and other superiors.

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

Here, 1. Noah comes to himself, He awoke from his wine: sleep cured him, and, we may suppose, so cured him, that he never relapsed into that sin afterwards. Those that sleep as Noah did, should awake as he did, and not as that drunkard, Prov. 23. 35. who says when he awakes, I will seek it yet again. 2. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and, like dying Jacob, he tells his sons what should befall them, ch. 49. 1. v. 25. 1. He pronounces a curse on Canaan the son of Ham, in whom Ham is himself cursed; either, because this son of his was now more guilty than the rest, or, because the posterity of this son was afterward to be rooted out of their land, to make room for Israel. And Moses here records it for the animating of Israel in the wars of Canaan; though the Canaanites were a formidably people, yet they were of a slow and accursed people, and doomed to ruin. The particular curse is, a servant of servants, that is, the meanest and most despiseful servant, shall he, even to his brethren. Those who by birth were his equals, shall by conquest be his lords. This certainly points at the victories obtained by Israel over the Canaanites, by which they were all either put to the sword, or put under tribute, (Josh. 9. 23. Judg. 1. 28, 30, 35, 35.) which happened not till about 800 years after this. Note, (1.) God often visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially when the children inherit their fathers' wicked dispositions, and imitate the father's wicked practices, and do nothing to cut off the entail of a curse. (2.) Disgrace is justly put upon those that put disgrace upon others, especially that dishonesty and grieve their own parents. An unadulterated child that mocks at his parents, is no more worthy to be counted among the sons of Israel, than a slave, or a servant, nay, a servant of servants, among his brethren. (3.) Though divine curses operate slowly, yet, first or last, they will take effect. The Canaanites were under a curse of slavery, and yet, for a great while, had the dominion; for a family, a people, a person, may lie under the curse of God, and yet may long prosper in the world, till the measure of their iniquity, like that of the Canaanites, be full. Many are marked for ruin, that are not yet ripe for ruin. Therefore, Let not thine heart envy sinners.

2. He entails a blessing upon Shem and Japheth. (1.) He blesses Shem, or, rather blesses God for him, yet so that it entitles him to the greatest honour and happiness imaginable. v. 26. Observe,
15. arcation, the Romans, sionaries, prosperity, and be
Christ, for world. while, works, Matt. 3:32, works fully good he shall, rendered
That vision, makes the blessing of
Thus David, for it is an honour and favour to be employed for God, and used by him in doing good. [5] He foresees and foretells, that God's gracious dealings with Shem and his family, would be such as would evidence to all the world that he was the God of Shem. [6] Canaan is particularly enslaved to him: He shall be his servant. Note, Those that have the Lord for their God, shall have as much of the honour and power of this world as he sees good for them. [2] He blesses Japheth, and, in him, the isles of the Gentiles, which were peopled by his seed, v. 27, God shall enlarge Japheth, and he will dwell in the tents of Shem; We should, therefore, render to Shem the respect due to him, as a prince and a representative of the Church. [1] Some make this to belong wholly to Japheth, and to bespeak either, First, His outward prosperity, that his seed should be so numerous, and so victorious, that they should be masters of the tents of Shem; which was fulfilled, when the people of the Jews, the most eminent of Shem's race, were tributaries to the Grecians first, and afterward to the Romans, both of Japheth's seed. Note, Outward prosperity is no true sign or pledge of the blessing of God, the tents of Shem are not always the tents of the conqueror. Or, Secondly, It bespeaks the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church; and then we would read it, God shall persuade Japheth, (for so the word signifies,) and then, being so persuaded, he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, that is, Jews and Gentiles shall be united together in the gospel-faith; and so much the better, because the Gentiles have been proselyted to the Jewish religion, both shall be one in Christ, Eph. 2. 14, 15. And the christian church, mostly made up of the Gentiles, shall succeed the Jews in the privileges of church-membership; the latter having first cast themselves out by their unbelief, the Gentiles shall dwell in their tents, Rom. 11. 11, 26. Note, It is God only that can bring those scattered Gentiles into the church, who have separated themselves from it, and he is the power of God that makes the gospel of Christ effectual to salvation, Rom. 1. 16. And again, Sons are brought into the church, not by force, but by persuasion, Ps. 110. 3. They are drawn by the cords of a man, and persuaded by reason to be religious. [1] Others divide this between Japheth and Shem, Shem having not been directly blessed, v. 24. First, Japheth has the blessing of earth beneath; God shall enlarge Japheth, enlarge his seed, enlarge his border; Japheth's posterity peopled all Europe, a great part of Asia, and perhaps America. Note, God is to be acknowledged in all our enlargements. It is he that enlarges the coast, and enlarges the heart. And again, Many dwell in large tents, that do not dwell in God's tents, as Japheth did. Second, Shem is the blessing of heaven above. He shall, that is, God shall, dwell in the tents of Shem, that is, From his joins Christ shall come, and in his seed the church shall be continued. The birth-right was now to be divided between Shem and Japheth, Ham being utterly discarded; in the principality they equally share, Canaan shall be servant to both; the double portion is given to Japheth, while God shall enlarge, but the priesthood was given to Shem, for God shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and certainly we are more happy, if we have God dwelling in our tents, than if we had there all the silver and gold in the world. It is better to dwell in tents with God than in palaces without him; in Salem, where is God's tabernacle, there is more satisfaction than in all the isles of the Gentiles. Thirdly, They both have dominion over Canaan; Canaan shall be servant to them; so some read it. When Japheth joins with Shem, Canaan falls before them both. When strangers become friends, enemies become servants. 29. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. 29. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died. Here see, 1. How God prolonged the life of Noah; he lived 950 years; 20 more than Adam, and but 19 less than Methuselah; this long life was a further reward of his signal piety, and a great blessing to the world, to which, no doubt, he continued a preacher of righteousness, with this advantage, that now all he preached to, were his own children. 2. How God put a period to his life at last; though he lived long, yet he died, having, probably, first seen many that descended from him, dead before him. Noah lived to see two worlds, but being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died, he went to see a better than either.

CHAP. X.

This chapter shows more particularly what was said in general, ch. 9. 19, concerning the three sons of Noah, that all of them was the whole earth overspread, and the extent of that blessing, ch. 9. 1, 7. replenish the earth. It is the only certain account extant of the original of nations; and yet perhaps there is no nation but that of the Jews, that can derive its origin from the sons of Noah. [1] Where no other account nor tradition is, we are to look to the blessing of Noah, and the word of God: To the Hebrews, who have separated themselves from it, it is the power of God that makes the gospel of Christ effectual to salvation, Rom. 1. 16. And again, Sons are brought into the church, not by force, but by persuasion, Ps. 110. 3. They are drawn by the cords of a man, and persuaded by reason to be religious. [1] Others divide this between Japheth and Shem, Shem having not been directly blessed, v. 24. First, Japheth has the blessing of earth beneath; God shall enlarge Japheth, enlarge his seed, enlarge his border; Japheth's posterity peopled all Europe, a great part of Asia, and perhaps America. Note, God is to be acknowledged in all our enlargements. It is he that enlarges the coast, and enlarges the heart. And again, Many dwell in large tents, that do not dwell in God's tents, as Japheth did. Second, Shem is the blessing of heaven above. He shall, that is, God shall, dwell in the tents of Shem, that is, From his joins Christ shall come, and in his seed the church shall be continued. The birth-right was now to be divided between Shem and Japheth, Ham being utterly discarded; in the principality they equally share, Canaan shall be servant to both; the double portion is given to Japheth, while God shall enlarge, but the priesthood was given to Shem, for God shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and certainly we are more happy, if we have God dwelling in our tents, than if we had there all the silver and gold in the world. It is better to dwell in tents with God than in palaces without him; in Salem, where is God's tabernacle, there is more satisfaction than in all the isles of the Gentiles. Thirdly, They both have dominion over Canaan; Canaan shall be servant to them; so some read it. When Japheth joins with Shem, Canaan falls before them both. When strangers become friends, enemies become servants. 29. And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. 29. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years: and he died. Here see, 1. How God prolonged the life of Noah; he lived 950 years; 20 more than Adam, and but 19 less than Methuselah; this long life was a further reward of his signal piety, and a great blessing to the world, to which, no doubt, he continued a preacher of righteousness, with this advantage, that now all he preached to, were his own children. 2. How God put a period to his life at last; though he lived long, yet he died, having, probably, first seen many that descended from him, dead before him. Noah lived to see two worlds, but being an heir of the righteousness which is by faith, when he died, he went to see a better than either.
and Dolanim. 5. By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.

Moses begins with Japheth's family; either because he was the eldest, or, because his family lay remotest from Israel, and had least concern with them, at the time when Moses wrote; and therefore he mentions that race very briefly, hastening to account of the posterity of Ham, who were Israel's enemies, and of Shem, who were Israel's ancestors: for it is the church that the scripture is designed to be the history of, and of the nations of the world, only as they were some way or other related to Israel, and interested in the affairs of Israel. Observe, 1. Notice is taken that the sons of Noah had sons born to them after the flood, to repair and rebuild the world of mankind which the flood had ruined. He that had killed, now makes alive. 2. The prosperity of Japheth were all-tided to the isles of the Gentiles, (ver. 3,) which were, solemnly, by lot, after a survey, divided among them, and, probably, this island of ours among the rest; all places beyond the sea from Japhet, are called isles. Jer. 25. 22. and this directs us to understand that promise, Isa. 49. 6, the isles shall wait for his law, of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ.

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

That which is observable and improvable in these verses, is, the account here given of Nimrod, ver. 8, 11. He is here represented as a great man in his time, and the beginning of a mighty nation; this is a note of that, where all those that went before him, were content to stay upon the same level with their neighbours, and though every man bare rule in his own house, yet no man pretended any further; Nimrod's aspiring mind could not rest here: he was resolved to tower above his neighbours, and not only so, but to lord it over them. The same spirit that actuated the giants before the flood, (whom became mighty men, men of renown, ch. 6. 4,) now revived in him; so soon was that tremendous judgment which the pride and tyranny of these mighty men brought upon the world, forgotten. Note, There are some, in whom ambition and ambition of dominion seem to be bred in the bone; such there have been, and will be, notwithstanding the wrath of God often revealed from heaven against them. Nothing on this side hell, will humble and break the proud spirits of some men, in this, like Lucifer, Is. 14. 14. 15. Now, I. Nimrod was a great hunter: this he began with, and for this, became famous to a proverb. Every great hunter is, in remembrance of him, called a Nimrod. 1. Some think he did good with his hunting, served his country by riddling of the wild beasts which infested it, and so insinuated himself into the affections of his neighbours, and got to be their prince; those that exercise authority, either here, or, at least, would be called, benefactors. Luke 22. 25. 2. Others think that under pretence of hunting, he gathered men under his command, in pursuit of another game he had to play, which was to make himself master of the country, and to bring them into subjection. He was a mighty hunter, that is, He was a violent invader of his neighbour's rights and possessions, and a persecutor of innocent men, carrying all before him, and endeavoring to make all his own by force and violence. He thought himself a mighty prince, but before the Lord, that is in God's account, he was but a mighty hunter.

Note. Great conquerors are but great hunters. Alexander and Cesar would not make such a figure in scripture history as they do in common history; the former is represented in prophecy but as a heathen, like Nimrod, Deut. 28. 49. and 2. Kings 21. 11. with his impious sons and his hussars could not overthrow the Almighty, and were a match for the Lord of Hosts and all his armies: As if it were a small thing to weary men, he thinks to weary my God also, Is. 7. 13.

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

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

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

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

21. Unto Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder, even to him were children born. 22. The children of Shem; Elam and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram. 23. And the children of Aram; Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Mash. 24. And Arphaxad begat Salah; and Salah begat Eber. 25. And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother’s name was Joktan. 26. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah. 27. And Hadoram, and Uzal, and Diklah, 28. And Obal, and Abimael, and Sheba, 29. And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab: all these were the sons of Jok-tan. 30. And their dwelling was from Meshha, as thou goest unto Sepher a mount of the east. 31. These are the sons of Shem, after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, after their nations. 32. These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood.

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

I. The description of Shem, v. 21. We have not only his name, Shem, which signifies a name, but two titles to distinguish him by. 1. He was the father of all the children of Eber: Eber was his great-grandson; but why should he be called the father of all his children, rather than of all Arphaxad’s, or Salah’s, &c.? Probably, because Abraham and his seed, God’s covenant-people, not only descended from Heber, but from him were called Hebrews, ch. 14. 13, Abram the He-brew. St. Paul looked upon it as his privilege, that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Phil. 3. 5. Eber himself, we may suppose, was a man eminent for religion in a time of general apostasy, and a great example of piety to his family; and the holy tongue being commonly called from him the Hebrew, it is probable that he retained it in his family, in the confusion of Babel, as a special token of God’s favour to him; and from him the professors of religion were called the children of Eber; now, when the inspired writer speaks of Abraham as the father of the nations, he calls him the father of the Hebrews; though, when Moses wrote this, they were a poor despised people, bond-slaves in Egypt, yet, being God’s people, it was an honour to a man to be akin to them. As Ham, though he had many sons, is disowned by being called the father of Canaan, on whose seed the curse was entailed, ch. 9. 22, so Shem, though he had many sons, is dignified with the title of the father of Eber, on whose seed the blessing was entailed. Note, A family of saints is more truly honourable than a family of nobles; Shem’s holy seed than Ham’s royal seed, Jacob’s twelve patriarchs than Ishmael’s twelve princes, ch. 17. 20. Goodness is true greatness.

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

II. The reason of the name of Peleg, v. 25, because in his days, (that is about the time of his birth, when his name was given him,) was the earth divided among the children of men that were to inhabit it; either, when Noah divided it by an orderly distribution of it, as Joshua divided the land of Canaan by lot, or when, upon their refusal to come with that division, God, in justice, divided them by the confusion of tongues; whosoever of these was the occasion, pious Heber saw cause to perpetual
the remembrance of it in the name of his son; and justly may our sons be called by the same name, for in our days, in another sense, is the earth, the church, most wretchedly divided.

CHAP. XI.

The old distinction between the sons of God, and the sons of men, (professors and profane,) was made by the flood, and continued among them, when men began to multiply: according to this distinction, we have, in this chapter, 1. The dispersion of the sons of men at Babel, v. 1-3, where we have, 1. Their presumption and prodigal design, which was, to build a city and a tower, v. 1, 4. 2. The righteous judgment of God upon them in disappointing their design, by confounding their language, and scattering them, v. 5, 9. II. The pedigree of the sons of Noah, v. 9-20, with a genealogical account of his family, and removal out of his native country, v. 27, 32.

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

The close of the foregoing chapter tells us, that by the sons of Noah, or, among the sons of Noah, the nations were divided in the earth after the flood, that is, were distinguished into several tribes or colonies; and the places they had hitherto lived in together being too small for them, it was either appointed by Noah, or agreed upon among his sons, which way each several tribe or colony should steer its course, beginning with the countries that were next them, and designing to proceed further and further, and to remove to a greater distance from each other, as the increase of their several companies should require. Thus was the matter well settled, one hundred years after the flood, about the time of Peleg: but the sense of Gen. ii. 16, it should seem, were loath to scatter into distant places; they thought, the more the merrier, and the safer, and therefore they contrived to keep together, and were slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of their fathers had given them, Josh. 18, 3, thinking themselves wiser than either God or Noah. Now here we have,

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

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

1. How the Spirit directed and encouraged one another to set about this work, v. 3, and again v. 4. Go to, let us build a city; by mutual excitments they made one another more daring and resolute. Note, Great things may be brought to pass, when the undertakers are numerous and unanimous, and stir up one another to it. Let us learn to provoke one another to love and to good works, as sinners stir up and encourage one another to wicked works. See Ps. 122, 1. Isa. 2, 5, 5. Jer. 56, 17, 18.

2. What materials they used in their building. The country being plain, yielded neither stone nor mortar, yet that did not discourage them from their undertaking, but they made brick to serve instead of stone, and slime or pitch instead of mortar. See here, (1.) What shift those will make, that are resolved in their purposes: were we but thus seriously affected with a good design, we might make our work so often as we do, under pretence that we want conveniences for carrying it on. (2.) What a difference there is between men's building and God's; when men build their Babel, brick and slime are their best materials; but when God builds his Jerusalem, he lays even the foundations of it with sapphires, and all its borders with pleasant stones, Rev. 21, 14, 11. 12. Rev. 21, 14.

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

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

(2.) They hoped hereby to make them a name; they would do something to be talked of, and to give posterity to know that there had been such men as they in the world; rather than die and leave no memorandum behind them, they would leave a monument of their pride, and ambition, and folly. Note, (1.) Affection to a high name among men, inspires with a strange ardor for great and difficult undertakings, and often bestrides to that which is evil, and offensive to God. (2.) It is just with God to bury those names in the dust, which are raised by sin. These Babel-builders put themselves to a great deal of foolish expense, to make a name to themselves; but they could not gain even this point, for we do not find in any history the name of so much as one of these Babel-builders; Philo Ju
Jesus says, They engraved every one his name upon a brick, in perpetuum vet memoriam—as a perpetual memorial; yet neither did that serve their purpose.

(3.) They did it to prevent their dispersion; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. “It was done,” (says Josephus,) “in disobedience to that command, ch. 9. 1, Replenish the earth.” God orders them to scatter; “No,” say they, “we will not, we will live and die together.” In order hereunto, they engage themselves, and one another, in this vast undertaking. That they might unite in one thing it as clearly and palpably required to build this city and tower, to be the metropolis of their kingdom, and the centre of their unity. It is probable that the hand of ambitious Nimrod was in all this: he could not content himself with the command of a particular colony, but aimed at universal monarchy; in order to which, under pretence of uniting for their common safety, he contrives to keep them in one body, that, having them all under his eye, he might not fail to have them under his power. See the daring presumption of these sinners: here is, [1.] A bold opposition to God; “You shall be scattered,” says God; “But we will not,” say they; Woe unto him that thus strives with his maker. [2.] A bold competition with God. It is God's prerogative to be universal Monarch, Lord of all, and King of kings; the man that aims at it, offers to step into the throne of God, who will not give his glory to another. 5. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men built. 6. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. 3. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. 9. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

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

1. The cognizance that God took of the design that was on foot, v. 5. The Lord came down to see the city: it is an expression after the manner of men; he knew it as clearly and palpably required to build this city and tower, to be the metropolis of their kingdom, and the centre of their unity. Which they came to the place to view. Observe, 1. Before he gave judgment upon their cause, he inquired into it; for God is incontestably just and fair in all his proceedings against sin and sinners, and condemneth none unheard. 2. It is spoken of as an act of condescension in God, to take notice even of this building, which the undertakers were so puffed up for, that they flattered themselves to behold the transactions, even the most considerable ones, of this lower world, Ps. 113. 6. 3. It is said to be the tower which the children of men built; which intimates, (1.) Their weakness and frailty as men: it was a very foolish thing for the children of men, worms of the earth, to defy Heaven, and to provoke the Lord to jealousy: Are they stronger than he? (2.) Their sinfulness and obstinacy: they were the sons of Adam, so it is in the Hebrew; nay, of that Adam, that sinful disobedient Adam, whose children are by nature children of disobedience, children that are corrupters. (3.) Their distinction from the children of God, the professors of religion, from whom these daring builders had separated themselves, and built this tower to support and perpetuate the separation. Pious Eber is not found among this ungodly crew; for he and his are called the children of God; their souls came not into the secret, nor unite themselves to the assembly, of these children of men.

II. The counsels and resolves of the Eternal God concerning this matter; he did not come down merely as a spectator, but as a Judge, as a Prince, to look upon these proud men, and abase them, Job 40. 11. 14. Observe, 1. He suffered them to proceed a good way in their enterprise, before he put a stop to it; that they might have space to repent, and, if they had so much consideration left, might be ashamed of it, and weary of it, themselves; and if not, that their disappointment might be the more shameful, and every one that passed by, might laugh at them, saying, These men began to build, and were not able to finish; that so the works of their hands, from which they preserved themselves immortal honor, might turn their personal blessing into a curse, Job 40. 14. Note, God is wise and holy ends in permitting the enemies of his glory to carry on their impious projects a great way, and to prosper long in their enterprises. 2. When they had, with much care and toil, made some considerable progress in their building, then God determined to break their measures, and disperse them, v. 7. Observe, (1.) The righteousness of God, which appears in the considerations upon which he proceeded in this resolution, v. 6. Two things he considered, [1.] Their unness, as a reason why they must be scattered: “Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; if they continue one, much of the earth will be uninhabited; the power of their prince will soon be exorbitant; wickedness and sinfulness will be insufferably rampant, for they will strengthen one another's hands against him; and, which is worst of all, they will be an overbalance to the church, and these children of men, if thus incorporated, will swallow up the little remnant of God's children.” Therefore he decreed that they must not be one. Note, Unity is policy, but it is not the infallible mark of a true church; yet, while the builders of Babel, though of different families, dispositions, and interests, were thus unanimous in opposing God, what a pity it is, and what a shame, that the builders of Zion, though united in one common Head and Spirit, should be divided, as they are, in serving God! But marvellous not at the matter: Christ came not to send peace. [2.] Their obstinacy; now nothing will be restrained from them; and this is a reason why they must be crossed and thwarted in their design; God had tried, by his commands and admonitions, to bring them off from this project, but in vain; therefore he must take another course with them. See here, First, The sinfulness of sin, and the willfulness of sinners; ever since Adam would not be restrained from the forbidden tree, his unsanctified seed have been impatient of restraint, and ready to rebel against it. Secondly, See the necessity of God's judgments upon earth, to keep the world in some order, and to tie the hands of those that will not be checked by law.

(2.) The wisdom and mercy of God in the methods that were taken for the defeating of this enterprise; (v. 7.) Go to, let us go down, and there
confound their language: this was not spoken to the angels, as if God needed either their advice, or their assistance, but God speaks it to himself, or the Father to the Son and Holy Ghost; they said, Go to, let us make brick; and Go to, let us build us a tower; and imaging one another to the attempt; and now God says, Go to, let us confound their languages; for if men stir up themselves to sin, God will stir up himself to take vengeance, Isa. 59. 17, 18. Now observe here, [1.] The mercy of God, in moderating the penalty, and not making that proportionable to the offence; for he deals not with us according to our deeds, says, Let us go down; let us confound their language. 

[2.] The wisdom of God, in patching upon an effectual expedient to stay proceedings, which was the confounding of their language, that they might not understand one another's speech, nor could they well join hands when their tongues were divided; so that this was a means to undo their work, and scatter them off from their building, (for if they could not understand one another, they could not help one another,) as also for disposing them to scatter; for when they could not understand one another, they could not employ one another. Note, God has various means, and effectual ones, to balance and defeat the projects of proud men that set themselves against him, and particularly to divide them among the members, either by dividing their spirits, Judges 9. 23. or by dividing their tongues, as David prays, Ps. 55. 9. 

III. The execution of these counsels of God, to the blasted and defeating of the counsels of men, v. 8, 9. God made them know whose word should stand, his or theirs, as the expression is, Jer. 44. 28. Notwithstanding their oneeness and obstinacy, God would have it upon them, and among them, and they did it proudly, he was above them; for who ever hardened his heart against him and prospered? Three things were done: 

1. Their language was confounded. God, who, when he made man, taught him to speak, and put words into his mouth fit to express the conceptions of his mind by; now made those builders to forget their former language, and to speak and understand a new one, which was the same to the same of the same tribe or family, but not to others; those of one colony could converse together, but not with those of another. 

Now, (1.) This was a great miracle, and a proof of the power which God has upon the minds and tongues of men, which he turns as the rivers of water. (2.) This was a great judgment upon these builders; for being thus deprived of the knowledge of the ancient and holy tongue, they were become incapable of communicating with the true church, in which it was retained; and, probably, it contributed much to their loss of the knowledge of the true God. (3.) We all suffer by it, to this day: in all the inconveniences we sustain by the diversity of languages, and all the pain and trouble we are at to learn the languages we have occasion for; and this is a just punishment of the rebellion of men, and of their unhappily controversial, which arise of strifes of words, and arise from our misunderstanding of one another's language, for aught I know, are owing to this confusion of tongues. (4.) The project of some to frame an universal character, in order to a universal language, how desirable soever it may seem, is yet, I think, but a vain attempt; for it is to strive against a divine sentence, by which the languages of the nations will be divided while the world stands. (5.) We may here lament the loss of the universal use of the Hebrew tongue, which, from this time, was the vulgar language of the Hebrews only, and continued so till the captivity in Babylon, where, even among them, it was exchanged for the Syriac. (6.) As the confounding of tongues divided the children of men, and scattered them abroad, so the gift of tongues, bestowed upon the apostles (Acts 2. 4.) did greatly to the gathering together of the children of God, which were scattered abroad, and the uniting of them in Christ, that with one mind and mouth they might glorify God, Rom. 15. 6. 

2. Their building was stopped; they left off to build the city. This was the effect of the confusion of their tongues; for it not only incapacitated them for helping one another, but, probably, struck such a damp upon their spirits, that they could not proceed, since they saw, in this, the hand of the Lord gone out against them. Note, [1.] It is wisdom to leave off that which we see God fights against. [2.] God is able to blast and bring to naught all the devices and designs of Babel-builders. He sits in heaven, and laughs at the counsels of the kings of the earth against Him and His Anointed; and to this they are condemned to confess that there is no wisdom nor counsel against the Lord, Prov. 21. 20. Isa. 8. 9, 10. 

3. The builders were scattered abroad from thence upon the face of the whole earth, v. 8, 9. They departed in companies, after their families, and after their tongues, (ch. 10. 5, 20, 31.) to the several countries and places allotted to them in the division that had been made, which they knew before, but would not go to take the possession of till now that they were forced to it. Observe here, [1.] That the very thing which they feared, came upon them; they feared dispersion, they sought to evade it by an act of rebellion, and by that act they brought upon themselves the evil with all its horrors: for we are most likely to fall into that trouble which we seek to evade by indirect and sinful methods. [2.] That it was God's work: The Lord is sore displeased with his children, and preserved it in all scattering providences; if the family be scattered, relations scattered, churches scattered, it is the Lord's doing. [3.] That though they were as firmly in league with one another as could be, yet the Lord scattered them: for no man can keep to gether what God will put asunder. [4.] That thus God justly took vengeance on them for their one ness in that presumptuous attempt to build their glorious purpose: the just punishment of sinful unions: Simeon and Levi, who had been brethren in iniquity, were divided in Jacob, Gen. 49. 5, 7. Ps. 83. 3. 15. [5.] That they left behind them a perpetual memorandum of their repugnance, in the name given to the place; it was called Babel, confusion. They that aim at a great name, commonly come off with a bad name. [6.] The children of men were now finally scattered, and never did, nor ever will, come all together again, till the great day, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered before him, Matt. 25. 31, 32. 

10. These are the generations of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old, and begat Arphaxad, two years after the flood. And Shem lived after he begat Arphaxad, five hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. 12. And Arphaxad lived five
and thirty years, and begat Salah: 13. And Arphaxad lived after he begat Salah, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. 14. And Salah lived thirty years, and begat Eber: 15. And Salah lived after he begat Eber, four hundred and three years, and begat sons and daughters. 16. And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg: 17. And Eber lived after he begat Peleg, four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. 18. And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: 19. And Peleg lived after he begat Reu, two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters. 20. And Reu lived two and thirty years, and begat Serug: 21. And Reu lived after he begat Serug, two hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters. 22. And Serug lived thirty years, and begat Nahor: 23. And Serug lived after he begat Nahor, two hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. 24. And Nahor lived nine and twenty years, and begat Terah: 25. And Nahor lived after he begat Terah, an hundred and nineteen years, and begat sons and daughters. 26. And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

We have here a genealogy, not an endless genealogy; for here it ends in Abram, the friend of God, and leads further to Christ, the promised Seed, who was the Son of Abram, and from Abram the genealogy of Christ is reckoned, (Matth. 1. 1, &c.) so that put ch. 5. ch. 11, and Matth. 1. together, and you have such an entire genealogy of Jesus Christ as cannot be produced, for aught I know, concerning any person in the world, out of his line, and at such a distance from the fountain-head. And laying these three genealogies together, we shall find that twice ten, and thrice fourteen, generations or descents, passed between the first and second Adam, making it clear concerning Christ, not only that he was the Son of Abraham, but the Son of man, and the Seed of the woman. Observe here,

1. That nothing is left upon record concerning those of this line, but their names and ages; the Holy Ghost seeming to hasten through them to the story of Abram. How little do we know of those that are gone before us in this world, even those that lived in the same places where we live, as we likewise know little of those that are our contemporaries, in distant places; we have enough to do, to mind the work of our own day, and let God alone to require that which is past, Eccl. 3. 15. 2. That there was an observable gradual decrease in the years of their lives; Shem reached to 600 years, which yet fell short of the age of the patriarchs before the flood; the three next came short of 500; the three next did not reach to 500 after them, we read not of any that attained to 500, but Terah; and, not many ages after this, Moses reckoned 70 or 80 to be the utmost men ordinarily arrive at; when the earth began to be replenished, men's lives began to shorten; so that the decrease is to be imputed to the wise disposal of providence, rather than to any decay of nature; for the deit's sake, men's days are shortened; and being evil, it is well they are few, and attain not to the years of the lives of our fa-thers, ch. 47. 9. 3. That Eber, from whom the Hebrews were denominated, was the longest lived of any that were born after the flood; which perhaps was the reward of his singular piety, and strict adherence to the ways of God.

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

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

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

II. His relations; mentioned for his sake, and because of their interest in the following story. 1. His father was Terah, of whom it is said, Jesh. 24. 2, that he served other gods, on the other side of the flood: so early did idolatry gain footing in the world, and so hard is it even for those that have some good principles, to swim against the stream. Though it is said, v. 26, that when Terah was seventy years old, he begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran, (which seems to tell us that Abram was the eldest son of Terah, and born in his 70th year,) yet, by comparing v. 32, which makes Terah to die in his 206th year, with Acts 7. 4, (where it is said that Abram removed from Haran, when his father was dead,) and with ch. 12. 4, (where it is said that he was but 73 years old when he removed from Haran,) it appears that he was born in the 130th year of Terah, and probably, was his youngest son for, in God's choices, the list are often first, and the first lost. We have 2, Some account of his brethren. (1.) Nahor, out of whose family both Isaac and Jacob had their wives. (2.) Haran, the father of Lot, of whom it is here said, v. 28, that he died before his father Terah. Note, Children cannot be sure that they shall survive their parents; for death does not go by seniority, taking the eldest first, the shadow of death is without any order. Job 10. 22. It is likewise said that he died in Ur of the Chaldees, before the happy removal of the family out of that idolatrous country. Note, It concerns us to hasten out of our natural state, lest death surprise us in it. 3. His wife was Sarai, who, some think, was the same with Iscah, the daughter of Haran. Abram himself says of her, that she was the daugh-
ter of his father, but not the daughter of his mother, ch. 20. 12. She was ten years younger than Abram.

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

CHAP. XII.

The pedigree and family of Abram we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here, the Holy Ghost enters upon his story; hereforeward, Abram and his seed are almost the only subject of the sacred history. In this chapter we have, I. God's call of Abram to the land of Canaan, v. 1. 3. II. Abram's obedience to this call, v. 4. 5. III. His welcome to the land of Canaan, v. 6, 7. IV. His journey to Egypt, with an account of what happened on his return from Egypt, v. 10, 11. Sarah's danger, and deliverance, v. 14, 20.

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

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

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

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

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

3. It is great; if, in appearing by his country, he lost his name there; "Care not for that," says God, "but trust me, and I will make thee a greater name than ever thou couldst have had there." Having no child, he feared he should have no name; but God will make him a great nation, and make him a great name. Note, (1.) God is the fountain of honour, and from him promotion comes. 1 Sam. 2. 8. (2.) The name of the ballot, when appeared. 1 Sam. 16. Note, God shall make great the best report that is which the elders obtained by faith, Heb. 11. 2. 4.

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

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

6. The whole earth shall be blessed; this was the promise that crowned all the rest; for it points at the Messiah, in whom all the promises are yes and amen. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the great blessing of the world, the great test that each the world was blessed with; he is a family-blessing, by him salvation is brought to the house, Luke 19. 9. When we reckon up our family blessings, let us put Christ in the first place, as the Blessing of blessings. But how are all the families of the earth blessed in Christ, when so many are strangers to him? Answer, (1.) All that are blessed, are blessed in him, Acts 4. 12. (2.) All that believe, of what family soever they are, shall be blessed in him. (3.) Some of all the families of the earth are blessed in him. (4.) There are some blessings which all the families of the earth are blessed with in Christ; for the gospel-salvation is a common salvation, Jude 3. (2.) It is a great honour to be related to Christ; this made Abram's name great, that the Messiah was to descend from his loins, much more than that he should be the father of many nations. It was Abram's honour to be his father by nature; it will be our's to be his brethren by grace, Matt. 12. 50.

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

Here is,

I. Abram's removal out of his country; out of Ur first, and afterward out of Haran, in compliance with the call of God; so Abram departed; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but did as he was bid, Gen. 13. 17. (2.) He went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11. 8, but knowing whom he followed, and under whose direction he went. Thus God called him to his foot, Isa. 41. 2.

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

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

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

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

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

IV. Here is their happy arrival at their journey's end.

They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, so they did before, (ch. 11. 31.) and then took up short; but now they held on their way, and, by the good hand of their God upon them, to the land of Canaan they came; where, by a fresh revelation, they were told that this was the land God promised to Abraham, (2. Chr. 6. 23.) and before the difficulties they met with in their way, nor diversified by the delights they met with, but pressed forward. Note, (1.) Those that set out for heaven, must persevere to the end, still reaching earth to those things that are before. (2.) That which we undertake, in obedience to God's command, and a humble attendance upon his providence, will certainly succeed, and end with comfort at last.

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

One would have expected that Abram having had such an extraordinary call to Canaan, some great event should have followed upon his arriy at there; that he should have been introduced with all possible marks of honour and respect, and that the kings of Canaan should entertain him, and crown him with their crowns to him, and do him homage: but, (1.) he comes not with observation, little notice is taken of him: for still God will have him to lie by faith, and to look upon Canaan, even when he was in it, as a land of promise: therefore observe here,

1. How little comfort he had in the land he came to; for, (1.) He had it not to himself, the Canaanite was then in the land. He found the country peopled and possessed by Canaanites, who were likely to be but bad neighbours, and worse landlords; and, (2.) for aught that appears, he could not have ground to pitch his tent on, but by their permission: thus the accursed Canaanites seemed to be in better circumstances than blessed Abram. Note, The children of this world have commonly more of it than God's children. 2. He had not a settlement in it. He passed through the land, v. 6. He removed to a mountain, v. 8. He journeyed, going on still, v. 9. Observe here, (1.) That sometimes it is the lot of good men to be unsettled, and obliged often to remove their habitation. Holy David had his wanderings, his fittings, Ps. 56. 8. (2.) Our removals in this world are often into various conditions.

Abram sojourned, first, in a plain, v. 6, then, in a mountain, v. 8. God had set the one over against the other, that we may learn, that God's children are not to set up their comfort in this world, but every where take up themselves as strangers and sojourners in this world, and by faith set loose to it as a strange country. So Abram did, Heb. 11. 8. 14. (4.) While we are here in this present state, we must be journeying, and going on still from strength to strength, as having not yet attained.

II. How much comfort he had in the God he followed; when he could have little satisfaction conversing with the Canaanites, whom he found there, he had abundance of pleasure in communion with that God who brought him thither, and did not leave him. Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer, and by these according to the methods of that dispensation, Abram's communion with God was kept up in the land of his pilgrimage. 1. God appeared to Abram; probably, in a vision, and spoke to him as a familiar friend; and with comfortable words, Unto thy seed will I give this land. Note, (1.) No place or condition of life can shut us out from the comfort of God's gracious visits. Abram is a sojourner, unsettled, among the Canaanites; and yet here also he meets with him that lives and sees him. Enemies may part us and our tents, us and our altars, but not us and our God. Note, (2.) With respect to those that feel the burden of duty, though he lead them from their friends, he will himself make up that loss by his gracious appearances to them. (3.) God's promises are sure and satisfying to all those who conscientiously observe and obey his precepts; and those who, in compliance with God's call, leave or lose anything that is dear to them, shall be sure of something else abundantly better in lieu of it. Abram had left the land of his nativity, "Well," says God, "I will give thee this land," Matt. 19. 29. (4.) God reveals himself and his favours to his people by degrees; before he had promised to show him this land, now, to give it him: as grace is growing, so is comfort. (5.) It is comfortable to have land of God's giving, not by providence only, but by promise. (6.) Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents. I will give it thee, says God, but unto his seed, then and there, he in a great reversion, to his seed, which yet, it should seem, Abram understood also as a grant to himself of a better land in reversion, of which this was a type; for he looked for a heavenly country, Heb. 11. 16. 2. Abram attended on God in his instituted ordnances. He built an altar unto the Lord, who appeared to him, and called on the name of the Lord, v. 7, 8. Note, consider this, (1.) As done upon a Canaanite occasion; where they had temples and altars, and there he built an altar, with a view to the God who appeared to him. Thus he returned God's visit, and kept up his correspondence with Heaven, as one that resolved it should not fail on his side; thus he acknowledged with thankfulness, God's kindness to him in making him that gracious visit and promise; and thus he testified his confidence in and deep respect for the other. (2.) This may be a type and pattern of the whole performance of the saints, their work and worship. Note, An active believer can heartily bless God for a promise which he does not yet see the performance of, and build an altar to the honour of God who appears to him, though he does not yet appear for him. (2.) As his constant practice, throughout he removed. As soon as Abram was got to Canaan, though he was but a stranger and sojourner there, yet he set up, and kept up the worship of God in his family; and wherever he had a
of you. God’s providence took care there should be a supply in Egypt, and Abram’s prudence made use of the opportunity; for we “empt God, and do not trust him, if, in the time of distress, we have not the means he has graciously provided for our preservation; we must not expect needless miracles. But that which is especially observable here, to the praise of Abram, is, that he did not offer to return, upon this occasion, to the country from which he came, nor so much as towards it. The land of his nativity lay north-east from Canaan; and there, when he must, for the time, quit Canaan, he chooses to go to Egypt which lay south-west, the contrary way, that he might not so much as seem to look back; see Heb. 11. 15, 16. Further observe, when he went down into Egypt, it was to sojourn there, not to dwell there. Note, 1. Though Providence, for a time, may cast us into bad places, yet we ought to tarry there no longer than needs must; we may sojourn there, where we may not settle. 2. A good man, while he is on this side heaven, wherever he is, is but a sojourner.

III. A great fault which Abram was guilty of, in denying his wife, and pretending that she was his sister. The scripture is impartial in relating the misdeeds of the most celebrated saints, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition; that he who thinks he stands, may take heed lest he fall. 1. His fault was, assembling his relations to Sarai, equivocating concerning it, and teaching his wife, and, probably, all his attendants, to do so too. Whether he did know he was his husband, true, (ch. 20. 12.) but with a purpose to deceive; he so concealed a further truth, as, in effect, to deny it, and to expose thereby both his wife and the Egyptians to sin. 2. That which was at the bottom of it, was a jealous timorous fancy he had, that some of the Egyptians would be so charmed with the beauty of Sarai, (Egypt producing few such beauties,) that if they should find some way or other to take him off, that they might marry her. He presumes they would rather be guilty of murder than adultery; such a heinous crime was it then accounted, and such a sacred regard was paid to the marriage-bond: hence he infers, without any good reason, They will kill me. Note, The fear of man brings a snare, and many are driven to sin by the dread of death, Luke 12. 4, 5. 3. With what a grace and tranquility might he have been contented, and yet he thus fell, through unbelief and distrust of the Divine Providence, even after God had appeared to him twice. Alas, what will become of the willows, when the cedars are thus shaken?

14. And it came to pass that when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman, that she was very fair. 15. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. 16. And he entertained Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he-asses, and maid-servants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. 17. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai Abram’s wife. 18. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? 19. Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take
her, and go thy way. 20. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

Here is

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

II. The deliverance of Sarai from this danger. For if God did not deliver us, many a time, by preventing, or changing the issue of, an evil, that we were very near to, we bring ourselves into by our own sin and folly, and which therefore we could not expect any deliverance from by promise, we should soon be ruined, nay, we had been ruined long before this. He deals not with us according to our deserts.

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

2. Pharaoh reproved Abram, and then dismissed him with respect. (1.) The reproof was calm, but very just; What is this that thou hast done? What an improper thing! How unbecoming a wise and good man! Note, If those that profess religion, do that which is unfair and disingenuous, especially if they say that it is for God's sake, they must expect to hear of it, and have reason to thank those that will tell them of it. We find a prophet of the Lord justly reproved and upbraided by a heathen shipmaster, Jon. 1. 6. Pharaoh reasons with him, Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Intimating, that if he had known that, he would not have taken her into his house. Note, It is a fault too common among good people, to entertain suspicions of others beyond what there is cause for. We have often found more of virtue, honour, and conscience, in some people, than we thought they possessed; and it ought to be a pleasure to us to be thus disappointed, as Abram was here, who found Pharaoh to be a better man than he expected. Charity teaches us to hope the best. (2.) The dismissal was kind, and very generous. He returned him his wife without offering any injury to her honour, v. 19, Behold thy wife, take her. Note, Those that would prevent sin, must remove the temptation, or get out of the way of it. He also sent him away in peace, and was so far lenient as to design to kill him, as he apprehended, that he took particular care of him. Note, We often perplex and insnare ourselves with fears which soon appear to have been altogether groundless. We often fear, where no fear is. We fear the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy, when really there is no danger, Isa. 31. 13. It had been more for Abram's credit and comfort, to have told him at first; for, after all, honesty is the best policy. Nay, it is said, v. 20, Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; that is, [1.] He charged them not to injure him in any thing. Note, It is not enough for those in authority, that they do not hurt themselves, but they must restrain their servants, and those about them, from doing hurt. Or, [2.] He appointed them, when Abram was disposed to return home, after the famine, to conduct him safe out of the country, rob it, so as were abashed by the plagues, v. 17, and inferred from them, that Abram was a particular favourite of Heaven, and therefore, through fear of their return, took special care he should receive no injury in his country.

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

CHAP. XIII.

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

1. AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. 2. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. 3. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the be-
ginnin, between Beth-el and Hai: 4. Unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

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

II. His wealth, v. 2. He was very rich. He was very heavy, so the Hebrew word signifies. For riches are a burden, and they that will be rich, do but load themselves with thick clay, Hab. 2. 6. There is no man in whom sin begins, 35, 1. God will not keep them in keeping them, temptation in using them, guilt in abusing them, sorrow in losing them, and a burden of account, at last, to be given up concerning them. Great possessions do make men heavy and unquietly. Abram was not only rich in faith and good works, and in the promises, but he was rich in cattle, and in silver and gold. Note, 1. God in his providence, sometimes makes good men men of the world, and enables them to abound as well as now to suffer want. 2. The riches of good men are the fruits of God's blessing. God had said to Abram, I will bless thee; and that blessing made him rich without sorrow. Prov. 10. 22. 3. True piety will very well consist with great prosperity. Though it is hard for a rich man to get to heaven, yet it is not impossible. Mark 10. 24. Abram was very rich, and yet very religious. Nay, as piety is a friend to outward prosperity, 1 Tim. 6. 8, so outward prosperity, if well managed, is an ornament to piety, and an opportunity of doing so much the more good.

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

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

5. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. 6. And he land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. 7. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. 8. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife between the me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

We have here an unhappy falling-out between Abram and Lot, who had hitherto been inseparable companions; (see v. 1. and ch. 12. 4.) but now parted. I. The occasion of their quarrel was their riches. We read, v. 2, how rich Abram was; now here we are told, v. 5, that Lot which went with Abram, was rich too; God blessed him with riches, because he went with Abram. Note, 1. It is good being in good company, and going with those with whom God is, Zech. 8. 23. 2. Those that are partners with God's people in their obedience and sufferings, will be protected with them in their prosperity and comforts, Isa. 66. 10. Now, they both being very rich, the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell comfortably and peaceably together. So that their riches may be considered, (1.) As setting them at a distance one from another; because the place was too strait for them, and they had not room for their stock, it was necessary they should live strait. Note, Every comfort in this world has its cross attended it. Business is a comfort; but it has this inconvenience in it, that it allows us not the society of those we love, so often, nor so long, as we could wish. (2.) As setting them at variance one with another. Note, Riches are often an occasion of strife and contention among relations and neighbours. This is one of these foolish and hurtful lusts, which they that will be rich, fall into. 1 Tim. 6. 11. Riches are only an additional cause of strife, and are the things most commonly striven about; but they also stir up a spirit of contention, by making people proud and covetous. Money and tumult—Mine and Thine, are the great make-belts of the world. Poverty and travail, wants and wanderings, could not separate between Abram and Lot; but riches did it. Friends are soon lest; but God is a Friend from whose love neither the height of prosperity, nor the depth of adversity, shall separate us.

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

III. The aggravation of the quarrel was, that the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land, this made the quarrel. 1. Very dangerous, if Abram and Lot cannot agree to feed their flocks together,
it is well if the common enemy do not come upon them, and plunder them both. Note, The division of families and churches often proves the ruin of them. 2. Very scandalous. No doubt, the eyes of all the neighbours were upon them, especially because of the singularity of their religion, and the extraordinary sanctity they professed; and notice would soon be taken of this quarrel, and improvement made of it, to their reproach, by the Canaanites and Perizzites. Note, The quarrels of professors are the reproach of profession, and give occasion to, and render any thing, to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

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

1. His petition for peace was very affectionate. Let there be no strife, I pray thee. Abram here shows himself to be a man, (1.) Of a cool spirit, that had the command of his passion, and knew how to turn away wrath with a soft answer. Those that would keep the peace, must never render railing for railing. (2) Of a condescending spirit; he was willing to be reconciled, but not to be at peace, and made the first overture of reconciliation. Conquerors reckon it their glory to give peace by power; and it is no less so to give peace by the meekness of wisdom. Note, The people of God should always approve themselves a peaceable people; whatever others are for, they must be for peace.

2. His plea for peace was very cogent. (1.) Let there be no strife between me and thee. Let the Canaanites and Perizzites contend about trifles; but let not me and thee fall out, who know better things, and look for a better country. Note, Professors of religion should, oft all others, be careful to avoid contention. Ye shall not be so, Luke 22. 26. We have no such custom, 1 Cor. 11. 16. "Let there be no strife between me and thee, who have lived together and loved one another, so long."

Note. The remembrance of old friendships should quickly put an end to new quarrels which at any time happen. (2.) Let it be remembered that we are brethren, Heb. We are men brethren; a double argument. [1.] We are men; and, as men, we are mortal creatures, we may die to-morrow, and are concerned to be found in peace; we are rational creatures, and should be ruled by reason. We are men, and not brutes, men, and not children; we are sociable creatures, let us be so to the uttermost.

[2.] We are brethren. Men of the same nature, of the same kindred and family, of the same religion; companions in obedience, companions in patience. Note, The consideration of our relation to each other, as brethren, should always prevail to moderate our passions, and either to prevent, or put an end to, our contentions. Brethren should love as brethren.

3. His proposal for peace was very fair. Many who profess to be for peace, yet will do nothing towards it; but Abram hereby approved himself a real friend to peace, that he proposed an unexceptionable expedition for the preserving of it, ver. 9.

Is not the whole land before thee? As if he had said, "I know it is, and have high hopes of it, while there is room enough for us both." (1) He concludes that they must part, and is very desirous that they should part friends. Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. What could be expressed more affectionately? He does not expel him, and force him away, but advises that he should separate himself. Nor does he charge him to depart, but humbly desires him to withdraw. Note, These that have power to command, yet, sometimes, for love's sake, and peace's sake, should rather beseech, as Paul Philemon, v. 8. When the great God condescends to beseech us, we may well afford to beseech one another, to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5. 20. (2) He offers him a sufficient share if the land they were in. Though God had promised Abram to give this land to his seed, ch. 13. 7, and it does not appear that every such promise was made to Lot, which Abram might have insisted on, to the total exclusion of Lot; yet God allowed him to come in and partake of the blessing. Abram extends an equal share to one that had not an equal right, and will not make God's promise to patronise his quarrel, nor under the protection of that, put any hardship upon his kinsman. (3) He gives him his choice, and offers to take up with his leavings; If thou wilt take the left hand, I will go to the right. There was all the reason in the world, that Abram should choose first; yet he recedes from his right. Note, It is a noble conquest, to be willing to yield for peace sake; it is the conquest of ourselves, and our own pride and passion, Matth. 5. 39. 40. It is not only the punctilios of honour, but even interest itself, that, in many cases, must be sacrificed to peace.

10. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and behold all the land of Jordan, as thou art enter¬ing unto Zoar. 11. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. 12. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. 13. But the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.

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

I. How much he had an eye to the goodness of the land. He beheld all the plain of Jordan, the first country in which Sodom stood, that it was admirably well watered every where (and perhaps the reason he chose it, at least in part, was particularly loud of the convenience,) and so Lot chose him all that plain, v. 10, 11. That valley which was like the garden of Eden itself, now yielded him a most pleasant prospect; it was, in his eye, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; and therefore he doubted not that it would yield him a comfortable settlement, and that in such a fruitful land he should at least thrive, and grow very rich; and this was all he looked at. But what came of it? Why, the next news we hear of him, is, that he is in the briars among them, he and his carried captive; while he lived among them, he vexed his righteous soul with their conversation, and never had a good day with them, till, at last, God fired the
town over his head, and forced him to the mountain for safety, who chose the plain for wealth and pleasure. Notice, 1. The provocation of God’s chaste, and severe love. 2. Those who in choosing relations, callings, dwellings, or settlements, are guided by the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, or the pride of life, and consult not the interests of their souls and their religion, cannot expect God’s presence with them, nor his blessing upon them, but are commonly disappointed even in that which they principally aimed at, and miss of all that they promised themselves in the choice. In all our choices, this principle should over-rule us, That this is the best for us, which is best for our souls.

11. How little he considered the badness of the inhabitants. But the men of Sodom were wicked, v. 13. Note, 1. Though all are sinners, yet some are greater sinners than others; the men of Sodom were sinners of the first magnitude, sinners before the Lord, that is, impudent daring sinners; they were so, to a proverb; hence we read of those that declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not, Isa. 3. 9. 2. That some sinners are the worse for living in a good land. So the Sodomites were; for this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, wealth, lust of the flesh, and abundance of idleness; and all these were supported by the great plenty their country afforded. Ezek. 16. 49. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them. 3. That God’s measures are not always pleasing to sinners. Fifthy Sodomites dwell in a city, a fruitful plain, while faithful Abram and his pious family dwell in tents upon the barren mountains. 4. When wickedness is come to the height, ruin is not far off. Abounding sins are sure presages of approaching judgments. Now Lot’s coming to dwell among the Sodomites may be considered, 1. As a great mercy to them, and a likely means of bringing them to repentance; for now they had a prospect among them, and a preacher of righteousness; if they had hearkened to him, they might have been reformed, and the ruin prevented. Note, God sends preachers, before he sends destroyers; for he is not willing that any should perish. (2.) As a great affluence to Lot, who was not only the lover of his country, but also of his race: he was much solicited and pressed to go with him. God does not always give us what we desire, for he knows better. Note, It has often been the vexation of good men, to live among wicked neighbours, to sojourn in Meshech, (Ps. 120. 5.) and it cannot but be the more grievous, if, as Lot here, they have brought it upon themselves by an unadvised choice.

14. And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: Is. 12. 1. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. 16. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. 17. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. 18. Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God made to Abram, to confirm the promise he had given his. Observe, 1. When it was that God renewed and ratified the promise, after that Lot was separated from him. Is. 12. 1. After of Abram for ever; for he was best prepared for the visits of divine grace when his spirits are calm and sedate, and not ruffled with any passion. 2. After Abram’s humble self-denying confessions to Lot for the preserving of peace, was then that God came to him with this token of his favour. Note, God will abundantly make up its spiritual peace, what we lose for the preserving of neighbourly peace. When Abram had willingly offered Lot one half of his right, God came, and confirmed the whole to him. 3. After he had lost the comfortable society of his kinsman, by whose departure his hands were weakened, and his heart saddened; then God came to him with these good words, and comfortable words. Note, Commissions with God may, at any time, serve to make up the want of conversation with our friends; when our relations are separated from us, yet God is not. 4. After Lot had chosen that pleasant, fruitful vale, and was gone to take possession of it; lest Abram should be tempted to envy him, and to repent that he had given him the choice, God comes to him, and assures him that what he had should remain to him and his heirs for ever; so that though Lot perhaps had the better land, yet Abram had the better title; Lot had the paradise, such as it was, but Abram had the promise; and the event soon made it appear that the place of Lot was small and mean, and really the better part. See Job 22. 20. God owned Abram after his strife with Lot, as the churches did Paul after his strife with Barnabas, Acts 15. 39, 40. 40. The promises themselves which God now comforted and enriched Abram with. Two things he assures him of; a good land, and a numerous issue to enrich; (for the land was the centre of the promise.) 1. He is the grant of a good land, a land famous above all lands, for it was to be the holy land, and Immannel’s land; this is the land here spoken of. (1.) God here shows Abram the land, as he had promised, (ch. 12. 1.) and afterward he showed it to Moses from the top of Pisgah. Lot had lifted up his eyes, and beheld the plain of Jordan, (v. 10.) and he was gone to enjoy what he saw; Come, says the Lord, take my servant, and look, and see thine own. Note, That which God has to show us, is infinitely better and more desirable than any thing that the world has to offer to our view. The prospects of an eye of faith are much more rich and beautiful than those of an eye of sense. Those for whom the heavenly Canaan is designed in the other world, have sometimes, by faith, a comfortable prospect of it in their present state, for we look at the things that are not seen, as real, though distant. (2.) He secures this land to him and his seed for ever; (v. 15.) To thee will I give it; and again (v. 17.) I will give it unto thee; every repetition of the promise is a ratification of it. To thee and thy seed, not to Lot and his seed; they were not to have their inheritance in this land, and therefore Providence so ordered it, that he should be separated from Abram first, and then their estate should be confirmed to him and his seed; thus God often brings good out of evil, and makes men’s sins and follies subservient to his own wise and holy counsels. To thee and thy seed; to thee, sojourner as a stranger; to thy seed, to dwell and rule in as proprietors. To thee, that is, to thy seed. The granting it to him and his for ever, intimates that it was typical of the heavenly Canaan, which is given to faithful Abraham. To thee; (ch. 14. 14.) He gives him livery and seisin of it, though it was a reversion, v. 17. "Arise, walk through the land. Enter and take possession, survey the parcels, and it will appear better than upon a distance;"
prospect." Note, God is willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of covenant, and the inestimable worth of covenant-blessings. Go, walk about Zion, Ps. 48. 12.

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

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

CHAP. XIV.

We have four things in the story of this chapter. 1. A war with the king of Sodom and his allies, v. 1. 11. 2. The captivity of Lot in that war, v. 12. 3. Abram's rescue of Lot from that captivity, with the victory he obtained over the conquerors, v. 13. 16. 4. Abram's return from that expedition, (v. 17.) with an account of what passed, 1. Between him and the king of Salem, v. 18. 2. Between him and the king of Sodom, v. 21. 24. So that here we have that promise to Abram, in part, fulfilled, that God would make his name great.

1. And it came to pass in the days of Abram king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations; 2. That these made war with Berah king of Sodom, and with Birsha king of Goimom, Shimha king of Admah, and Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar.

All these were joined together in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt-sea. 4. Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled. 5. And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth-Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh-Kiriathaim, 6. And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-paran, which is by the wilderness. 7. And they returned, and came to En-mishpat, which is Kadesh, and smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, that dwelt in Hazezon-tamar. 8. And there went out the king of Sodom, and the king of Goimorrah, and the king of Admah, and the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela; (the same is Zoar;) and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim: 9. With Chedorlaomer the king of Elam, and with Tidal king of nations, and Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar; four kings with five, 10. And the vale of Siddim was full of slime-pits; and the kings of Sodom and Goimorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain. 11. And they took all the goods of Sodom and Goimorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. 12. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

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

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

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

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

1. The fructification of the king of Sodom and his allies were routed; and, it should seem, many of them perished in the slime-pits, who had escaped the sword, v. 10. In all places, we are surrounded
with deaths of various kinds, especially in the field of battle. The cities were plundered, v. 11. All the goods of Sodom, and particularly their stores and provisions of victuals, were carried off by the conquerors. Note, When men abuse the gifts of a bountiful providence to gluttony and excess, it is just with God, and his usual way, by some judgment or other, to strip them of that which they have so abused, Hps. 2. 6, 9.

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

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

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

Here is,

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

11. The preparations he made for this expedition. The cause was plainly good, his call to engage in it was clear; and therefore, with all speed, he armed his trained servants, born in his house, to the number of three hundred and eighteen. A great family, but a small army, about as many as Gideon's that routed the Midianites, Judg. 7. 7. He drew out his trained servants, or his catechised servants, not only instructed in the art of war, which was then far short of the perfection which later and worse ages have improved it to, but instructed in the principles of religion, and taught them to be capable of keeping the way of the Lord. This shows that Abram was, 1. A great man, who had so many servants depending upon him, and employed by him; which was not only his strength and honour, but gave him a great opportunity of doing good, which is all that is truly valuable and desirable in great places and great estates. 2. A good man, who not only served God himself, but instructed all about him in the service of God. Note, Those that have great families, have not only many bodies, but many souls beside their own, to take care of and provide for. Those that would be found the followers of Abram, must see that their servants be catechised servants. 3. A wise man: for though he was a man of peace, yet he disciplined his servants for war, not knowing what occasion he might have, some time or other, so to employ them. Note, Though our worldly quiet is no argument of religious peace, yet it does not forbid us to provide for war.

III. His allies and confederates in this expedition. He prevailed with his neighbours, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, (with whom he kept up a fair correspondence,) to go along with him. It was his prudence thus to strengthen his own troops with their auxiliary forces; and, probably, they saw themselves concerned, in interest, to act, as they could, against this formidable power. Jesus, their own turn should be next. Note, 1. It is our wisdom and duty to behave ourselves so respectfully and obligingly towards all men, as that, whenever there is occasion, they may be willing and ready to do us a kindness. 2. Those who depend on God's help, yet, in times of distress, ought to make use of men's help, as Providence offers it; else they tempt God. 3. His courage and resolution were admirable. 1. This was a great deal of bravery in the enterprise itself, considering the disadvantages he lay under. What could one family of husbandmen and shepherds do against the armies of four princes, who now came fresh from blood and victory? It was not a vanquished, but a victorious army, that he was to pursue; nor was he constrained by necessity to this daring attempt, but move on his own generosity; so that, all things considered, it was, for ought I know, as great an instance of true courage as ever Alexander or Caesar was celebrated for. Note, Religion tends to make men, not coward.
but truly valiant. The righteous is bold as a lion. The true Christian is the true hero. 2. There was a great deal of policy in the management of it. Abram was no stranger to the strategies of war; he divided himself, as Genesis did his little army. Judg. 7, 16, that he might come upon them by the way of the desert, not by the way of the valleys, and so make it seem a great many: he made his attack by night, that he might surprise them. Note, Honest policy is a good friend both to our safety, and to our usefulness. The serpent's head (provided it be nothing akin to the old serpent) may well become a good Christian's body, especially if it have a dove's eye in it, Matt. 10, 16.

This is a very considerable, v. 15, 16. He defeated his enemies, and rescued his friends; and we do not find that he sustained any loss. Note, Those that venture in a good cause, with a good heart, are under the special protection of a good God, and have reason to hope for a good issue. Again, It is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few, 1 Sam. 14, 6. Observe, 1. He rescued his kinsmen; twice here he is called his brethren Lot; the remembrance of the relation that was between them, both by nature and grace, made him forget the little quarrel that had been between them, in which Lot had no means acted well towards Abram. Justly might Abram have upbraided Lot with his folly in quarrelling with him and removing from him, and have told him that he was well enough served, he might have known when he was well off; but, in the charitable breast of pious Abram, it is all forgiven and forgotten; and he takes this opportunity to give a real proof of the sincerity of his reconciliation. Note, (1.) We ought to be ready, whenever it is in the power of our hands, to succour and relieve those that are in distress, especially our relations and friends. A brother is born for adversity, Prov. 17, 17. A friend in need is a friend indeed. (2.) Though others have been wanting in their duty to us, yet we must not therefore deny our duty to them. Some have said that they can more easily forgive their enemies than their friends; but we shall see ourselves obliged to forgive both, if we consider, not only that our God, when we were enemies, reconciled us, but also that he passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, Mic. 7, 18.

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

17. And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. 18. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, Possessor of heaven and earth: 20. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.
speaks his absolute perfections in himself, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures; he is King of Kings. Note, It will greatly add to the beauty and our reverence in prayer, to eye God as the most high God, and to call him so. (2.) Possessor of heaven and earth, that is, rightful Owner, and sovereign Lord, of all the creatures; because he made them. This bespeaks him a great God, and greatly to be praised, Ps. 24. 1, and them a happy people who have an interest in his favour and love. 2. He blessed God for Abram, v. 20, and blessed be the most high God. Note, (1.) In all our prayers, we must praise God, and join Halleluyahs with all our Hesynomials. These are the spiritual sacrifices we must offer up daily, and upon particular occasions. (2.) God, as the most high God, must have the glory of all our victories, Exod. 17. 15. 1 Sam. 7. 19, 12. Judg. 5. 1, 2. 2 Chron. 20. 21. In them he shows himself higher than our enemies, Exod. 18. 11, and higher than we; for without him we could do nothing. (3.) We ought to give thanks for others' mercies as for our own; triumphing with them that triumph. (4.) Jesus Christ, our great High-Priest, is the Mediator both of our prayers and praises, and not only offers up our's, but his own for us. See Luke 10. 21.

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

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

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

Here is, 1. The king of Sodom's grateful offer to Abram, v. 21. Give me the soul, and take thou the substance: so the Hebrew reads it. Here he fairly hedges the persons, but as freely bestows the goods on Abram. Note, 1. Where a right is dubious and divided, it is wisdom to compound the matter by mutual concessions rather than to contend. The king of Sodom had an original claim to the spoils that were his own, and would it bear a debate whether Abram acquired right by rescue would supersede his title, and extinguish it; but, to prevent all quarrels, the king of Sodom makes this fair proposal. 2. Gratitude teaches us to recompense to the utmost of our power those that have undergone fatigues, run hazards, and been at expense, for our service and benefit. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? 1 Cor. 9. 7. Well does their pay deeper than any labourers, and are well worthy of it, because they expose their lives.

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

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

2. He backs his refusal with a good reason, Less thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich; which would reflect reproach. Upon the promise and covenant of God, as if they would not have enriched Abram without the spoils of Sodom. And, (2.) Upon the piety and charity of Abram, as if all he had in his eyes, were life and breath, his whole expedition, was to enrich himself. Note, [1.] We must be very careful that we give not occasion to others to say things which they ought not. [2.] The people of God must, for their credit's sake, take
heed of doing any thing that looks mean or merce-


y, or that savours of covetousness and self-seek-


ing. Probably, Abram knew the king of Sodom to


be a proud and scornful man, and one that would,


though most unreasonably, be apt to turn such a


thing as this to his reproach afterward; when we


to do with such men, we have need to act with


particular caution.


3. He limits his refusal with a double proviso, v. 24.


And taking vows, we ought carefully to insert


the necessary exceptions, that we may not after-


ward say before the angel, It was an error, Eccl.


5. 6. Abram here excepts, (1.) The food of his


soldiers; they were worthy of their meat while


trod out the corn. This would give no colour to the


king of Sodom to say that he had enriched Abram.


(2.) The shares of his allies and confederates. Let


them take their portion. Note, Those who are strict


in restraining their own liberty, yet ought not to im-


pose those restraints upon the liberties of others,


nor to judge of them accordingly; we must not make


ourselves the standard to measure others by. A


good man will deny himself that liberty which he


will not deny another, contrary to the practice of


the Pharisees, Matt. 23. 4. There was not the same


reason why Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, should quit


their portion to Abram, with the king of Sodom. They


did not make the profession that he made, nor were


they, as he was, under the obligation of a vow; they


had not the hopes that Abram had of a portion in


the other world, and therefore, by all means, let


them take their portion of this.


CHAP. XV.


n this chapter, we have a solemn treaty between God and


Abram, concerning a covenant that was to be established


between them. In the former chapter, we had Abram in


the field with kings, here in the mount with God; and


though there he looked great, yet, methinks, here he looks


much greater; that honour have the great men of the


world, but this honour here all the saints. The covenant


to be settled between God and Abram, was a covenant of


promises; accordingly, here is, I. A general assurance


of God's kindness and good-will to Abram, v. 1. II.


A particular declaration of the purposes of his love con-


cerning him; one thing: That he would give him


a numerous issue, v. 2. 6. That he would give him Ca-


naan for an inheritance, v. 7...21. Either an estate


without an heir, or an heir without an estate, would


but have been a blot on God's kindness to Abram. But God


ensures both to him; and that which made these two, the pro-


mised seed, and the promised land, comforts indeed to


this great believer, was, that they were both typical of


those things, the church, Christ, and heaven; and


so, we have reason to think, Abram eyed them.


I. AFTER these things, the word of the


Lord came unto Abram in a vision,


saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield


and thy exceeding great reward.


Observe here,


1. The time when God had this treaty with


Abram: after these things. 1. After that famous


act of generous charity which Abram had done, in


rescuing his friends and neighbours out of distress,


and that, not for price nor reward; after that, God


made him this gracious visit. Note, Those that


show favour to men, shall find favour with God. 2.


After that victory which he had obtained over four


kings: lest Abram should be too much elevated and


puffed up with the victory which came to him, to tell him


he had better things in store for him. Note, A believ-


ing converse with spiritual blessings is an excellent


means to keep us from being too much taken up


with temporal enjoyments. The gifts of common


providence are not comparable to those of covenant-


love.


II. The manner in which God conversed with


Abram; The word of the Lord came unto Abram,


that is, God manifested himself and his will to


Abram in a vision; which supposes Abram awake,


and some visible appearance of the Shechinah, or


some sensible token of the presence of the divine


glory. Note, The methods of divine revelation are


adapted to our state in a world of sense.


III. The gracious assurance God gave him of his


favour to him; He called him by name, Abram,


which was a great honour to him, and gave him his


name great, and was also a great encouragement


and assistance to his faith. Note, God's good word


does us good, when it is spoken by his Spirit to


us in particular, and brought to our hearts. The


words are, Ho, everyone, Isa. 53. 1; The Spirit says,


Ho, such a one. 2. He continued him against


both disquieted and confounded; Fear not, Abram.


Abram might fear lest the four kings he had fought,


should rally again, and fall upon him to his ruin;


No, says God, Fear not. Fear not their re-


venges, nor thy neighbours' envy; I will take care


of thee. Note, (1.) Where there is great faith,


yet there may be many fears, 2 Cor. 7. 3. (2.) God


takes cognizance of his people's fears though ever


so secret, and knows their souls, Ps. 31. 7. (3.) It


is a provision made of God that his people should not


give way to prevailing fears, whatever expedient


let the sinners in Zion be afraid, but fear not, Abram.


3. He assured him of safety and happiness; that he


should ever for ever be, (1.) As safe as God himself


could keep him; I am thy Shield, or, somewhat more


emphatically, I am a Shield to thee, present with thee,


actually caring for thee. See 1 Chron. 17. 24. Not


the God of Israel, but a God to Israel. Note, The


consolation of this, that God himself is,


and will be, a Shield to his people to secure them


from all destructive evils, and a Shield ready to


them, and a Shield round about them, should be


sufficient to silence all their perplexing tormenting


fears. (2.) As happy as God himself could make


him: I will be thy exceeding great Reward; not only


thy Rewarder, but thy Reward. Abram had gen-


erously refused the rewards which the king of So-


dom offered him, and here God comes, and tells


him he shall be no lesr by it. Note, (1.) The re-


wards of believing obedience and self-denial, are


exceeding great, 1 Cor. 2. 9. (2.) God himself is


the chosen and promised felicity of holy souls; cho-


sen in this world, promised in a better. He is the


portion of their inheritance, and their cup.


2. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt


thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the


steward of my house is this Eliezer of Da-


mascus? 3. And Abram said, Behold, to


me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one


born in my house is mine heir. 4. And,


behold, the word of the Lord came unto


him, saying, This shall not be thine heir: but


that he shall come forth out of thine own


bowels, shall be thine heir. 5. And he


brought him forth abroad, and said, Look


now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if


thou be able to number them. And he said


unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6. And he


believed in the Lord; and he counted it to


him for righteousness.


We have here the assurance given to Abram of a


numerous offspring which should descend from


him. In which, observe,


1. Abram's repeated complaint, v. 2, 3. This


was that which gave occasion to this promise. The


great affliction that sat heavy upon Abram, was the


Vol. I.—N
want of a child; and the complaint of this he here 
hours out before the Lord, and shews before him his 
trouble, Ps. 142. 2. Note, Though we must never 
complain of God, yet we have leave to complain 
to him, and to be large and particular in the state 
of our grievances; and it is some ease to a something 
spirit, to open its case to a faithful and compassionate 
friend; such a friend God is, whose ear is al-
ways open. Now his complaint is four-fold. 1. 
That he had no child, v. 3. Behold, to me thou 
hast given no seed; not only no son, but no seed: if 
he had had a daughter, from her the promised Mes-
siah might have come, who was to be the seed of 
the woman; but he had neither son nor daughter. 
He seems to lay an emphasis on that, to me. His 
nighbours were all full of children, his servants had 
children born in his house; "But to me," he com-
plains, "thou hast given me none;" and yet God 
had told him he should be a favourite above all. 
Note, (1.) Those that are written childless, must 
see God writing them so. (2.) God often withholds 
those temporal comforts from his own children, 
which he gives plentifully to others that are stran-
gers to him. 2. That he was never likely to have any; intima-
ted in that, I go, or "I am going, childless, going 
to years, going down the hill apace; nay, I am 
going out of the world, going the way of all the 
earth. I die childless." So the LXX. "I leave 
the world, and leave no child behind me." 3. 
That his servants were, for the present, and 
were likely to be to him, instead of sons. While 
he lived, the steward of his house was Eliezer of 
Damascus; to him he committed the care of his 
family and estate, who might be faithful, but only 
as a servant, not as a son. When he died, one born 
in his house would be his heir, and would bear rule 
over all that for which he had laboured. Eccl. 2. 
16, 19, 21. God had already told him that he 
would have a son, and was very earnest at it. 
(2. 2.) That he should live in his house as the 
seed of the earth, ch. 13. 16, but he had left him in doubt whether it should be his seed 
begotten, or his seed adopted, by a son of his loins, 
or only a son of his house. "Now, Lord," says 
Abram, "if it be only an adopted son, it must be 
one of my servants, which will reflect disgrace upon 
the promised Seed, that is to descend from him." 
Note, While promised mercies are delayed, our 
unbelief and impatience are apt to conclude them 
dead. 4. That the want of a son was so great a trouble to 
him, that it took away the comfort of all his en-
joyments. "Lord what wilt thou give me? All is 
nothing to me, if I have not a son." Now (1.) If 
we suppose that Abram looked no further than a 
temporal comfort, this complaint was culpable. 
God had, by his providence, given him some good 
things; and more by his personal 
acceptance, that God makes no account of them, because he has not a 
son. It did very ill become the father of the faith-
ful to say, What wilt thou give me, seeing I go 
childless? immediately after God had said, I am thy 
shield, and thy exceeding great reward. Note, 
Those that do not rightly value the advantages of their 
covenant-relations to God and interest in him, who 
do not think it sufficient to balance, and a certainty of an 
earthly blessing for ever. But, (2.) If we 
suppose that Abram, herein, had an eye to the Promis-
ed Seed, the impurity of his desire was very 
commendable; all was nothing to him if he had not 
the earnest of that great blessing, and an assurance 
of his relation to the Messiah, which God had already 
encouraged him to maintain in the expectation. He has 
wealth, and victory, and honour; but, while he is 
kept in the dark about the main matter, it is all 
nothing to him. Note, Till we have some com-
fortable evidence of our interest in Christ and the 
new covenant, we should not rest satisfied with any 
thing else. "This, and the other, I have; but 
what will this avail me, if I go Christless?" Yet 
thus far the complaint was culpable, that there was 
something like a difference of the present at the 
withdrawing of it, and a weariness of waiting God's time. Note, True 
believers sometimes find it hard to reconcile God's 
premises and his providences, when they seem to 
disagree.

II. God's gracious answer to this complaint. To 
the first part of the complaint, (v. 2.) God gave no 
immediate answer, because there was something 
misfortunes in it; but when he was about to declare 
what was in his heart, he运维 wครอบי, (v. 3.) God commu-
nicated it to him. Note, If we continue instant 
in prayer, and yet pray with a humble submission to 
the divine will, we shall not seek in vain. 1. 
God gave him an express promise of a son, v. 4. 
This is that, born in thy house, shall not be thine heir, 
as thou fearest, but one that shall come forth out 
of thy own bowels shall be thine heir. Note, (1.) 
God makes heirs; he says, "This shall not, and 
this shall," whatever men devise and design, in setting 
their estates, God's counsel shall stand. (2.) 
God is often better to us than our own fears, and 
gives the mercies we had long despaired of. 2. To 
affect him the more with surprise, he took him out, 
and showed him the stars, (this vision being early 
in the morning before day,) and then tells him, So 
shall thy seed be, v. 5. (1.) So numerous; the 
stars show innumerable; mere he should have no child at all, but God tells him 
that the descendants from his loins should be so 
many as not to be numbered. (2.) So illustrious, 
resembling the stars in splendour: for to them per-
tained the glory, Rom. 9. 4. Abram's seed, ac-
cording to his flesh, were like the dust of the earth, 
(ch. 13. 16.) but his spiritual seed are like the 
stars of heaven, not only numerous, but glorious, 
and every one different from the other. III. Abram's firm 
belief of the promise God now made him, and God's favourable acceptance of his faith, v. 6. 
1. He believed in the Lord, that is, he 
believed the truth of that promise which God had 
ow made him, resting upon the irresistible power, 
and the invariable faithfulness, of him that made it; 
Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? 
Note, This belief of the promises, must be like the 
faith of the New Testament, must mix faith with the promises. See 
how the apostle magnifies this faith of Abram, and 
makes it a standing example, Rom. 4. 19, 21, 
He was not weak in faith; he staggered not at the pro-
mise; he was strong in faith; he was fully persuad-
ed. The Lord work such a faith in every one of 
us! Some think that his believing in the Lord, 
respecting, not only the Lord promising, but the Lord 
promised, the Lord Jesus, the Mediator of the new 
covenant. He believed in him, that is, 
received and embraced the divine revolution concern-
ing him, and rejoiced to see his day, though at 
sore a distance, John 8. 56. 2. God counted it to 
him for righteousness; that is, upon the score of 
this, he was accepted of God, and, as the rest of the 
patriarchs, by faith he obtained the witness that he 
was righteous, Heb. 11. 4. This is urged in the 
New Testament, as the ground of all our 
righteousness, had lately struggled with unbelief, (v. 2.) 
and, coming off a conqueror, it was thus crowned, 
thus honoured. Note, A fiducial, practical, ac-
ceptance of, and dependence upon, God's promise of 
peace and grace, in and through Christ, is that,
which according to the tenor of the new covenant, gives us a right to all the blessings contained in that promise. All believers are justified as Abram was, and it was his faith that was counted to him for righteousness.

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

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

1. God declares his purpose concerning it, v. 7. Observe here, Abram made no complaint in this matter, as he had done for the want of a child. Note, That those who have an interest in the promise mentioned, will see no reason to doubt of a title to the promised land. If Christ is our's, heaven is our's. Observe, again, When he believed the former promise, (v. 6.) then God explained and ratified this to him. Note, To him that has (improves what he has) more shall be given. Three things God here reminds Abram of for his encouragement concerning the promise of the land. 1. What he is himself: I am the Lord Jehovah; and therefore, (1.) "I may give it thee, for I am sovereign Lord of all, and have a right to dispose of the whole earth." (2.) "I can give it thee, whatever opposition may be made, though by the sons of Amor." God never promises more than he is able to perform, as men often do. (3.) It will make good my promise to thee; Jehovah is not a man, that he should lie: he is a God, and will not lie. 2. What he had done for Abram: he had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, out of the fire of the Chaldeans, so some, that is, (1.) From their idolatries; for the Chaldeans worshipped the fire; or, (2.) From their persecutions. The Jewish writers have a tradition that Abram was cast into the fiery furnace for refusing to worship idols, and was miraculously delivered. It is rather a place of that name. Thence God brought him by an effectual call; brought him with a gracious violence; snatched him as a brand out of the burning. This was, [1.] A special mercy; "I brought thee, and left others, thousands, to perish there." God called him alone, Isa. 51. 2. [2.] A spiritual mercy; a mercy to his soul, a deliverance from sin, and its fatal consequences. If God save our souls, we shall want nothing that is good for us. [3.] A fresh mercy lately bestowed, and therefore should the mercy be affecting; as that in the preface to the commandments, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Egypt lately. [4.] A foundation mercy; the beginning of mercy, peculiar mercy to Abram, and therefore a pledge of further mercy, Isa. 65. 9. Observe how God speaks of it as that which he returned, I am the Lord that brought thee out. He glorifies it as an act both of power and grace; compare Isa. 29. 22, where he glories in it, long afterward. Thus saith the Lord who redeemed Abram, redeemed him from sin.

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

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

II. Abram desires a sign, v. 8. Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? This did not proceed from distrust of God's power, or promise, as that of Zacharias; but he desired this, 1. For the strengthening and confirming of his own faith; he believed, (v. 6.) but here he prays, Lord, help me against my unbelief. 2. Nor was he so well used by this grace of God, as that he should have more confidence in it. Note, Those that are satisfied themselves, shall desire that others also might be satisfied, of the truth of God's promises. John sent his disciples to Christ, not so much for his own satisfaction as for their's, Matt. 11. 2. 3. Canaan was a type of heaven. Note, It is a very desirable thing to know that we shall inherit the heavenly Canaan, that is, to be confirmed in our belief of the truth of that happiness, and to have the evidences of our title to it more and more cleared up to us.

III. God directs Abram to make preparations for a sacrifice, intending by that to give him a sign, and Abram makes preparation accordingly, v. 9. Abram expected some extraordinary sign from heaven; but God gives him a sign upon a sacrifice. Note, Those that wait on God in the observances of God's favour, and would have their faith confirmed, must attend instituted ordinances, and expect to meet with God in them. Observe, 1. God appointed that each of the beasts used for this service should be three years old, because then they were at their full growth and strength. God must be served with the best we have, for he is the best. 2. We do not read that God gave Abram particular directions how to make these beasts and fowls, knowing that he was so well versed in the law and customs of sacrifices, that he needed not any particular directions; or, perhaps, instructions were given him, which he carefully observed, though they are not recorded; at least, it was intimated to him, that they must be prepared for the solemnity of ratifying a covenant, and he well knew the manner of preparing them. 3. Abram took and appointed him, though as yet he knew not how these things were to be done; he gave him a sign to him. This was not the first instance of Abram's implicit obedience. He divided the beasts in the midst, according to the ceremony used in confirming covenants, (Jer. 34. 18, 19.) where it is said, They cut the calf in two, and fasted between the parts. 4. Abram having prepared according to God's appointment, he expected to wait for the sign God might give him by these, like the old Levite, as it were taking upon his watch-tower, 2 Chron. 20. 1. While God's appearing to own his sacrifice, was deferred, Abram continued waiting, and his expectations were raised by those delays; when the fowls came down upon
the carcasses to prey upon them, as common and neglected things, Abram drove them away, (v. 11.) believing that the vision would, at the end, speak, and not lie. Note, A very watchful eye must be kept upon our spiritual sacrifices, that nothing be suffered to prey upon them, and render them unfit for God's acceptance. When vain thoughts, like these fowls, come down upon our sacrifices, we must drive them away, and not suffer them to lodge within us, but attend on God without distraction.

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

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

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

II. The preparatives for this discovery: 1. A deep sleep fell upon Abram; not a common sleep through weariness or carelessness, but a divine ecstacy, like that which the Lord God caused to fall upon Adam, (ch. 2. 21.) that being hereby wholly taken off from the view of things sensible, he might be wholly taken up with the contemplation of things spiritual. The doors of the body were locked up, that the soul might be private and retired, and might act the more freely, and like itself. 2. With this sleep, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. Note, before we had solacing himself in the comforts of God's covenant, and in communion with him; and here a horror of great darkness falls upon him. Note, The children of light do not always walk in the light, but sometimes clouds and darkness are round about them. This great darkness, which brought horror with it, was designed, (1.) To strike an awe upon the spirit of Abram, and to possess him with a sense of his sufferings and carelessness in ordinances; or, (2.) To make him sensible of his sinfulness; for when God was pleased to admit him to, might not breed contempt. Note, Holy fear prepares the soul for holy joy; the spirit of bondage makes way for the spirit of adoption. God sounds first, and then heals; humbles first, and then lifts up, Isa. 6. 5. 6. (2.) To be a specimen of the method of God's dealings with his seed; they must first be in the horror and darkness of Egyptian slavery, and then enter with joy into the good land; and therefore he must have the foretaste of their sufferings, before he had the foresight of their happiness. (3.) To be an indication of the nature of that covenant of peculiarity which God was now about to make with Abram, i.e. that the greatest dispensation, which was founded upon that covenant, was a dispensation, [1.] Of darkness and obscurity, 2 Cor. 3. 13. [2.] Of dread and horror, Heb. 12. 18. &c.

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

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

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

3. The deliverance of Abram's seed out of Egypt; that great event is here foretold, afterward, shall they come out with great substance. It is here promised, (1.) That they shall be enlarged; afterward, they shall come out, that is, either, after they have been afflicted 400 years, when the days of their servitude are fulfilled, then they may expect deliver-
ANCE; or, after the Egyptians are judged and plagued. Note. The destruction of oppressors is the redemption of the oppressed; they will not let God's people go, till they are forced to it. (2.) That they should be enriched; they shall come out with great substance this was fulfilled, Exod. 12. 33, 36. God took care they should have, not only a good land to go to, but a good stock to bring with them. 4. Their happy settlement in Canaan; ver. 16. They shall not only come out of Egypt, but they shall come hither again, hither to the land of Canaan, wherein thou now art. The discontinuance of their possession shall be no defeasance of their right; we must not reckon those comforts lost for ever, that are intermitted for a time. The reason why they must not have the land of promise in possession till the fourth generation, is, because the guilt of the Amorites was not yet full. Israel cannot be possessed of Canaan, till the Amorites be dispossessed; and they are not yet ripe for ruin. The righteous God has determined that they shall not be cut off, till they have persisted in sin so long, and arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that there may appear some equitable proportion between their sin and their ruin; and therefore till it come to that they would be destroyed, nor outwardly possess. Note, (1.) The measure of sin fills gradually; those that continue iniminent in wicked ways, are treasuring up unto themselves wrath. (2.) Some people's measure of sin fills slowly. The Sodomites, who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly, soon filled their measure; so did the Jews, who were in profession near to God; but the iniquity of the Amorites was long in the filling up. (3.) That this is the reason of the prosperity of wicked people; the measure of their sins is not yet full. The wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power, while God is laying up their iniquity for their children, Job 21. 7, 19. See Matt. 25. 32. Deut. 32. 54. 5. Abram's peaceful quiet death and burial, before these things should come to pass, v. 15. As he should not live to see that good land in the possession of his family, but must die as he lived, a stranger in it; so, to balance that, he should not live to see the troubles that should come upon his seed, much less share in them. This is promised to Josiah, 2 Kings 22. 23. Note, Good men are sometimes greatly favoured by being taken away from the evil to come, Isa. 57. 1. Let this satisfy Abram, that, For his part, (1.) He shall go to his fathers in peace; though the seed of Abram must be kept out of possession, yet he himself is to have peace, and go to his fathers in peace, and have the assurance of his own deliverance; for, though the seed of his covenant shall be taken out of the land of Canaan, yet he shall be delivered himself. 2. (2.) The lamp denotes comfort in this affliction; and this God showed Abram, at the same time that he showed him the smoking furnace. (1.) Light denotes delivery out of the furnace; their salvation was a lamp that burned, Isa. 62. 1. When God came down to deliver them, he appeared in a bush that burned, and was not consumed, Exod. 3. 2. (2.) The lamp denotes direction in the smoke; God's word was their lamp; this word to Abram was a lamp that burned, and its light was a light shining in a dark place; perhaps this burning lamp prefigured the pillar of cloud and light, which led them out of Egypt, in which God was their Guide. 23. The burning lamp denotes the destruction of their enemies who kept them so long in the furnace; see Zech. 12. 6. The same cloud that enlightened the Israelites, troubled and burned the Egyptians. 3. The passing of these between the pieces, was the confirming of the covenant God now made with him, that he might have strong consolation, being filled with that assurance that what God promised, he would certainly perform. It is probable that this furnace and lamp, which passed between the pieces, burned and consumed them, and so completed the sacrifice, and testified God's acceptance of it, as of Gideon's, Judg. 6. 21. Also, of Manasseh, Judg. 13. 19, 20. and Solomon's, 2 Chron. 7. 1, n. intimates, (1.) That God's covenants with men are made by sacrifice, Ps. 50. 5. by Christ, the great Sacrifice, Heb. 2. 13. (2.) That God's acceptance of our spiritual sacrifices, is a token for good, and an earnest of further favours; see Judg. 13. 23. And by this we may know that he accepts our sacrifices, if he kindle in our souls a holy fire of pius and devout affections in them. 11. The covenant repeated and explained, v. 18. In that same day, that day never to be forgotten, in the fifth commandment; it is pleasing to nature; and a great opportunity to usefulness; [2.] Especially if it be a good old age: their's may be called a good old age, First, That are old and healthful, not loaded with such distempers as make them weary of life; Secondly, That are old and holy, old disciples, Acts 21. 16, whose hoary head is found in the words of righteousness, Prov. 16. 31. old and useful, old and exemplary for godliness; their's is indeed a good old age. 17. And it came to pass that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 18. In the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19. The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20. And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, 21. And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites. Here is, I. The covenant ratified, v. 17; the sign which Abram desired, was given at length, when the sun was gone down, so that it was dark; for that was a dark dispensation. 1. The smoking furnace signified the affliction of his seed in Egypt; they were there in the iron furnace. Deut. 4. 20, the furnace of affliction, Isa. 48. 10, labouring in the very fire. They were there in the smoke, their eyes darkened, that they could not see the end of their troubles, and they at a loss to conceive what God would do with them; clouds and darkness were round about them. 2. The burning lamp denotes comfort in this affliction; and this God showed Abram, at the same time that he showed him the smoking furnace. (1.) Light denotes deliverance out of the furnace; their salvation was a lamp that burned, Isa. 62. 1. When God came down to deliver them, he appeared in a bush that burned, and was not consumed, Exod. 3. 2. (2.) The lamp denotes direction in the smoke; God's word was their lamp; this word to Abram was so, it was a light shining in a dark place; perhaps this burning lamp prefigured the pillar of cloud and light, which led them out of Egypt, in which God was their Guide. (3.) The burning lamp denotes the destruction of their enemies who kept them so long in the furnace; see Zech. 12. 6. The same cloud that enlightened the Israelites, troubled and burned the Egyptians. 3. The passing of these between the pieces, was the confirming of the covenant God now made with him, that he might have strong consolation, being filled with that assurance that what God promised, he would certainly perform. It is probable that this furnace and lamp, which passed between the pieces, burned and consumed them, and so completed the sacrifice, and testified God's acceptance of it, as of Gideon's, Judg. 6. 21. Also, of Manasseh, Judg. 13. 19, 20. and Solomon's, 2 Chron. 7. 1, n. intimates, (1.) 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the Lord made a covenant with Abram, that is, gave a promise to Abram, saying, Unto the seed have I given this land. Here is 1. A rehearsal of the grant: he had said before, To thee seed shall I give this land, ch. 12. 7.—13. 15. But here he says, I have given it; that is, (1.) I have given the promise of it, the charter is sealed and delivered, and cannot be disannulled. Note, God's promises are God's gifts, and are so to be accounted of. (2.) The possession is as sure, in due time, as if it were now actually delivered to them: what God has promised, is as sure as if it were already done; hence it is said, He that believeth hath everlasting life, John 3. 36, for he shall as surely go to heaven as if he were there already. 2. A recapitulation of the particulars granted, such as is usual in the grants of land. He specifies the boundaries of the land intended hereby to be granted, v. 19. And then, for the greater certainty, as it is usual in such cases, he mentions in what country and occupation these lands now were. Then several nations or tribes, are here spoken of, v. 19. 21. that must be cast out, to make room for the seed of Abram. They were not possessed of all these countries, when God brought them into Canaan. The bounds are fixed much narrower, Num. 34. 2, 3. &c. But, (1.) In David's time and Solomon's, the Jews extended their possessions beyond these limits, 2 Chron. 9. 26. (2.) It was their own fault that they were not sooner and longer in possession of all these territories. They forfeited their right by their sins, and by their own sloth and cowardice kept themselves out of possession. 3. The land granted, is here described in its utmost extent, because it was to be a type of the heavenly inheritance, where there is room enough: in our Father's house are many mansions. The present possessions are limited, because their number and strength, and long prescription, should be no hindrance to the accomplishment of this promise in its season, and to magnify God's love to Abram and his seed, in giving to that one nation the possession of many nations: so precious were they in his sight, and so honourable, Isa. 43. 4.

CHAP. XVI.

Hagar is the person mostly concerned in the story of this chapter, a slave, or Egyptian woman, whose name and story are here introduced, because she had not brought her into the family of Abram. Probably, she was one of those maid-servants, which the king of Egypt, among other gifts, bestowed upon Abram, ch. 12. 16. Conceptions have been many times in this chapter: 1. Her marriage to Abram her master, v. 1. 3. Her misbehaviour toward Sarai, her mistress, v. 4. 6. 3. Her discourse with an angel that met her in her flight, v. 7. 14. 4. Her flight, and of a son, v. 15. 16.

NOW Sarai, Abram's barren wife, bare no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. We have here the marriage of Abram to Hagar, who was his secondary wife; herein, though some excuse may be made for him, he cannot be justified; for from the beginning it was not so; and when it was so, it seems to have proceeded from an irregular desire to build up their families for the speedier peopling of the world and the church: it must not be so now. Christ has reduced this matter to the first institution, and makes the marriage unien to be between one man and one woman only.

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

II. The inducement to it was Sarai's barrenness. 1. Sarai bare to Abram no children, yet she was very fair, ch. 12. 14; she was an agreeable dutiful wife, and a sharer with him in his large possessions; and yet written childless. Note, (1.) God dispenses his gifts variously, leading us with benefits, but not overloading us: some cress or other is appointed to be an allay to great enjoyments. (2.) The mercy of children is often given to the poor, and denied to the rich; given to the wretched, and denied to good people; though they have good things, not always to enjoy them, and to give peace to our conscience, our pupils would take most care of their education. God does herein as it has pleased him. 2. She owned God's providence in this affliction; the Lord hath restrained me from bearing. Note, (1.) As where children are, it is God that gives them, ch. 33. 3, so where they are wanted, it is he that withholds them, ch. 30. 2. This evil is of the Lord. (2.) It becomes us to acknowledge this, that we may bear it, and improve it, as an affliction of his ordering for wise and holy ends.

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

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

4. And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despaired in her eyes. 5. And Sarai said unto Abram, My
wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the Lord judge between me and thee. 6. But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

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

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

II. Abram is clamoured upon, and cannot be easy while Sarai is out of humour; she accosts him violently, and very unjustly charges him with the injury, (v. 5.) My wrong be upon thee; with a most unreasonable jealousy, suspecting that he countenanced Hagar’s insolence; and as one not willing to hear what Abram had to say for the rectifying of the mistake, and the clearing of himself, she rashly appeals to God in the case, The Lord judge between me and thee; as if Abram had refused to right her. Thus does Sarai, in her passion, speak as though she were an angel of God. Note, 1. It is an absurdity which passionate people are often guilty of, to quarrel with others for that which they themselves must bear the blame of: Sarai could not but own that she had given her maid to Abram, and yet she cries out, My wrong be upon thee, when she should have said, What a fool was I to do so! That is never said wisely, which pride and anger have the inditing of; when passion is upon the throne, reason is at the door, and not spoken. 2. Those are not always in the right, who are most loud and forward in appealing to God; rosh and bold imprecations are commonly evidences of guilt and a bad cause. Notice, 1. Abram’s meekness resigns the matter of the servant to Sarai, whose proper province it was to deal with the family; Thy maid is in thy hand; though she was his wife, he would not connive or protect her in any thing that was disrespectful to Sarai, for whom he still retained the same affection that ever he had. Note, Those who would keep up peace and love, must return soft answers to hard accusations; husbands and wives particularly should agree, and endeavour not to be both angry together: yielding pacifies great offences; see Prov. 15. 1. 2. Sarai’s passion will be revenged upon Hagar; she dealt hardly with her, not only confining her to her usual place and work, as a servant, but probably making her to serve with rigour. Note, God takes notice of, and is displeased with the hardships which harsh masters unreasonably put upon their servants: they ought to forbear threatening, with Job’s thought, Did not he that made me, make him? Job 31. 13.

3. Hagar’s pride cannot bear it, her high spirit is become impatient of rebuke; she fled from her house. "She cast her lot with the wilderness, and fled from the face of her mistress."

Now, (1.) The questions the angel put to her, were proper and very pertinent. [1.] Whence camest thou? Consider that thou art running away, both from the duty thou wast bound to, and the privileges thou wast blessed with, in Abram’s tent. Note, It is a great advantage to live in a religious...
family, which those ought to consider, who have that advantage, yet upon every slight inducement, are forward to quit it. 2. [1] "Whither wilt thou go? Thou art running thyself into sin, in Egypt." (she return to that people, she will return to their gods,) "and into danger, in the wilderness" through which she must travel, Deut. 8. 15. Note, Those who are forsaking God and the s duty, would do well to remember not only when they are fallen, but whether they are falling. See Job 2. 18. What hast thou to do (with Hagar) in the way of Egypt? John 6. 68.

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

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

10. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

12. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? 14. Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

We may suppose that the angel having given Hagar that good counsel, (v. 9.) to return to her mistress, discharged too, promised to do s; and had set her face homew rd; and then the angel went on to encourage her with an assurance of the mercy God had in store for her and her seed; for God will meet those with mercy, that are returning to their duty: I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest, Ps. 32. 5.

Here is the prediction concerning her posterity, given her for her comfort in her present distress. Notice is taken of her condition; Behold, thou art with child; and therefore this is not a fit place for thee to be in. Note, It's a great comfort to women with child to think that they are under the particular cognizance and care of the Divine Providence. God graciously considers that case, and suits supports to it.

Now, 1. The angel assures her of a safe delivery, and that of a son, which Abram desired. This fright and ramble of her's might have destroyed her hope of an offspring; but God dealt not with her according to her folly; Thou shalt bear a son: she was saved in child-bearing, not only by providence, but by promise.

2. He names her child, which was an honour both to her and to him; and called him Ishmael, God will hear; and the reason is, because the Lord has heard; he has, and therefore he will. Note, The experience we have had of God's means of kindness to us in distress, that encourage us to hope for the I keep in the like exigencies, Ps. 10. 17. He has heard thy affliction. Note, (1.) Even there where there is little cry of devotion, the God of pity sometimes graciously hears the cry of affliction: tears speak as well as prayers, and He that heard the cry of Israel, that God not only sees what the afflictions are, but hears what they say. (2.) That reasonable succours, in the day of affliction, ought always to be remembered with thankfulness to God. Such a time, in such a strait, the Lord heard the voice of my affliction, and helped me. See Deut. 26. 7. Ps. 31. 12.

3. He promises her a numerous offspring, v. 10, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, Hebr. Multiplying, I will multiply it, that is, multiply it in every age, so as to perpetuate it. It is supposed t the Turks at this day descend from Ishmael; and they are a great people. This is in pursuance of the promise made to Abram, ch. 15, 16, I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth. Note, Many that are children of godly parents, have, for their sakes, a very large share of outward common blessings, though, like Ishmael, they are not taken into covenant: many are multiplied that are not sanctified.

4. He gives a character of the child she should bear, which, however it may seem to us, perhaps not very disagreeable to her, v. 12, He will be a wild man; a wild ass of a man, so the word is; rude and bold, and fearing no man; untamed, untractable, living at large, and impatient of service and restraint. Note, The children of the bondwoman, who are out of covenant with God, are, as they were born, like the wild ass's colt; t is grace that reclaims men, evils, and makes them wise, and good for something. It is foretold, (1.) That he should live in strife, and in a state of war; his hand against every man, that is his sin; and every man's hand against him, that is his punishment. Note, This speaks of the spirits, that have commonly troubles: lives; they are provoking, vexatious, and injurious to others, must expect to be repaid in their own coin. He that has his hand and tongue against every man, shall have every man's tongue and hand against him; and he has no reason to complain of it. And yet, (2.) That he should live in safety, and hold his own against all the world; he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren, and found safety there. God has given them not only a fair share, but a principle and desire to make his part good with them: accordingly we read, ch. 25. 18, that he died, as he lived, in the presence of all his brethren. Note, Many that are much expost with their own impudence, yet are strangely preserved by the Divine Providence; so much benefit to them than the service, not only not only forego their lives by sin, but hazard them.

1. Hagar's plans reflection upon this gracious appearance of God to her, v. 13, 14. Observe in what she said,

1. Her awful adoration of God's omniscience and providence, with application of it to herself; she called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her that is, thus she made confession of his name, thus
she said to his praise, "Thou God seest me; this should be with her, his name for ever, and this his memorial, by which she will know him and remember him while she lives, Thou God seest me." Note, (1.) The God with whom we have to do, is a seeing God, an all-seeing God. God is, (as the ancients expressed it) all eyes. (2.) We ought to acknowledge the invisible eye; let us act as if all eyes were upon us. (3.) The all-seeing eye of Jehovah is upon us, and sees all, see means, as David, Ps. 139. 1. O God, thou hast searched me and known me. (4.) A believing regard to God, as a God that sees us, will be of great use to us in our returns to him. It is a proper word for a penitent: [1.] "Thou seest my sin and folly; I have sinned before thee, says the prodigal; in thy sight, says David. [2.] Thou seest my sorrow and affliction," that Jehovah sees all our secret mournings for sin, and secret motions toward thee. [4.] "Thou seest me, if in any instance I depart from thee," Ps. 44. 26, 27. This thought should always restrain us from sin, and excite us to virtue. [5.] Her humble admiration of God's favour to her: "Have I here also looked after him that seeth me? Have I here seen the back parts of him that seeth me?" So it might be read, for the word is much the same with that, Exod. 33. 23. She saw not face to face, but as through a glass darkly, 1 Cor. 13. 12. Probably, she knew not who it was that talked with her, till he was departing, as Judges 6. 21, 22, 23. 11. and then she looked after him, with a reflection, like that of the two disciples, Luke 24. 31, 32. Or, "Have I seen him that seeth me?" Note, (1.) The communion which holy souls have with God, consists in their having an eye of faith toward him, as a God that has an eye of favour toward them. The intercourse is kept up by the eye. (2.) The privilege of our communion with God, is to be looked upon with wonder and admiration, considering what we are, who are admitted to this favour. "Have I that I am so mean, that I am so vile?" 2 Sam. 7. 18. This privilege is thus to be looked upon, considering the place where we are thus favoured; "here also? Not only in Abram's tent, and at his altar, but here also, in this wilderness! Here, where I never expected it, where I was out of the way of my duty! Lord, how is it?" John 14. 22. Some make the answer to this question the object of their meditations and spiritual reflection: "Have I here also, in my distress and affliction, looked after God? No, I was as careless and unmindful of him as ever I used to be; and yet he has thus visited and regarded me?" for God often prevents us with his favours, and is found of those that seek him not, Isa. 65. 1.

11. The name which this event gave to the place, v. 14. Beer-lahai-roi, well of him that lives and seeth. It is probable that Hagar put this name upon it; and it was retained long after, in perpetuam rem memoriam—a lasting memorial of this event. This was the place, where the God of glory manifested the special cognizance and care he took of a poor woman in distress. Note, 1. He that is all-seeing, is ever-living; he lives and sees us. 2. Those that are graciously admitted into communication with God, and are favored with such comforts from him, should tell others what he has done for their souls, that they also may be encouraged to seek him, and trust in him. 3. God's gracious manifestations of himself to us are to be had in everlasting remembrance by us, and should never be forgotten.

15. And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ismael. 16. And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ismael to Abram.

It is here taken for granted, though not expressly recorded, that Hagar did as the angel commanded her, returned to her mistress, and submitted herself; and then, in the fulness of time, she brought forth her son. Note, Those who obey divine precepts, shall have the comfort of divine promises. This was the son of the bond-woman that was born after the flesh, Gen. 16. 15, representing the uncircumcised, or negligence of the Jews, v. 25. Note, Hagar, she is called, Abram father, yet are born after the flesh, Matt. 3. 9. 2. The carnal seed in the church are sooner brought forth than the spiritual. It is an easier thing to persuade men to assume the form of godliness, than to submit to the power of godliness.

CHAP. XVII.

This chapter contains articles of agreement covenanted and concluded upon between the great Jehovah, the Father of mercies, on the one part, and pious Abram, the Father of the faithfull, on the other part. Abram is therefore called "the servant of God," not only because he was the man of his counsel, but because he was the man of his covenant; both these secrets were with him: mention was made of this covenant, ch. 15. 18, but here it is particularly owned and put into the form of a special covenant, that Abram might have strong consolation. Here is, 1. The circumstances of the making of this covenant, the time and manner, v. 1, and the promise Abram was in, v. 2. 2. The promise as in, v. 3. 11. This promise was received, v. 17. And his request for Ismael (v. 18.) was answered, abundantly to his satisfaction, v. 19, 22. 3. The circumcision of Abram and his family, according to God's appointment, v. 22. 27.

1. AND when Abram was ninety years old, and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 2. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. 3. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, Here is, 1. The time when God made Abram this gracious visit; when he was 99 years old, full 13 years after the birth of Ishmael. 1. So long, it should seem, God preserved Abram and his seed, as a partial intermission; and all the communion he had with God, was only in the usual way of ordinances and providences. Note, There are some special comforts which are not the daily bread, no root of the best saints, but they are favoured with them now and then. On this side heaven, they have convenient food, but not a continual feast. 2. So long the promise of Isaac was deferred. (1.) Perhaps it was the correct punishment of his over-hasty desire. (2.) Note, The comforts we sinfully anticipate, are justly delayed. (2.) That Abram and Sarai being so far stricken in age, God's power, in this matter, might be the more magnified, and their faith the more tried. See Dent. 32. 36. John 11. 6, 13. (3.) That a child so long waited for, might be an Isaac, a son indeed, Isa. 54. 1.

11. The way in which God made this covenant with him; The Lord appeared to Abram, in the
Shechinah, some visible display of God's immediate glorious presence with him. Note, God first makes himself known to us, and gives us a sight of him by faith, and then takes us into his covenant.

III. The posture Abram put himself into upon this occasion. He fell on his face while God talked with him, v. 9. Either, 1. As one overcome by the brightness of the divine glory, and unable to bear the sight of it, though he had seen it at several times before: Daniel and John did likewise, though they were also acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, Dan. 8. 17.—10. 9, 15. Rev. 1. 17. Or, 2. As one ashamed of himself, and blushing to think of the honours done to one so unworthy: he looks upon himself with humility, and upon God with reverence, and, in token of both, falls on his face, putting himself into a posture of adoration. Note, (1.) God graciously condescends to come in whose name he takes us into his covenant and communion with himself. He talks with them by his word, Prov. 6. 22. He talks with them by his Spirit, John 14. 26. This honour have all his saints. (2.) Those that are admitted into fellowship with God, are, and must be, very humble and very reverent in their approaches to him. If we say we have fellowship with him, and the familiarity needed consequent, they see that, who should receive comfort from God, must set themselves to give glory to God, and to worship at his footstool.

IV. The general scope and summary of the covenant, laid down as the foundation on which all the rest was built; it is no other than the covenant of grace, still in use with all believers in Jesus Christ, v. 1. Observe here, 1. What we may expect to find God to us; I am the Almighty God; by this name he chose to make himself known to Abram rather than by his name Jehovah, Exod. 6. 3. He used it to Jacob, ch. 35. 11. They called him by this name, ch. 28. 3.—43. 14.—48. 3; It is the name of God that is most used throughout the book of Job, at least thirty times in the discourses of that book. After Moses, Jehovah is more frequently used, and this very rare. It is called El-shaddai; it speaks the almighty power of God, either, (1.) As an averager, from הַיְאִל hâyâl hâl he laid waste, so some; and they think God took this title from the destruction of the old world. This is comenanced by Isa. 13. 6, and Joel 1. 15. Or, (2.) As a ben-factor, for some who, and is sufficient. He is a God, that is enough; or as our old English translation reads it here very significantly, I am God all-sufficient. Note, The God we have to do with, is a God that is [1.] He is enough in himself; he is self-sufficient; he has every thing, and he needs not any thing. [2.] He is enough to us, if we be in covenant with him: we have all in him, and we have enough in him; enough to satisfy our most enlarged desires, enough to supply the defect of every thing else, and to secure us a happiness for our immortal souls: so Ps. 16. 5. 6.—73. 25. [2. 2.] God is a Father that we be to him; the covenant is mutual, Walk before me, and be thou perfect, that is, upright and sincere; for wherein the covenant of grace is well-ordered, that sincerity is our gospel perfection. Observe, (1.) That to be religious, is to walk before God in our integrity; it is to set God always before us, and to think, and speak, and act, in every thing, as those that are always before God. It is to have a constant regard to his word as our rule, and to his glory as our end, in all our actions, and to be continually in his fear. It is to be inward with him, in all the duties of religious worship, for in them particularly we walk before God, 1 Sam. 2. 30, and to be entire for him, in all holy conversation. I know no religion but sincerity. (2.) That upright walking with God, is the condition of our interest in his all-sufficiency. If we neglect him, or dissemble with him, we forfeit the benefit and comfort of our relation to him. (3.) A continual regard to God's all-sufficiency, will have a great influence upon our upright walking with him.

4. As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. 5. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations and kings shall come out of thee.

The promise here is introduced with solemnity: "As for me," says the great God, "behold, and admire him, behold and be assured of it, my covenant is with thee;" as before, v. 2, I will make thee exceedingly great, and a father of many nations; but this grace is a covenant of God's own making; this he doth it, (as for me,) and so may we. Now here,

1. It is promised to Abram, that he should be a father of many nations: that is, 1. That his seed after the flesh, should be very numerous, both in Isaac and Ishmael, and in the sons of Keturah; something extraordinary is doubtless included in this promise, and we may suppose that the event answered to it, and that there have been, and are, more of the children of men descended from Abraham, than from any one man at an equal distance from him with Noah, the common root. 2. That all believers, in every age, should be looked upon as his spiritual seed, and that he should be called, not only the Friend of God, but the father of the faithful. In this sense, the Apostle directs us to understand this promise, Rom. 4. 16, 17. He is the father of those in every nation, that by faith enter into covenant with God, and (as the Jewish writers express it) are gathered under the wings of the divine Majesty.

II. In token of this, his name was changed from Abram, a high father, to Abraham, the father of a multitude. This was, 1. To put an honour upon him: it is spoken of as the glory of the church, that she shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name, Isa. 62. 2, and Princes dignified their favourites, by conferring new titles upon them; thus was Abraham dignified by him that is indeed the Fountain of honour; all believers have a new name, Rev. 2. 17. Some think it added to the honour of Abraham's new name, that a letter of the name Jehovah was inserted into it, as it was a disgrace to Jeroniah to have the first syllable of his name cut off, because it was a first syllable of that sacred name, Jer. 22. 22, 29. Believers are named from Christ, Eph. 3. 15. 2. To encourage and confirm the faith of Abraham; while he was childless, perhaps even his own name was sometimes an occasion of grief to him: why should he be called a high father, who was not a father at all? But now that God had promised him a numerous issue, and had given him a name which signified so much, that name was his by. Note, God calls things that are not, as though they were. It is the apostle's observation upon this very thing, Rom. 4. 17; he called Abraham the father of a multitude, because he should prove to be so in due time, though as yet he had but one child.

7. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,
in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. 8. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. 9. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. 10. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised. 11. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12. And he that is eight days old, shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Here is, 1. The continuance of the covenant; intimated in three things. 1. It is established; not to be altered or revoked: it is fixed, it is ratified, it is made as firm as the divine power and truth can make it. 2. It is entailed; it is a covenant, not with Abraham only, (then it would die with him,) but with his seed after him, not only his seed after the flesh, but his seed in the spirit. 3. It is everlasting in the evangelical sense and meaning of it. The covenant of grace is everlasting; it is from everlasting in the counsels of it, and to everlasting in the consequences of it; and the external administration of it is transmitted with the seal of it to the seed of believers, and the internal administration of it by the Spirit, to Christ's seed in every age. 11. The contents of the covenant; it is a covenant of promises, exceeding great and precious promises. Here are two, which, indeed, are all sufficient. 1. That God would be their God, v. 7, 8. All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys, and all its hopes, are summed up in this: a man needs no more than this, to make him happy. What God is himself, that he will be to his people; his wisdom theirs, to guide and counsel them; his power theirs, to protect and support them; his goodness theirs, to supply and comfort them. What faithful worshippers can expect from the God they serve, believers shall find in God as their's. This is enough, yet not all. 2. That Canaan should be their everlasting possession, v. 8. God had before promised this land to Abraham, and his seed, ch. 15. 18. But here, where it is promised from an everlasting possession, surely it must be looked upon as a type of heaven's happiness, that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God, Heb. 4. 9. This is that better country to which Abraham had an eye, and the grant of which was that which answered to the vast extent and compass of that promise, that God would be to them a God; so that if God had not prepared and designed this, he would have been ashamed to be called their God, Heb. 11. 16. As the land of Canaan was secured to the seed of Abraham, according to the flesh, so heaven is secured to all his spiritual seed, by a covenant, and for a possession, truly everlasting. The offer of this eternal life is made in the word, and confirmed by the sacraments, to all that are under the external administration of the covenant; but not to that part of it, or the part therein, which is hid from this world's knowledge.

III. The token of the covenant; and that is circumcision, for the sake of which the covenant is itself called the covenant of circumcision, Acts 7. 8. It is here said to be the covenant which Abraham and his seed must keep, as a copy of covenant; and, in the event of the breach of covenant, would lead to death; and to that part of it, in every breach of it, which brokenManage.

Now, (1.) Circumcision was a bloody ordinance; for all things by the law were purged with blood, Heb. 9. 22. See Exod. 24. 8. But the blood of Christ being shed, all bloody ordinances are now abolished; circumcision therefore gives way to baptism. (2.) It was peculiar to the males; though the women also were included in the covenant, for the man is the head of the woman. In our kingdom, the oath of allegiance is required only from men: some think that the blood of the males only was shed in circumcision, because respect was had in it to Jesus Christ, and his blood. (3.) It was not a sign of the flesh of his foreskin, but of his name, because it is by ordinary generation that sin is propagated, and with an eye to the Promised Seed, who was to come from the loins of Abraham. Christ having not yet offered himself for us, God would have man to enter into covenant by the offering of some part of his own body, and no part could be better spared. It is a secret part of the body: for the true circumcision is that of the heart, this house of God, the uncorrupted heart, (1 Cor. 6. 19, 25.) (4.) The ordinance was to be administered to children when they were eight days old, and not sooner; that they might gather some strength to be able to undergo the pain of it, and that at least one siboth might pass over them. (5.) The children of the stranger, of whom the master of the family was the true domestic owner, were to be circumcised, v. 13. 15. which looked favourably upon the Gentiles; they should, in due time, be brought into the family of Abraham by faith; see Gal. 3. 14. (6.) The religious observance of this institution was required, under a very severe penalty, v. 14. The contempt of circumcision was a contempt of the covenant; if the parents did not circumcise their children, it was at their peril, as in the case of Moses, Exod. 4. 24, 25. With respect to those that were
not circumcised in their infancy, if, when they grew up, they did not themselves come under this ordinance, God would surely reckon with them. If they cut not off the flesh of their foreskin, God would cut them off from their people. It is a dangerous thing to make light of divine institutions, and to live in the neglect of them.

15. And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarah thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. 16. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. 17. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? 18. And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! 19. And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. 20. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. 21. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the year. 22. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

Here is,

1. The promise made to Abram of a son by Sarai, that son in whom the promise made, to him, should be fulfilled, that he should be the father of many nations; for she was a mother of nations, and kings of people shall be of her, v. 16. Note, God reveals the purposes of his good-will to his people by degrees. God had told Abraham, long before, that he should have a son by Sarai. 2. The blessing of the Lord makes fruitful, and adds no sorrow with it, no such sorrow as was in Hagar's case. "I will bless her with the blessing of fruitfulness, and the thing thou shalt have a son of her." 3. Government and order are a great blessing to the church. It is promised, not only that people, but kings of people, should be of her; not a headless rout, but a well-modelled, well-governed society.

II. The ratification of this promise was the change of Sarai's name into Sarah, v. 13, the same letter added to her name that was to Abraham's, and for the same reasons. Sarai signifies my princess, as if her honour were confined to one family only; Sarah signifies a princess, namely of multitudes; or, signifying that from her should come the Messiah, the Prince, even the Prince of the kings of the earth.

III. Abraham's joyful, thankful entertainment of this gracious promise, v. 17. Upon this occasion, he expressed, 1. Great humility; he fell on his face. Note, The more favours and favours God confers upon us, the lower we should be in our own eyes, and the more reverent and submissive before God. 2. Great joy; he laughed, it was a laughter of delight, not of distrust. Note, Even the promises of a holy God, as well as his performances, are the joys of holy souls; there is the joy of faith, as well as the joy of fruition. Now it was that Abraham regretted to see Christ's day; now he saw it, John 8. 56, for as he saw heaven in the promise of Canaan, so he saw Christ in the promise of Isaac. 3. Great admiration; Shall a child be born to him that is an hundred years old? He does not here speak of it as at all doubtful, (for we are sure that he staggered not at the promise, Rom. 4. 20.) but as very wonderful, and that which could not be effected but by the almighty power of God, and a message from him, and a favour which was the more affecting and oblicing for this, that it was extremely surprising, Ps. 126. 2.

IV. Abraham's prayer for Ishmael, v. 18, O that Ishmael might live before thee! This he speaks, not as desiring that Ishmael might be preferred before the son he should have by Sarah; but, dreading lest he should be abandoned and forsoaken of God, he prays that God would be bountiful to him, and that God is talking with him, he thinks he has a very fair opportunity to speak a good word for Ishmael, and he will not let it slip. Note, Though we ought not to prescribe to God, yet he gives us leave, in prayer, to be humbly free with him, and in making known our requests, Phil. 4. 6. Whatever is the matter of our care and fear, should be spread before God in prayer. 2. It is the duty of parents to intercede for their children, for their children, as Job, who offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all, Job 1. 5. Abraham would not have it thought, when God promised him a son by Sarah, which he so much desired, that then his son by Hagar was forgotten; no, still he bears him upon his heart, and shows a concern for him. The prospect of further favours must not make us unmindful of former graces. 3. The great thing we should desire of God for our children is, that they may live before him, that is, that they may be kept in covenant with him, and may have grace to walk before him in their uprightness; spiritual blessings are the best blessings, and which we should be most earnest with God for, both for ourselves, and others. These live well, that live before God.

V. God's answer to his prayer; and it is an answer of peace; Abraham could not say that he sought God's face in vain.

1. Common blessings are secured to Ishmael, v. 20. As for Ishmael, when thou art in so much care about, I have heard thee; he shall find favour for thy sake; I have blessed him, that is, I have many blessings in store for him. (1.) His posterity shall be numerous, I will multiply him exceedingly, better than his mother Sarai: this is his birthright. Now blessing, as that, ch. 1. 28. (2.) They shall be considerable; twelve princes shall he beget; we may charitably hope that spiritual blessings also were bestowed upon him, though the visible church was not brought out of his loins, and the covenant was not lodged in his family. Note, Great plenty of outward good things is often given to these children, as worldly plenty, that are born after the flesh, for their parents' sake.

2. Covenant-blessings are reserved for Isaac, and appropriated to him, v. 19. 21. If Abraham, in his prayer for Ishmael, meant that he would have the covenant made with him, and the Promised Seed to come from him; then, God did not answer him in the letter, but in that sense which was com¬patible, nay, which was every way better. (1.) God repeats to him the promise of a son by Sarah; she shall bear thee a son indeed. Note, [1.] Even true believers need to have God's promises doubled and repeated to them, that they may have strong consolation, Heb. 6. 18. [2.] Children of the promise are children indeed. [3.] He names that child,
calls him Isaac, Laughter; because Abraham rejoiced in spirit, when this son was promised him. Note, If God's promises be our joy, his mercies promised shall in due time be our exceeding joy. Christ will be Laughter to them, that look for him; they that now rejoice in hope, shall shortly rejoice in having that which they hope for: this is laughter that is not mad. (3.) He entails the covenant upon that child; I will establish my covenant with him. Note, God takes whom he pleases into covenant with himself, according to the good pleasure of his will: see Rom. 9. 8, 13. Thus was the covenant settled between God and Abraham, with its several limitations and remainder, and then the covenant ended; God left off talking with him, and the vision disappeared, God went up from Abraham. Note, Our communion with God here is broken and interrupted; in heaven it will be a continual and everlasting feast.

23. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their fore-skin in the self-same day, as God had said unto him. 24. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin. 25. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his fore-skin. 26. In the self-same day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son. 27. And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

We have here Abraham's obedience to the law of circumcision; he himself, and all his family, were circumcised; so receiving the token of the covenant, and distinguishing themselves from other families that had no part nor lot in the matter. 1. It was an implicit obedience; he did as God said unto him, and did not ask why or wherefore. God's will was not to be appealed to, reasonings brought forward to cause God bid him. 2. It was a speedy obedience; in the self-same day, v. 23, 26. Sincere obedience is not dilatory, Ps. 119. 60. While the command is yet sounding in our ears, and the sense of duty is fresh, it is good to apply ourselves to it immediately, lest we deceive ourselves by putting it off to a more convenient season. 3. It was an universal obedience; he did not circumcise his family, and excuse himself, but set them an example; nor did he take the comfort of the seal of the covenant to himself only, but desired that all might share with him in it: this is a good example to masters of families; they and their houses must serve the Lord. Though God's covenant was not established with Ishmael, yet he was circumcised; for children of believing parents, as such, have a right to the privileges of the visible church, and the seals of the covenant, whatever they may prove afterward; Ishmael is blessed, and therefore circumcised. 4. Abraham did this, though much might be objected against it; though circumcision was painful, though to grown men it was shameful; though, while they were so weak and unfit for action, their enemies might take advantage against them, as Simeon and Levi did against the Shechemites; though Abraham was ninety years old, and had been justified and accepted of God long since; though so strange a thing done religiously, might be turned to his reproach by the Canaanite and the Perizite that dwelt then in the land; yet God's command was sufficient to answer these, and a thousand such objections; what God requires, we must do, not conferring with flesh and blood.

CHAP. XVIII.

We have an account in this chapter of another interview between God and Abraham, probably, within a few days after the former, as a reward of his cheerful obedience to the last commands given him. Here is, I. The kind visit, which God made him, and the kind entertainment which he gave to that visit, v. 1. 8. II. The matters discussed of between them. 1. The purposes of God's love concerning Sarah, v. 8. 15. 2. The purposes of God's wrath concerning Sodom, v. 16. 22. 3. The intercession Abraham made for Sodom, v. 23. 33.

1. A N D the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; 2. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, 3. And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: 4. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: 5. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that, ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. 6. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. 7. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. 8. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

This appearance of God to Abraham seems to have had in it more of freedom and familiarity, and less of grandeur and majesty, than those we have hitherto read of; and therefore more resembles that great visit, which, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was to make to the world; when the Word would be made flesh, and appear as one of us. Observe here,

1. How Abraham expected strangers, and how richly his expectations were answered, v. 1. He sat in the tent-door, in the heat of the day; not so much to repose or divert himself, as to seek an opportunity of doing good, by giving entertainment to strangers and travellers, there being perhaps no inns to accommodate them. Note, We are likely to have the most comfort of these good works that we are most free and forward to. 2. God graciously visits those in whom he has first raised the expectation of him, and manifests himself to these that wait for him. When Abraham was thus sitting, he saw three men coming toward him. These three men were three spiritual heavenly beings, now assuming human bodies, that they might be visible to Abraham, and conversable with him. Some think that they were all created angels, others, that one of
them was the Son of God, the Angel of the covenant, whom Abraham distinguished from the rest, and who is called Jehovah, v. 13. The apostle improves this, for the encouragement of hospitality, Heb. 13. 2. Those that have entertained, and more especially, have entertained angels, to their unspeakable honour and satisfaction. Where, upon a prudent and impartial judgment, we see no case to suspect ill, charity teaches us to hope well, and to show kindness accordingly; it is better to feed five swarms, or wasps, than to starve one bee.

II. How Abraham entertained these strangers, and how kindly his entertainment was accepted. The Holy Ghost takes particular notice of the very free and affectionate welcome which Abraham gave to the strangers. 1. He was complaisant and respectful to them; forgetting his age, he ran to, and set the most obliging manner, and bowed himself toward the ground, though as yet he knew nothing of them, but that they appeared grateful respectable men. Note, Religion does not destroy, but improves good manners, and teaches us to honour all men. Decent civility is a great ornament to pety. 2. He was very earnest and importunate for their stay, and took it as a great favour, v. 3. 4. Note, (1.) It was expected of them to be liberal and openhearted in their entertainments, according to their ability, and (not to compliment, but cordially) bid their friends welcome; we should take a pleasure in showing kindness to many; for both God and man love a cheerful giver. Who would eat the bread of him that has an evil eye? Prov. 23. 6, 7. (2.) Those that would have communion with God, must earnestly desire it, and pray for it. God is a Guest worth entertaining. 3. He gave them welcome, with plenty; to be liberal and openhearted in their entertainments, according to their ability, and (not to compliment, but cordially) bid their friends welcome; we should take a pleasure in showing kindness to many; for both God and man love a cheerful giver. Note, We ought not to be curious in our diet: let us be thankful for food convenient, though it be homely and common; and not be desirous of delicacies, for they are deceitful meat to those that love them and set their hearts upon them. 4. He and his wife were both of them very attentive, and busy, in accommodating their guests with the best they had. Sarah herself was cook and baker; Abraham runs to fetch the calf, brings out the milk and honey, and thinks it not below him to wait at table, that he might show how heartily welcome his guests were. Note, (1.) Those that have real merit, need not take state upon them. (2.) Hearty friendship will stoo to one thing but sin, Christ himself has taught us to wash another's feet, in humble love. They that thus cleave themselves, shall be exalted. Here Abraham's faith showed itself in good works; and such must answers, else it is dead. Jam. 2. 21, 26. The father of the faith was famous for charity, and generous, and good house-keeping; and we must learn of him to do good, and communicate. Job did eat his bread with快乐, Job 31. 17.

9. And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. 10. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind him. 11. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well-stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. 12. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? 13. And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old! 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed, I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son. 15. Then Sarah said unto Abraham, I laughed, and I was ashamed; and he said, I heard laughter, but thou didst laugh.

These heavenly guests, (being sent to confirm the promise late made to Abraham, that he should have a son by Sarah,) while they are receiving Abraham's kind entertainment, thus return his kindness; he receives angels, and his angels' reward; a gracious message from Heaven, Matt. 10. 41. 1. Care is taken that Sarah should be with a hear ing. She must conceive by faith, and therefore the promise must be made to her, Heb. 11. 11. It was the least he was to of that time, that the women did not sit. A meat with men, at least, not with strangers, but under their own roof, and to themselves, and in their own domains; therefore Sarah is here out of sight; but it must not be out of hearing. The angel's inquiry, v. 9. Where is Sarah thy wife? By naming her, they gave satisfaction enough to Abraham that though they seemed strangers, yet they very well knew him and his family; by inquiring after her, they showed a friendly kind concern for the family and relations of one whom they found respectable to them. It is a piece of common civility, that ought to proceed from the principle of Christian love, and then it is sanctified. And by speaking of her, (she over-hearing it,) they drew her to listen to what was further to be said. Where is Sarah thy wife? say the angels; Behold, in the tent, said Abraham. Where should she be else? There she is in her place, as she used to be, and is now within call. Note, 1. The daughters of Sarah must learn of her, to be chaste keepers at home, 1 Pet. 3. 6. Therefore let every thing be put by gardening. 2. There are more likely to receive comfort from God and his promises, that are in their place, and in the way of their duty, Luke 2. 8.

II. The promise is then renewed and ratified, that she should have a son. v. 10. "I will certainly return unto thee, and visit thee next time, with the performance, as now I do, with the promise." God will return to those that bid him welcome, that entertain his visits: "I will return thy kindness, Sarah thy wife shall have a son;" it is repeated again, v. 14. Thus the promises of the Messiah were often repeated and renewed, as is evident from the strengthening of the faith of God's people. We are slow of heart to believe, and therefore have need of long time upon line to the same purport. This is that word of promise which the apostle quotes, Rom. 9. 9, as that, by the virtue of which Isaac was born. Note, 1. The same blessings which others have from common providence, believers have from the promise, which makes them very sweet, and very sure. 2. The child of Abraham was called the heir of all the promises, for the strengthening of the faith of God's people. We should have great delight and joy, and hope, and all, to the promise. They are born by the word of God, 1 Pet. 1. 23.

III. Sarah thinks this too good news to be true, and therefore cannot as yet find in her heart to believe it, v. 12. Sarah laughed within herself. It was not a pleasure laughter of faith, like Abraham's, ch. 17. 17, but it was a laughter of doubting and
mistrust. Note, The same thing may be done from very different principles, which God only can judge, who knows the heart. The great objection which Sarah could not get over, was her own doubt: "I am waxed old, and past child-bearing in the course of nature; especially having been hitherto barren; and (which magnifies the difficulty) My lord is old also." Observe here, 1. Sarah calls Abraham her lord; it was the only good word in this saying, and the Holy Ghost takes it thus of her husband, and recommends it to the imitation of all his children, v. 5. 2. Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, in token of respect and submission. Thus must the wife reverence her husband, Eph. 5. 22. And thus must we be apt to take notice of what is spoken decently and well, to the honour of them that speak it, though it may be mixed with that which is amiss, or which we should cast a mantle of love. 2. Human impropriety often sets up in contradiction to the divine precept. The objections of sense are very apt to stumble and puzzle the weak faith even of true believers. It is hard to cleave to the First Cause, when second causes frown. 3. Even there where isthm faith, yet there are often some conflicts with unbelief; Sarah could say, Lord, I believe, (Heb. 11. 1.) and yet must say, Lord, help my unbelief.

IV. The angel reproves the indecent expressions of Sarah, Gen. 16:3. Observe, 1. Though Sarah was most kindly and generally entertained by these angels, yet, when she did amiss, they reproved her for it, as Christ reproved Mary in her own house, Luke 10. 44, 41. If our friends be kind to us, we must not therefore be so unkind to them as to suffer sin upon them. 2. God gave this rebuke to Sarah by Abraham her husband; to him she said, Why did Sarah laugh? Perhaps, he had not held her in his mind as a partaker of his own advantages, for he had not thought of this at the former time before to this purport: if he had communicated it to her with its ratifications, she would hardly have been so surprised at it now. Or, Abraham was told of it, that he might tell her of it; mutual reproof, when there is occasion for it, is one of the duties of that relation. 3. The rebuke itself is plain, and backed with a good reason. Whence did Sarah laugh? Note, (1.) It is good to inquire into the reason of the rebuke; for the Lord is the comfort of the one, the reproach of the other. (2.) If we be afe, "Wherefore did I laugh?" (2.) Our unbelief and distrust are a great offence to the God of heaven. He justly takes it ill, to have the objections of sense set up in contradiction to his promise, as Luke 1. 18. Here is a question asked, which is enough to answer all the cavils of flesh and blood, Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Heb. too wonderful, that is, [1.] Is anything so secret as to escape his cognizance? No, in Sarah's laughing, though it was only within herself. Or, [2.] Is any thing so difficult as to exceed his power? No, not the giving of a child to Sarah in her old age.

V. Sarah foolishly endeavours to conceal her fault, v. 13. She denied, saying, I did not laugh; thinking nobody could disprove her; she told this lie, because she was afraid; but it was in vain to attempt concealing it from an all-seeing eye; she was told, to her shame, Thou didst laugh. Now, 1. There seems to be in Sarah a reluctance of her discretion. Now that she perceived, by laying circumstances together, that it was a divine promise which had been made concerning her, she renounces all doubting distrustful thoughts about it. But, 2. There was withal a sinful attempt to cover a sin with a lie. It is hard to do amiss, and harder to own it, and set it being done; for thereby we add iniquity to iniquity. Fear of a rebuke often betrays us into this snare. See Isa. 57. 11. Whom hast thou feared, that thou hast lied? But we deceive ourselves, if we think to impose upon God; he can and will, bring truth to light, to our shame. He that covers his sin, cannot prosper; for the day is coming, which will discover it.

16. And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. 17. And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; 18. Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? 19. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. 20. And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21. I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. 22. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

The messengers from heaven had now despatched one part of their business, which was an errand of grace to Abraham and Sarah, and which they delivered first; but God had given them work of another nature; Sodom is to be destroyed, and they must do it, ch. 19. 13. Note, As with the Lord there is mercy, so he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. Pursuant to their commission, we here find, 1. That they looked toward Sodom, v. 16, they set their faces against it in wrath; as God is said to look upon the host of the Egyptians, Exod. 14. 24. Note, Though God has long seemed to connive at the wicked, from which they have inferred that the Lord does not see, does not regard; yet, when the day of his wrath comes, he will look towards them. 2. That they went toward Sodom, v. 22, and accordingly, we find two of them at Sodom, ch. 19. 1. Whether the third was the Lord, before whom Abraham yet stood, and to whom he drew near, v. 23, as most think, or whether the third left them before they came to Sodom, and the Lord before whom Abraham stood was the Shekinah, or that appearance of the Divine Glory which Abraham had formerly seen and conversed with, is uncertain. However, we have here, (1.) The honour Abraham did to his guests; he went with them to bring them on the way, as one that was both to part with such good company, and was desirous to pay his utmost respects to them. This is a piece of civility, proper to be showed to our friends; but it must be done as the apostle directs, (3 John 6.) after a godly sort. (2.) The honour they did to him, for these that honour our God, he will honour; God communicated to Abraham his purpose to destroy Sodom, and not only so, but entered into a free conference with him about it. Having taken him, more closely than before, into covenant with himself, ch. 17. 1, he here admits him into more intimate communion with him, and than ever, as the man of his counsel. Observe here, 1. God's friendly thoughts concerning Abraham, (v. 17, 19.) where we have his resolution to make known to Abraham his purpose concerning Sodom,
with the reasons of it. If Abraham had not brought them on their way, perhaps he had not been thus favoured; but he that loves to walk with wise men, shall be wise, Prov. 13. 20. See how God is pleased to argue with himself; Shall I hide from Abraham (or, as some read it, Am I concealing from Abraham) that thing which I do? " Can I go about such a thing, and not tell Abraham?"

Thus it was God, in his counsels, express himself, after the manner of men, with deliberation. But why must Abraham be of the cabinet council? The Jews suggest that because God had granted the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, therefore he would not destroy those cities which were a part of that land, without his knowledge and consent. But God here gives twof other reasons for his judgment, for he is a friend and a favourite, and one that God has a particular kindness for, and great things in store for. He is to become a great nation; and not only so, but in the Messiah which is to come from his loins, "All nations of the earth shall be blessed." Note, The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Ps. 25. 14. Prov. 3. 32. Those that by faith live a life of communion with God, and do what God approves, and are not to be accounted mind other than people, though not with a prophetic, yet with a prudential, practical, knowledge. They have a better insight than others into what is present, (Hos. 14. 9. Ps. 107. 43.) and a better foresight of what is to come, at least, so much as suffices for their conduct and for their comfort.

2. Abraham must know, for he will teach his household, v. 19. I know Abraham very well, that he will command his children and his household after him.

Consider this, (1.) As a very bright part of Abraham's character and example. He not only prayed with his family, but he taught them as a man of knowledge, nay, he commanded them as a man in authority, and was prophet and king, as well as priest, in his own house. Observe, [1.] God having made the covenant with him and his seed, and his household being circumcised, pursuant to that, he was very careful to teach and rule them well. Those that expect family-blessings, must make conscience of family-duty. If our children be the Lord's, they must be nursed for him; if they wear his livery, they must be trained up in his work. [2.] Abraham not only took care of his children, but of his household; his servants, his entourage, servants. [3.] He not only taught his family what they should do, but inspect the manners of, all under their roof. The poorest servants have precious souls that must be looked after. [5.] Abraham made it his care and business to promote practical religion in his family. He did not fill their heads with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputations, but he taught them to keep the way of the Lord, and to do judgment and justice, that is, to be serious and devout in the worship of God, and to be honest in their dealings with all men. [5.] Abraham, herein, had an eye to posterity, and was in care not only that his household with him, but that his household after him, should keep the way of the Lord; that religion might flourish in his family, when he was in his grave. [5.] His doing this, was the fulfilling of the covenant and promise, and an additional blessing from him. Those only can expect the benefit of the promises, that make conscience of their duty.

(2.) We may consider this as the reason why God would make known to him his purpose concerning Sodom, because he was communicative of his knowledge, and improved it for the benefit of those that were under his charge. Note, To him that hath, shall he give, Matth. 13. 12. — 25. Those that make a good use of their knowledge, shall know more.

II. God's friendly talk with Abraham; in which he makes known to him his purpose concerning Sodom, and allows him a liberty of application to him about that matter. 1. He tells him of the evidence there was against Sodom, v. 20. The cry of Sodom is great. Note, Some sins, and the sins of some sinners, cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance. The impiety of Sodom was crying iniquity, that is, it was so very provoking, that it even urged God to punish. 2. The inquiry he would make upon this evidence, v. 21, I will go down now and see. Not as if there were any thing concerning which God is in doubt, or in the dark; but he is pleased thus to express himself after the manner of men, (1.) To show the incontrovertible equity of all his judicial proceedings. Men might have said, God, we know not in what way, or with what judgment, he is; it is not spoken of as not yet peremptory, that room and encouragement might be given to Abraham to make intercession for them. Thus God looked if there were any to intercede, Isa. 59. 16.

23. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24. Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? 25. That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? 26. And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. 27. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: 28. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find thee forty and five, I will not destroy it. 29. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. 30. And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. 31. And he said, If I find thee thirty, I will not destroy it. 32. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be twenty there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. 33. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake. 34. And the Lord went his
way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

Communion with God is kept up by the word and by prayer. In the word, God speaks to us; in prayer, we speak to him. God had spoken to Abraham his purposes concerning Sodom; now from thence Abraham takes occasion to speak to God on Sodom's behalf. Note, God's word does us good when it turns us with matter for prayer, and excites us to it. When God has spoken to us, we must consider what we have to say to him upon it.

Observe,

I. The solemnity of Abraham's address to God on this occasion, v. 23. Abraham drew near. The expression intimates, 1. A holy concern; he engaged his heart to approach God, v. 18. 2. That Sodom be destroyed, and I not speak one good word for it? 2. A holy confidence: he drew near with an assurance of faith, drew near as a prince, Job 31. 37. Note, When we address ourselves to the duty of prayer, we ought to remember that we are drawing near to God, that we may be filled with a reverence of him, Lev. 10. 3.

II. The general scope of this prayer. It is the first prayer that has been recorded in the Bible; and it is a prayer for the sparing of Sodom. Abraham, no doubt, greatly abhorred the wickedness of Sodom, he would not have lived among them, as Lot did, if they would have given him the best estate in their country; and yet he prayed earnestly for them. Note, Though sin is to be hated, sinners are to be pitied and prayed for. God delights not in their death, nor shrubs: let us be diligent to carry our intercessions to God, that if they were dealing with a man like themselves, they could not but fear that he would be angry with them. But he with whom we have to do, is God and not man; and, however he may seem, is not really, angry with the prayers of the upright, (Ps. 80. 4.) for they are his delight, (Prov. 15. 8.) and he is pleased when he is wrestled with. [2.] That even when we receive special tokens of God's displeasure with ourselves, lest we should be too reverent to God, we may pray to him for the divine consolation; and therefore we must bring the Mediator with us in the arms of our faith, to atone for the iniquity of our holy things. 3. Here is great charity. (1.) A charitable opinion of Sodom's character: as bad as it was, he thought there were several good people in it. It becomes us to hope the best of the worst places. Of the two, it is better to err in the extreme. (2.) A charitable desire of Sodom's welfare; he used all his interest at the throne of grace for mercy for them. We never find him thus earnest in pleading for God with himself and his family, as here for Sodom.

IV. Here are great boldness, and believing confidence.

(1.) He took the liberty to pitch upon a certain number of righteous ones which he supposed might be in Sodom. Such an ask he fifty, v. 24. (2.) He drew upon God's concessions, again and again. As God granted much, he still begged more, with the hope of gaining his point. (3.) He brought the terms as low as he could for shame, (having prevailed for mercy if there were but ten righteous ones in five cities,) and perhaps so low, that he concluded they would have been spared. [1.] Though the righteous be among the wicked, yet the righteous God will not, certainly he will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Though in this world they may be involved in the same common calamities, yet in the great day, a distinction will be made. Among the best there are, commonly some bad, and among the worst some good. Even in Sodom, one Lot. [2.] Though the righteous be among the wicked, yet the righteous God will not, certainly he will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. Though in this world they may be involved in the same common calamities, yet in the great day, a distinction will be made. Among the best there are, commonly some bad, and among the worst some good. Even in Sodom, one Lot. [3.] That the Judge of all the earth will do right; undoubtedly he will, because he is the Judge of all the earth; it is the apostle's argument, Rom. 3. 5, 6. Note, [1.] God is the Judge of all the earth; he gives charge to all, takes cognizance of all, and will pass sentence upon all. [2.] That God Almighty never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures, either by withholding that which is right, or by exacting more than is right, Job 34. 10, 11.

2. Here is great humility. (1.) A deep sense of his own unworthiness, v. 27. Behold now, I have taken upon myself to speak unto the Lord, who am I, that I should be the mighty one, and to tell God, who am he, but dust and ashes; and again, v. 51. 52. He was amazed at his own boldness, and the liberty God graciously allowed him, considering God's greatness,—he is the Lord; and his own meanness,—but dust and ashes. Note, [1.] The greatest of men, the most considerable and deserving, are but dust and ashes, mean and vile, before God; despicable, feeble, and dying. (2.) Whenever we draw near to God, it becomes us reverently to acknowledge the vast distance that there is between us and God. He is the Lord of glory, we are worms of the earth. [3.] The access we have to the throne of grace, and the freedom of speech allowed us, are just matter of humble wonder, 2 Sam. 7. 18. (2.) An awful dread of God's displeasure. O let not the Lord be angry, v. 30, and again, v. 32. Note, [1.] The importunity with which themselves spoken to God, is such, that if they were dealing with a man like themselves, they could not but fear that he would be angry with them. But he with whom we have to do, is God and not man; and, however he may seem, is not really, angry with the prayers of the upright, (Ps. 80. 4.) for they are his delight, (Prov. 15. 8.) and he is pleased when he is wrestled with. [2.] That even when we receive special tokens of God's displeasure with ourselves, lest we should be too reverent to God, we may pray to him for the divine consolation; and therefore we must bring the Mediator with us in the arms of our faith, to atone for the iniquity of our holy things.
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if there were not so many; as the dresser of the vineyard, who consented that the barren tree should be cut down, if one year's trial more did not make it fruitful, Luke 13. 9. Or, (2.) Because God restrained his spirit from asking any further. When God has determined the ruin of a place, he forbids it to be proceeded on, Jer. 7. 16.—11. 14.—14. Ham. 1.

Lot. Here is the breaking up of the conference, v. 33. 1. The Lord went his way. The visions of God must not be constant in this world, where it is by faith only that we are to set God before us. God did not go far, till Abraham had said all he had to say; for he is never weary of hearing prayer, Isa. 59. 1. 2. Abraham returned unto his place, not pushed up with the honour of him, nor by these extraordinary interviews, taken off from the ordinary course of duty; he returned to his place, to observe what the event would be; and it proved that his prayer was heard, and yet Sodom not spared, because there were not ten righteous in it. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God.

CHAP. XIX.

The contents of this chapter we have, 2 Pet. 2. 6. 8, where we find that God, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, and delivered just Lot. It is the history of Sodom's ruin, and Lot's deliverance from it. First, the ruin of Sodom; and that ruin was partly, partly, partly, ch. 16. of God's coming to take a view of the present state of Sodom; what its wickedness was, and what righteous persons there were in it: now here we have the result of that inquiry. 1. It was found, upon trial, that Lot was very good, v. 1. 3, and it did not appear that there was one more of the same character. II. It was found that the Sodomites were very wicked, and vile, v. 4. 11. III. Special care was therefore taken for the securing of Lot and his family, in a place of safety, v. 12. 23. IV. Mercy having rejoiced therein, justice shows itself in the ruin of Sodom, and the death of Lot's wife, v. 24. 26, with a general repetition of the story, v. 27. 29. V. A foul sin that Lot was guilty of, in conniving inest with his two daughters, v. 30. 35.

1. AND there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; 2. And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet; and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

These angels, it is likely, were two of the three that had just before been with Abraham; the two created angels that were sent to execute God's purpose concerning Sodom. Observe here,

I. There was but one good man in Sodom, and these heavenly messengers soon found him out. Wherever we are, we should inquire out those of the place that live in the fear of God, and should choose to associate ourselves with them; Matth. 10. 11. Thunder calls is thunder, and there are none. II. Lot sufficiently distinguished himself from the rest of his neighbours, at this time, which plainly set a mark upon him. He that did not act like the rest, must not fare like the rest. 1. Lot sat in the gate of Sodom at even; when the rest, it is likely, were tipp'ing and drinking, he sat alone, waiting for an opportunity to do good. 2. He was extremely respectful to men whose men and aspect were sober and serious, though they did not come in state. He bowed himself to the ground, when he met them, as if, upon the first view, he discerned something divine in them. 3. He was hospitable, and very free and generous in his invitations and entertainments. He courted these strangers to his house, and to the best accommodations he had, and gave them all the evidences that he could of his sincerity: (1.) When the angels, to try whether he were hearty in the invitation, declined the acceptance of it, at first, (which is the common usage of those who are solicitous to be modest,) his refusal did but make him more important; for he pressed upon them greatly, v. 3. Partly, because he would by no means have them to expose themselves to the inconveniences and perils of lodging in the street of Sodom; and partly, because he was desirous of their company and converse. He had not seen two such honest faces in Sodom this great while. Note, Those that live in bad places, should know how to value the society of those that are wise and good, and earnestly desire it. (2.) When the angels accepted his invitation, he treated them nobly; he made a feast for them, and thought it well-bestowed on such guests. Note, Good people should be (prudence) generous people.

4. But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter; 5. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him. 7. And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. 8. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. 9. And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. 10. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

Now it appeared, beyond contradiction, that the cry of Sodom was no louder than there was cause for. This night's work was enough to fill the measure. For we find here,

I. That they were all wicked, v. 4. Wickedness was grown universal, and they were unanimous in every vile design. Here were old and young, and all from every quarter, engaged in this riot; the old were not past it, and the young were soon come up to it; either they had no magistrates to keep the peace, and protect the peaceable; or their magis-
tates were themselves aiding and abetting. Note, When sin is become epidemic, it is fatal to any place, Isa. 1. 5. 7.

II. That they were arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness; they were sinners before the Lord exceedingly, ch. 13. 13, for,

1. It was the most unnatural and abominable wickedness that they were now set upon, a sin that still bears their name, and is called Sodomity. They were carried headlong by the devil (Isa. 5. 29, 27.) which are worse than brutish, and the eternal reproach of the human nature, and which cannot be thought of without horror, by those that have the least spark of virtue, and any remains of natural light and conscience. Note, Those that allow themselves in unnatural uncleanness, are marked for the vengeance of eternal fire. See Jude 7.

2. They were not ashamed to own it, and to prosecute their design by force and arms. The practice had been bad enough, if it had been carried on by intrigue and wheedling; but theyproclaimed war with virtue, and bid open defiance to it. Hence during sinners are said to declare their sin as Sodom, Isa. 5. 9. Note, Those that become impudent in sin, generally prove impotent in sin; and it will be their ruin. Those that have hard hearts indeed, that sin in sight of God, ver. 15.

3. When Lot interposed, with all the mildness of approach, to check the rage and fury of their lust, they were most insolently rude and abusive to him. He ventured himself among them, v. 6. He spoke civilly to them, called them brethren, v. 7, and begged of them not to do so wickedly; and, being greatly disturbed at their vile attempt, unadvisedly and rashly offered to prostitute his two daughters to them, v. 8. It is true, of two evils we must choose the less; but of two sins we must choose neither, nor ever do evil, that good may come of it. He reasoned with them, pleaded the laws of hospitality, and the protection of his house which his guests were entitled to; but you had as good offer reason to a roaring lion and a raging bear, as to these headstrong sinners, who were governed only by lust and passion, and who were not acquainted with Lot's arguments with them, does but exasperate them, and, to complete their wickedness, and fill up the measure of it, they fell foul upon him. (1.) They ridicule him, charge him with the absurdity of pretending to be a magistrate, when he was not so much as a free-man of their city, v. 9. Note, It is common for reprovers to be unjustly upbraided as usurpers, and while offering the kindness of a friend, to be charged with assuming the authority of a judge; as if a man might not speak reason, without taking too much upon him. (2.) They threaten him, and lay violent hands upon him; and the good man is in danger of being pulled in pieces by this outrageous rabble. Note, [1.] Those that are to be reformed, hate those that reproves them, though with ever so much tenderness. Presumptuous sinners do by their consciences as the Sodomites did by their checks, still their accusations, press hard upon them, till they have scared them and quite stopped their mouths, and so made themselves ripe for ruin. [2.] Abuses offered to God's messengers and to faithful reprovers, soon fill the measure of a people's wickedness, and bring destruction without remedy. See Prov. 29. 1. and 2. Chron. 36. 16. If reproves remain not, there is no remedy. See 2 Chron. 25. 16.

III. That nothing less than the power of an angel could save a good man out of their wicked hands. It was now past dispute what Sodom's character was, and what course must be taken with it; and therefore the angels immediately give a specimen of what they further intended.

1. They rescue Lot, v. 10. Note, (1.) He that waketh shall be warned also himself. Lot was solicitous to protect them, and now they take special care for his safety, in return for his kindness. (2.) Angels are employed for the special preservation of those that expose themselves to danger by well-doing. The saints, at death, are pulled like Lot into a house of perfect safety, and the door shut for ever against those that pursue them.

2. They chuse the insolence of the Sodomites, v. 11. They smite them with blindness. This was designed, (1.) To put an end to their attempts and disable them to pursue it. Justly were they struck blind, who had been deaf to reason. Violent persecutors are often infatuated, so that they cannot push on their malicious designs against God's messengers, Job. 5. 14. 15. Yet these Sodomites, after they struck blind, continued seeking the door, to break it down, till they were tired. No judgments will, of themselves, change the corrupt natures and purposes of wicked men. If their minds had not been blinded as well as their bodies, they would have said, as the magicians, This is the finger of God, and would have submitted. (2.) It was to be an earnest of their utter ruin the next day. When God, in a way of righteous judgment, binds men, their condition is already desperate, Rom. 11. 6, 9.

12. And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: 13. For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it. 14. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

We have here the preparation for Lot's deliverance.

I. Notice is given him of the approach of Sodom's ruin, v. 13. We will destroy this place. Note, The holy angels are ministers of God's wrath for the destruction of sinners, as well as of his mercy for the preservation and deliverance of his people. In this sense, the good angels become evil angels, Ps. 78. 49.

II. He is directed to give notice to his friends and relations, that they, if they would, might be saved with him, v. 12, "Hast thou here any besides, that thou art concerned for? If thou hast, go tell them what is coming." Now this implies, 1. The command of a great duty, which was, to do all he could for the safety of the world, and then to snatch them as brands out of the fire. Note, Those that are in grace are themselves delivered out of a sinful state, should do what they can for the deliverance of others, especially their relations. 2. The offer of great favour. They do not ask whether he knew any righteous ones in the city fit to be spared; no, they knew there were none; but they ask what relations he had there; that, whether righteous or righteous daughters, they might be saved with him. Note, Bad people often fare the better in this world for the sake of their good relations. It is good being akin to a godly man.

III. He applies himself accordingly to his sons in law, v. 14. Observe, 1. The fair warning that Lot gave them. Up, get you out of this place. The manner of expression is startling and quickening,
It was no time to trifle, when the destruction was just at the door. They had not forty days to turn them in, as the Ninevites had. Now or never, they must make their escape. At midnight this cry was made. Such as this, is our call to the unconverted, to turn and live. 2. The slight they put upon this warning. He seemed to them as one that mocked. They thought, perhaps, that the assault which the Sodomites had just now made upon his house, had disturbed his head, and put him into such a fright, that he knew not what he said; or they thought that he was not in earnest with them. They who lived a merry life, and made a jest of every thing, made a jest of that, and so they persisted in the overthrow. Thus many who are warned of the misery and danger they are in by sin, make a light matter of it, and think their ministers do but jest with them; such will perish with their blood upon their own heads.

15. And when the morning arose, then the angels hardened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16. And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. 18. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord. 19. Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast showed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die. 20. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live. 21. And he said unto him, See, I have accepted thee, concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for which thou hast spoken. 22. Hastethou, escape thither; for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. 23. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Here is,

I. The rescue of Lot out of Sodom. Though there were not ten righteous men in Sodom, for whose sakes it might be spared, yet that one righteous man that was among them, delivered his own soul, Ezek. 14. 14. Early in the morning, his own guests, in kindness to him, turned him out of doors, and his family with him, v. 15. His daughters that were married, perished with their unbelieving husbands; but those that continued with him, were preserved with him, Observe.

1. With what a gracious violence Lot was brought out of Sodom, v. 16. It seems, though he did not make a jest of the warning given, as his sons-in-law did, yet he lingered, he tripped, he did not make so much haste as the case required. Thus many that are under some convictions about the misery of their spiritual state, and the necessity of a change, yet defer this, and delay, and foolishly linger. Lot declared he would not go, and it might have been fatal to him, if the angels had not laid hold on his hand and brought him forth, and saved him with fear, Jude 25. Here in it is said, The Lord was merciful to him; other wise he might have justly left him to perish, since he was so loth to depart. Note, (1.) The salvation of the most righteous men must be attributed to God's mercy, not to their own merit. We are saved by grace. (2.) God's power also must be acknowledged in the bringing of souls out of a sinful state. If God had not brought us forth, we had never come forth. (3.) If God had not been merciful to us, our lingering had been our ruin.

2. With what a gracious vehemence he was urged to make the best of his way, when he was brought forth, v. 17. (1.) He must still apprehend himself in danger of being consumed, and be quickened by the law of self-preservation to flee for his life. Note, A holy fear and trembling are found necessary to the working out of our salvation. (2.) He must therefore mind his business with the utmost care and diligence. He must not hanker after Sodom, Look not behind thee; he must not loiter by the way, Stay not in all the plain, for it would all be made one dead sea; he must not take up short of the place of refuge appointed him, Escape to the mountain. Such as these, are the commands given to those who through grace are delivered out of a sinful state and condition. [1.] Return not to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. [2.] Rest not in self and the world, for that is staying in the plain. And, [3.] Reach toward Christ and Heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain, short of which we must not take up.

II. The fixing of a place of refuge for him. The mountain was first appointed for him to flee to, but 1. He begged for a city of refuge, one of the five that lay together, called Beith, ch. 14. 2, 18. 20. It was Lot's weakness to think a city of his own choosing would be safer than the mountain of God's appointing. And he argued against himself, when he pleaded, Thou hast magnified thy mercy in saving my life, and I cannot escape to the mountain; for could not he that had plucked him out of Sodom, when he lingered, carry him safe to the mountain, though he began to tire? Could not He that had saved him from greater evils, save him from the lesser? He insists much in his petition upon the smallness of the place. It is a little one, is it not? Therefore, it was to be hoped, not so bad as the rest. This gave a new name to the place; it was called Zoar, a little one. Intercessions for little ones are worthy to be remembered.

2. God granted him his request, though there was much infirmity in it, v. 21, 22. See what favour God showed a true saint, though weak. (1.) Zoar was spared, to gratify him. Though his intercession for it was, as Abraham's for Sodom, from a principle of generous charity, but merely from selfinterest, yet God granted him his request, to show how much the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth. (2.) Sodom's ruin was suspended, till he was safe. I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Note, The very presence of good men in a place helps to keep off judgments. See what care God takes for the preservation of his people. The business is, to show that God's servants are sealed, Rev. 7. 3. Ezek. 9. 4.

Lastly, It is taken notice of, that the sun was risen when Lot entered into Zoar. For when a good man comes into a place, he brings light along with him, or should do.
24. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; 25. And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

Then, when Lot was got safe into Zoar, then this ruin came; for good men are taken away from the evil to come, when the sun was right bright and clear, promising a fair day, then this storm arose, to show that it was not from natural causes. Concerning this destruction, observe,

1. That God was the immediate Author of it. It was destruction from the Almighty, The Lord rained,—from the Lord, v. 24, that is, God from himself, by his own immediate power, and not in the common course of nature. Or, God the Son from God the Father; for the Father has committed all judgment to the Son. Note, He that is the Saviour, will be the Destroyer of those that reject the salvation.

2. That it was a strange punishment, Job 31. 3. Never was the like before or since. Hell was rained from Heaven upon them. Fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, this was the portion of their end, Ps. 11. 6; not a flash of lightning, which is destructive enough, but God gives it commission, but a shower of lightning. Brimstone was scattered upon their habitation, Job. 18. 15, and then the fire soon fastened upon them. God could have drowned them, as he did the old world; but he would show that he has many arrows in his quiver, fire as well as water.

3. That it was a judgment that laid all waste; it overthrew the cities, and destroyed all the inhabitants of them, the plain, and all that grew upon the ground, v. 25. It was an utter ruin, and irreparable; that fruitful valley remains to this day a great lake, or dead sea; it is called the Salt Sea, Numb. 34. 12. Travellers say that it is about thirty miles long, and ten miles broad; it has no living creature in it; it is not moved by the wind; the smell of it is offensive; things do not easily sink in it. The fire and brimstone were fire and brimstone; and when it casts up. Jordan falls into it, and is lost there.

4. That it was a punishment that answered to their sin. Burning lusts against nature were justly punished with this preternatural burning. They that went after strange flesh, were destroyed by strange fire, Jude 7. They persecuted the angels with their rabble, and made Lot afraid; and now God persecuted them with his tempest, and made them afraid with his storm, Ps. 83. 15.

5. That it was designed for a standing revelation of the wrath of God against sin and sinners in all ages: it is, accordingly, often referred to in the scripture, and made a pattern of the ruin of Israel, Deut. 29. 23, of Babylon, Isa. 13. 19, of Edom, Jer. 49. 18, of Moab and Ammon, Zeph. 2. 9. Nay, it was typical of the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7, and that ruin shall fall upon the wicked, even upon them, that displease the gospel, Matt. 10. 15. It is in allusion to this destruction, that the place of the damned is often represented by a lake that burns, as Sodom did, with fire and brimstone. Let us learn from it, (1.) The evil of sin, and the hurtful nature of it. Iniquity tends to ruin. (2.) The terrours of the Lord. See what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!

26. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

This also is written for our admonition; our Saviour refers to it, Luke 17. 32, Remember Lot's wife. As by the example of Lot's wife, the wicked are warned to turn from their wickedness; so by the example of Lot's wife, the righteous are warned not to turn away from their righteousness. See Ezek. 3. 18, 20. We have here,

1. The sin of Lot's wife: she looked back from behind him. This seemed a small thing, but we are sure, by the punishment of it, that it was a great sin, and exceeding sinful. (1.) She disobeyed an express command, and so sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression which ruined us all. (2.) She was at the bottom of it; she questioned whether Sodom would be destroyed, and thought she still might have been safe in it. (3.) She looked back upon her neighbours whom she had left behind, with more concern than was fit, now that their day of grace was over, and Divine Justice was glorifying itself in their ruin. See Isa. 66. 24. (4.) Probably, she hankered after her house and goods in Sodom, and was loath to leave them. Christ intimates this to be her sin, Luke 17. 31, 32. She too much regarded her stuff. (5.) Her looking back bespoke an inclination to go back; and therefore our Saviour uses it as a warning against apostasy from our Christian profession. We have all renounced the world and the flesh, and have set our faces heavenward; we are in the plain, upon our probation; and it is at our peril, if we return into the interests we profess to have abandoned. Drawing back is to perish, and looking back is towards it. Let us therefore fear, Heb. 4. 1.

2. The punishment of Lot's wife for this sin. She was struck dead in the place; yet her body did not fall down, but stood fixed and erect like a pillar or monument, not liable to waste or decay as human bodies exposed to the air are, but metamorphosed into a metallic substance which would last perpetually. Come, behold the goodness and severity of God: at first severity, for aught we know, and then goodness; toward his wife that looked back, severity. Though she was nearly related to a righteous man, though better than her neighbours, and though a monument of distinguishing mercy in her deliverance out of Sodom, yet God did not connive at her disobedience; for great privileges will not secure us from the wrath of God, if we do not carefully and faithfully observe all the conditions that are made good to us.

27. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord: 28. And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. 29. And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

Our communion with God consists in our gracious regard to him, and his gracious regard to us; we have here there the communion that was between God and Abraham, in the event concerning Sodom, as before, in the consultation concerning it; for communion with God is to be kept up in providences as well as in ordinances.

1. Here is Abraham's pious regard to God in this event, in two things; (1.) A careful expectation of the event, v. 27. He gat up early, to look toward Sodom; and, to intimate that his design here was to see what became of his prayers, he went to the very place where he had stood before the Lord, and set himself there, as upon his watch-tower, Hab. 2.
II. The great sin that Lot and his daughters were guilty of, when they were in this desolate place. It is a sad story:

1. His daughters laid a very wicked plot to bring him to sin; and their's was, doubtless the greater guilt. They contrived, under pretence of cheering up the spirits of their father in his present circumstances, to make him drunk, and then lie with him, v. 31, 32. (1.) Some think that their pretence was plausible: their father had no sons, they had no husbands, nor knew they where to have any of the holy seed; or, if they had children by others, their father's name was not to be preserved in them; some think that they had the Messiah in their eye, who they hoped, might descend from their father; for he came from Terah's elder son, was separated from the rest of Shem's posterity, as well as Abraham, and magnificently delivered out of Sodom. Their mother, and the rest of the family were gone, they might not marry with the cursed Canaanites; and therefore they supposed that the end they aimed at, and the extremity they were brought to, would excuse the irregularity. Thus the learned Monsieur Alix. Note, God's intentions are often abused to patronise bad actions. But, (2.) Whatever their pretence was, it is certain that their project was very wicked and vile, and an impudent affront to the very light and low of nature. Note, [1.] The sight of God's most tremendous judgments upon sinners, will not, of itself, without the grace of God, restrain evil hearts from evil practices: one would wonder how the fire of lust could possibly kindle upon them, who had so lately been the eyes-witnesses of Sodom's flames. [2.] Solitude has its temptations as well as company, and particularly to uncleanness. When Joseph was alone with his mistress, he was in danger, ch. 39. 11. Relations that dwell together, especially if solitary, have

30. And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain; and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave; he and his two daughters.

31. And the first-born said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth.

32. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

33. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the first-born went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

34. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the first-born said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.

35. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose.

36. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father.

37. And the first-born bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

38. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.

Here is,

1. The great trouble and distress that Lot was

brought into, after his deliverance, v. 30. He was frightened out of Zoar; durst not dwell there; either, because he was afraid for the safety of himself and his family, or, for a refuge of his own choosing, and that therein he had foolishly prescribed to God, and therefore he could not but distrust his safety in it; or, because he found it as wicked as Sodom, and therefore concluded it could not long survive it; or, perhaps, he observed the rise and increase of those waters, which, after the conflagration, perhaps from Jordan, began to overflow the plain, and which, mixing with salt seas, by degrees made the Dead Sea; in those waters he concluded Zoar must needs perish (though it had escaped the fire,) because it stood upon the same flat. Note, Settlements and shelters of our own choosing, and in which we do not follow God, commonly prove an easy to us. 2. He was forced to take himself to the mountain, and to take upon himself for his habitation there. Methinks, it was strange that he did not return to Abraham, and put himself under his protection, to whom he had once and again owed his safety: but the truth is, there are some good men, that are not wise enough to know what is best for themselves. 

Note, [1.] He was now glad to go to the mountain, the place which God had appointed for his shelter. Note, It is well, if disappointment in our way drive us as last to God's way. (3.) He that, while ago, could not find room enough for himself and his stock in the wide level land, where God had justly left him, as far as from him as he could, is now confined to a hole in a hill, where he has scarcely room to turn him, and there he is solitary and trembling. Note, It is just with God to reduce these to poverty and restraint, who have abused their liberty and plenty. See also in Lot what these bring themselves to, at last, that forsake the communion of saints for secular advantages; they will be beaten with their own work.
need carefully to watch against the least evil thought of this kind, lest Satan get an advantage.

2. Lot himself, by his own folly and unwariness, was wretchedly overcome, and suffered himself so far to be imposed upon by his own children, as, two nights together, to be drunk, and to commit 'leest, v. 33, &c., Lord, what is man!' What are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves? See here, (1.) The peril of security; Lot, who not only kept himself sober and chaste in Sodom, but was a constant mourner for the wickedness of the place, and a witness against it, is yet, in the mountain, where he was alone, and, as he thought, quite out of the way of temptation, thus shamefully over¬
taken: let him therefore that thinks he stands, stands high, and stands firm, 

"take heed lest he fall." No mountain, on this side the holy hill above, can set us out of the reach of Satan's fiery darts. (2.) The peril of drunkenness; it is not only a great sin itself, but it is the inlet of many sins; it may prove the inlet of the worst and most unnatural sins, which may be a perpetual wound and dishonour. Excellently does Mr. Herbert describe it,

"He that is drunken, may his Mother kill "Big with his Sister." A man may do that without reluctance, when he is drunken, which, when he is sober, he could not think of without horror. (3.) The peril of temptation from our dearest relations and friends, whom we love and esteem, and expect kindness from. Lot, whose temperance and chastity were impreg¬

nable against the batteries of foreign force, was surprised into sin and shame by the base treachery of his own children; we must dread a snare wherever we are, and be always upon our guard.

In the close, we have an account of the birth of the two sons, or grandparents, (ca l them which you will,) of Lot—Mam and Amnon, the fathers of two nations, neighbours to Israel, and which we often read of in the Old Testament; both together are called the children of Lot, Ps. 83. 8. Note, Though prosperous births may attend incestuous conceptions, yet they are so far from justifying them, that they rather perpetuate the reproach of them, and entail infamy upon posterity; yet the tribe of Judah, of which our Lord sprang, descended from such a birth, and Ruth, a Moabess, has a name in his genealogy, Mat. 1. 3, 3.

Lastly, Observe that, after this, we never read any more of Lot, nor what became of him; no doubt he repented of his sin, and was pardoned: but from the silence of the scripture concerning him hence¬

forward, we may learn that drunkenness, as it makes men forgetful, so it makes them forgotten; and many a name, which otherwise might have been remembered with respect, is buried by it in contempt and oblivion.

CHAP. XX.

We are here returning to the story of Abraham; yet that part of it which is here recorded, is not to his honour. The nearest marbles have their flaws, and while there are spots in the sun, we must not expect any thing spotless under it. The scripture, it should be remarked, is im¬

partial in relating the blemishes even of its most cele¬

brated characters. We have here, I., Lot as a sojourner in denying his wife, and Abimelech's sin thereupon in taking her, v. 1, 2. II. God's discourse with Abimelech in a dream, upon this occasion, wherein he shows him his sin, v. 3, accepts his plea, and yet doth not direct him to make restitution, v. 7. III. Abimelech's discourse with Abraham, wherein he chides him for the cheat he had put upon him, v. 8, 10, and Abraham excuses it as well as he can, v. 11, 13. IV. The issue of the whole story, in which God restores Abraham his wife, v. 14, 16, and Abraham, by prayer, prevails with God for the removal of the judgment Abimelech was under, v. 17, 18.

1. A ND Abraham journeyed thence to¬

ward the south country, and dwelt be¬

tween Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. 2. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

Here is,

1. Abraham's remove from Mamre, where he had lived near twenty years, into the country of the Philistines, v. 1, He sojourned in Gerar. We are not told upon what occasion he removed, whether terrified by the destruction of Sodom; or, be¬

cause the country round was, for the present, pre¬

judiced by it; or as some of the Jewish writers say, because he was grieved at Lot's incest with his daughters, and the reproach which the Canaanites cast upon him and his religion, for his kinsman's sake; doubtless, there was some good cause for his removal. Note, (1.) In a world where we are strangers and pilgrims, we cannot expect to be al¬

ways in the same place. (2.) Wherever we are, woe unto us, if we take ourselves but as sojourners.

2. His sin in denying his wife; as before, ch. 12, 13, which was not only in itself such an equivo¬

cation as bordered upon a lie, and which, if admitted as lawful, would be the ruin of human converse, and an inlet to all falsehood; but was also an exposing of the chastity and honour of his wife, which he ought to have been the protector of. But beside this, it had here a two-fold aggravation. (1.) That he had been guilty of the same sin himself, and had been reproved for it, and convinced of the folly of the sug¬

gestion which induced him to it; yet he returns to it. Note, It is possible that a good man may not only fall into sin, but relapse into the same sin, through the surprise and strength of temptation, and the infancy of the flesh. Let backsliders repen¬

then, but not despair, Jer. 3. 22. (2.) That Sarah, is it she should, was now the child of the promised seed, cr, at least, in expectation of being so quickly, according to the word of God; he ought therefore to have taken particular care of her now, as Jud. 13. 4.

3. The peril that Sarah was brought into by this means; The king of Gerar sent, and took her to his house, in order to take her to his bed. Note, The time of one often occasions the sin of others; he that breaks the hedge of God's commandments, opens a gap to he knows not how many; the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water.

3. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife. 4. But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? 5. Said he not unto me, She is my sister? And she, even she herself, said, He is my brother: In the in¬

tegrity of my heart, and innocence of my hands, have I done this. 6. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7. Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou re-
store her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

It appears by this, that God revealed himself by dreams, (which evidenced themselves to be divine and supernatural,) not only to his servants, the prophets, but even to those who were out of the pale of the church and covenant; but then, usually it was with some regard to God's own people, as in Pharaoh's dream, to Joseph, in Nebuchadnezzar's, to Daniel, and here in Abimelech's, to Abraham and Sarah, for he reproved this king for the sake, Ps. 105. 14, 15.

1. God gives him notice of his danger, (v. 3.) his danger of sin; telling him that the woman was a man's wife, so that if he take her, he wrongs her husband; his danger of death for this sin, Thou art a dead man; and God's saying so of a man, makes him so. Note, Every wilful sinner ought to be told that he is a dead man. As the condemned malefactor, and the patient whose case is mortal, are said to be so: If thou art a bad man, certainly art a dead man.

II. He pleads ignorance, (v. 4, 5.) that Abraham and Sarah had agreed to impose upon him, and not to let him know that they were any more than brother and sister. See what confidence a man may have toward God, when his heart condemns him not, 1 John 3. 21. If our consciences witness to our integrity, and we have reason to believe that however we may have been cheated into a snare, we have not, knowingly and willingly sinned against God, it will be our rejoicing in the day of evil. He pleads with God as Abraham had done, ch. 18. 23. Will thou slay a righteous nation? Not such a nation as Sodom, which was indeed justly destroyed, but a nation which, in this matter, was innocent.

III. God gives a very full answer to what he had said.

1. He allows his plea, and admits that what he did, he did in the integrity of his heart, v. 6, Yea, I know it. Note, It is matter of comfort to those that are honest, that God knows their honesty, and will acknowledge it, though perhaps men that are prejudiced against them, either cannot be convinced of it, or will not own that they are.

2. He lets him know that he was kept from proceeding in the sin, merely by the good hand of God upon him. I withheld thee from sinning against me. Abimelech was hereby kept from doing wrong, Abraham from suffering wrong, and Sarah from both. Note, (1.) There is a great deal of sin devised and designed, that is never executed. As bad as things are in the world, they are not so bad as the Devil and wicked men would have them. (2.) It is God that restrains men from doing the ill they would do; it is not from him that there is sin, but it is from him that there is not more sin, either by his influence upon men's minds, checking their inclination to sin, or by his providence, taking away the opportunity to sin. (3.) It is a great mercy to be hindered from committing sin; of this God must have the glory, whoever is the instrument, 1 Sam. 25. 30. 31.

3. He charges him to make restitution, v. 7. Now therefore, now that thou art better informed, restore the man his wife. Note, Ignorance will excuse no longer than it continues; if we ignorantly did wrong, that will not excuse us, if we knowingly persist in it, Lev. 5. 3, 5. The reasons why he must be just and kind to Abraham, are, (1.) Because he is a prophet; near and dear to God, for whom God does in a particular manner concern himself. God highly resents the injuries done to his prophets, and takes them as done to himself. (2.) Being a prophet, he shall pray for thee; that is a prophet's reward, and a good reward it is. It is intimated that there was great efficacy in the prayers of a prophet; and that good men should be ready to help those with their prayers, that stand in need of them, and should make, at least, this return for the kindesses that are done them. Abraham was accessory to Abimelech's trouble, and therefore was obliged in justice to pray for him. (3.) It is at thy peril, if thou do not restore her; know thou that thou shalt surely die. Note, It is that do wrong, whoever he is, prince or peasant, shall certainly receive for the wrong which he has done, unless he repent and make restitution, Col. 3. 25. No injustice can be made passable with God, no not by Casar's image stamped upon it.

3. Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears; and the men were sore afraid. 9. Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto me? And what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me, and on my kingdom, a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. 10. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? 11. And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. 12. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me: at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother.

Abimelech, being thus warned of God in a dream, takes the warning, and, as one truly afraid of sin and its consequences, he rises early to pursue the directions given him.

1. He has a care for his servants, (v. 8.) Abraham himself could not be more careful than he was, to command his household in this matter. Note, Those whom God has convinced of sin and danger, ought to tell others what God has done for their souls, that they also may be awakened, and brought to a like holy fear.

II. He has a chiding for Abraham. Observe,

1. The serious reproof which Abimelech gave to Abraham, v. 9, 10. His reasoning with Abraham upon this occasion was strong, and yet very mild. Nothing could be said better; he does not reproach him, nor insult over him; does not say, "Is this your profession? I see, though you will not swear, you will lie. If these be prophets, I will beg to be freed from the sight of them?" but he fairly represents the injury Abraham had done him, and calmly signifies his resentment of it. (1.) He calls that sin which he now found that he had been in danger of, a great sin. Note, Even the light of nature teaches men that the sin of adultery is a very great sin: he is observed, to the shame of many who call themselves Christians, and yet make a light matter of it. (2.) He looks upon it, that both himself and his kingdom would have been exposed to the wrath of God, if he had been guilty of that sin, though ignorantly. Note, The sins of kings often prove the plagues of kingdoms; rulers should therefore, for their people's sake, dread sin. (3.) He charges
Abraham with doing that which was not justifiable, in disowning his marriage; this he speaks of justly, and yet tenderly; he does not call him a liar and cheat; but tells him he had done deeds that ought not to be done. Note, Equivocation and dissimulation, however they may be palliated, are very bad things, and by no means to be admitted in any case. (4.) He tells it as a very great injury to himself and his family that Abraham should use them in such a manner; "What have I offended thee? If I had been thy worst enemy, thou couldst not have done me a worse turn, nor taken a more effectual course to be avenged on me." Note, We ought to reckon that these do us the greatest unkindness in the world, that any ways tempt or expose us to sin, though they may pretend friendship, and offer that which is grateful enough to the corrupt nature. (5.) He challenges him to assign a cause for his conduct, and to show what is the reason, (a) that he may have a just ground to stand on, and (b) that if the design be to overawe him, he may see it, and judge how far it will avail. Therefore he asks him, "What hast thou done, that thou hast done this thing? What reason hadst thou to think that if we had known her to be thy wife, thou wouldst have been exposed to any danger by it?" Note, A suspicion of our goodness is justly reckoned a greater affront than a slight upon our greatness. 2. The poor excuse that Abraham made for himself. (1.) He pleaded the excuse he had made of the place, ver. 11. He thought within himself, (though he could not give any good reason for his thinking so,) "Surely the fear of God is not in this place, and then they will slay me." [1.] Little good is to be expected there, where no fear of God is: see Ps. 36. 1. [2.] There are many places and persons, that he fears will not be as tender in their treatment of them, as he thinks they have: perhaps they are not called by our dividing name, they do not wear our budgest, they do not tie themselves to that which we have an opinion of; and therefore we conclude they have not the fear of God in their hearts, which is very injurious both to Christ and Christians, and makes us obnoxious to God's judgment. Matt. 7. 1. [3.] Unchastitely and censurably are sins that are heinous to all mankind in them, and were and have once persuaded themselves concerning such and such, that they have not the fear of God, they think that will justify them in the most unjust and unchristian practices toward them. Men would not do ill, if they did not first think ill. (2.) He excused it from the guilt of a downright lie, by making it out, that, in a sense, she was his sister, ver. 12. Some think she was own sister to Lot, and that she was the nephew of Abraham and his wife, when they first became sojourners, ver. 15. "When God caused me to wander from my father's house, then we settled this matter." Note, [1.] God is to be acknowledged in all our wanderings. [2.] These that travel abroad, and converse much with strangers, as they have need of the wisdom of the serpent, so it is requisite that that wisdom be ever tempered with the innocence of the dove. It may, for such I know, be said of God and man. (3.) He gives to Sarah good instruction, tells her that her husband (her brother, he calls him, to uphold her with calling him so) must be to her a covering of the eyes, that is, she must look at no other, nor desire to be looked at by any other. Note, Yekefolows must be to each other a covering of the eyes. The marriage-covenant is a covenant with the eyes, like Jeb's, chap. 31. 1. 3. The kindness of a hireling, which Abraham showed to Abimelech; he praised for him, ver. 17, 18. This honour God would put upon Abraham, that though Abimelech had restored Sarah, yet the judgment he was under should be removed upon the prayer of Abraham, and not before. Thus God healed Miriam, when Moses, whom she had most affronted, proved for her, Numb. 12. 13, and was reconciled to Jethro's friends, when Jethro, whom they had disowned, proved for them. (Psalm 98. 8.) and so did, as it were, give it under his hand, that he was reconciled to them. Note, The prayers of good men may be a kindness to great men, and ought to be valued.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Isaac the child of promise, born into Abraham's family, v. 1... 8. II. Ishmael, the
son of the bond-woman, cast out of it, v. 9. 21. III. Abraham's league with his neighbour Abimelech, v. 22 ... 32. IV. His devotion to his God, v. 33, 34.

1. AND the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. 2. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5. And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. 6. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. 7. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck! for I have born him a son in his old age. 8. And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

Long looked for comes at last. The vision concerning the promised seed is for an appointed time, and now at an end, it speaks, and does not lie; few under the Old Testament were brought into the world with such expectation as Isaac was; not for the sake of any great personal eminence at which he was to arrive, but because he was to be, in this very thing, a type of Christ, that Seed which the holy God so long promised, and holy men so long expected. In this account of the first days of Isaac, we may observe,

1. The fulfilling of God's promise in the conception and birth of Isaac, v. 3. 28. Note, God's providences look best and brightest when they are compared with his word, and when we observe how God in them all, acts as he has said, as he has spoken. 1. Isaac was born according to the promise. The Lord visited Sarah in mercy, as he had said. Note, No word of God shall fail to the ground; for he is faithful that has promised, and God's faithfulness is the stay and support of his people's faith. He was born at the set time which God had spoken to him, v. 2. Note, God is always punctual to his time; though his promised mercies come not at the time we set, they will certainly come at the time that He sets, and that is the best time. 2. He was born by virtue of the promise; Sarah by faith received strength to conceive, Heb. II. 11. God therefore, by promise, gave that strength. It was not by the power of common providence, but by the power of a special providence, that Isaac was born, as a sentence of death, as it were, passed upon the second causes; Abraham was old, and Sarah old, and both as good as dead; and then the word of God took place. Note, True believers, by virtue of God's promises, are enabled to do that which is above the power of human nature, for by them they 'hurtake of a divine nature,' 2 Pet. 1. 4.

II. Abraham's obedience to God's precept concerning Isaac. 1. He named him, as God commanded him, v. 3. God directed him to name him for a memorial, Isaac, laughter; and Abraham, whose office it was, gave him that name, though he might have designed him some other name of a more pompous signification. Note, It is fit that the luxuriance of human invention should always yield to the sovereignty and plainness of divine institution; yet there was good reason for the name. (1.) When Abraham received the promise of him, he laughed for joy, ch. 17. 17. Note, When the sun of comfort is risen upon the soul, it is good to remember how welcome the dawning of the day was, and with what exultation we embraced the promise. (2.) When Sarah received the promise, she laughed with dishonour and childlessness. 7. When God gives us the mercies he began to deal them out, we ought to remember with sorrow and shame our sinful distrusts of God's power and promise, when we were in pursuit of them. (3.) Isaac was himself, afterward, laughed at by Ishmael, v. 9, and perhaps his name bid him expect it. Note, God's favours are of the world's laughing-stocks. (4.) The promise which he was, not only the son, but the heir, and in his heirs, and to his seed, it was, as that which would fill their mouths with laughter.

2. He circumcised him, v. 4. The covenant being established with him, the seal of the covenant was administered to him: and though a bloody ordinance, and he a darling, yet it must not be omitted; no, nor deferred beyond the eighth day. God had kept time in performing the promise, and therefore Abraham must keep time in obeying the precept.

3. The impressions which this mercy made upon Sarah.

1. It filled her with joy, v. 6, "God has made me to laugh; he has given me both cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice." Thus the mother of our Lord, Luke 1. 46, 47. Note, (1.) God bestows mercies upon his people to encourage their joy in his work and service: and whatever is the matter of our joy, God must be acknowledged as the Author of it. 2. Hearken to the voice of the fool. (2.) When mercies have been long deferred, they are the more welcome when they come. (3.) It adds to the comforts of any mercy, to have our friends rejoice with us in it. See Luke 1. 58. "They that hear us, will laugh with me;" for laughing is catching. Others would rejoice in this instance of God's power and goodness, and be encouraged to trust in him. See Ps. 119. 74.

2. It filled her with wonder, v. 7. Observe here, (1.) What it was she thought so wonderful, that Sarah should give children suck, that she should not only bear a child, but be so strong and hearty at that age, as to give it suck. Note, Mothers, if they be able, ought to be nurses to their own children. Sarah was a person of quality; was aged; nursing might be prejudicial either to herself, or to the child; or to both; she had sense of dangers, and doubt, in her own family; and yet she would do her duty in this matter; and her daughters the good wives are, while they thus do well, 1 Pet. 3. 5, 6. See Lam. 4. 3. (2.) How she expressed her wonder, "Who would have said it?" The thing was so highly improbable, so near to impossible, that if any one but God had said it, we could not have believed it. Note, God's favours to his covenant people are such as shock both their own, and other's thoughts and expectations; who could imagine that God should do so much for these that deserve so little, nay, for those that deserve so ill? See Eph. 3. 20. 2 Sam. 7. 18, 19. Who would have said that God should send his Son to die for us, his Spirit to sanctify us, his angels to attend us? Who would have said that such great sins should be pardoned, such a man as David accepted, and such worthless, weak and worldly taken into covenant and communion with the great and holy God? IV. A short account of Isaac's infancy, v. 8, The child grew; special notice is taken of this, through a thing of course, to intimate that the children if the promise are growing children; See Luke 1. 80. 2. 40. They that are born of God, shall increase
more and more with the increase of God, Col. 2, 19. He grew so as not always to hear milk, but was able to hear strong meat, and then he was crowned: See Heb. 5, 13, 14. And then it was that Abraham made a great feast for his friends and neighbours, in thankfulness to God for his mercy to him. He made this feast, not on the day that Isaac was born, that would have been too great a disturbance to Sarah; nor on the day that he was circumcised, that would have been too great a diversion from the ordinance; but on the day that he was weaned, because God was his Nurse over the minds of children, and the preservation of them through the perils of the infant-age, are signal instances of the care and tenderness of the Divine Providence, which ought to be acknowledged, to its praise: see Ps. 22, 9, 10. Hos. 11, 1, 2.

9. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bond-woman, and her son: for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bond-woman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13. And also of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

The casting out of Ishmael is here considered of, and resolved on.

I. Ishmael himself gave the occasion, by some affronts he gave to Isaac his little brother; some think, on the day that Abraham made the feast, for joy that Isaac was safely weaned, which, the Jews say, was not till he was three years old; others say, five. Sarah hereafter, in her vexation at the above, says, "Servant of the Egyptian, mocking; v. 9, mocking Isaac, no doubt, for it is said, with reference to this, Gal. 4. 29, that he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Ishmael is here called the son of the Egyptian, because, as some think, the 400 years' affliction of the seed of Abraham by the Egyptians began now, and was to be dated from hence, ch. 15. 13. She saw him playing with Isaac, so the LXX. and, in play, mocking him. Ishmael was fourteen years older than Isaac; and when children are together, the elder should be careful and tender of the younger: but it argued a very base and sorrid disposition in Ishmael, to be abusive to a child that was no way a match for him. Note, 1. God takes notice of what children say and do in their play: and will reckon with them, if they say so, as they do this; though their parents do not. 2. Mocking is a great sin, and very provoking to God. 3. There is a rooted remaining enmity in the seed of the serpent against the Seed of the woman. The children of promise must expect to be mocked. This is persecution which they that live godly, must count upon. 4. None are rejected and cast out from God, but those who have first deserved it; Ishmael is continued in Abraham's family, till he becomes a disturbance, grief, and scandal to it.

II. Sarah made the motion, v. 10. Cast out this bond-woman. This seems to be spoken in some heat, yet it is quoted, Gal. 4. 30, as if it had been spoken by a spirit of prophesy: and it is the sentence passed on all hypocrites and carnal people, though they have a place and name in the visible church; and that after the flesh, and not by the Spirit, that rest in the law and reject the gospel-promise, shall certainly be cast out. It is made to point particularly at the rejection of the unbelieving Jews, who, though they were the seed of Abraham, yet because they submitted not to the gospel-covenant, were unchurched and disfranchised: and that which, above any thing, provoked God to cast them off, was, the mocking and persecuting of the gospel-church, God's Israel in the flesh, in the days of their unbelief.

16. Note, There are many who are familiarly conversant with the children of God in this world, and yet shall not partake with them in the inheritance of sons. Ishmael might be Isaac's play-fellow and school-fellow, yet not his fellow-heir.

III. Abraham was averse to it, v. 11. The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight. 1. It grieved him that Ishmael had given such a provocation. Note, Children ought to consider that the more their parents love them, the more they are grievous at their misconduct, and particularly their quarrels among themselves. 2. It grieved him that Sarah insisted upon such a punishment. "Might it not suffice to correct him; would nothing less serve than to expel him?" Note, Even the needful extremities which must be used with wicked and incorrigible children, are grievous to tender parents, who cannot thus afflict willingly.

IV. God determined it, v. 12, 13. We may well suppose Abraham to be greatly agitated about this matter; loath to displease Sarah, and yet loath to expel Ishmael; in this difficulty, God tells him what his will was, and then he is satisfied. Note, A good man desires no more in doubtful cases than to know his duty, and what God will have him do and when he is clear in that, he is, or ought to be, clear in this. To make Abraham so, God sets this matter before him in a true light, and shows him, 1. That the casting out of Ishmael was necessary to the establishment of Isaac in the rights and privileges of the covenant. In Isaac shall thy seed be called: both Christ and the church must descend from Abraham through the loins of Isaac; this is the entail of the promise made in Isaac himself, Gen. 21. 8, 12. (Rom. 9, 7.) to show that not all who come from Abraham's loins, were the heirs of Abraham's covenant. Isaac, the promised son, must be the father of the promised seed; therefore, "Away with Ishmael, send him far enough, lest he corrupt the manners, or attempt to invade the rights of Isaac." It will be his security to have his rival banished. The covenant-seed of Abraham must be a peculiar people, a people by themselves, from the very first distinguished, not mingled with those that were out of covenant, for this reason, Ishmael must be separated. Abraham was called alone, and so must Isaac be. See Isa. 51. 2. It is probable that Sarah little thought of this, (John 11. 51.) but God took what she said, and turned it into a miracle, as afterward, ch. 27. 10. 2. That the casting out of Ishmael should not be a ruin, v. 13. He shall be a nation, because he is they. Note, That it was his eternal ruin; it is presumption to say that all those who are left out of the eternal dispensation of God's covenant, are therefore excluded from all his mercies: these may be saved, who are not thus honoured. However, we are sure it was not his temporal ruin. Though he was chased out of the church, he was not chased out of the world. He shall be a nation, because he is they. This may be the effect of God's making; he founds them, he forms them, he fixes them. (2.) Many are full of the blessings of God's providence, that are strangers to the blessings of his covenant. (3.) The children of this
14. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15. And she was in the wilderness in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16. And she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. 17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20. And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

He reis,

1. The casting out of the bond-woman and her son from the family of Abraham, ver. 14. Abraham's obedience to the divine command in this matter was speedy; early in the morning, we may suppose immediately after he had, in the night's visions, received orders to do this. It was also submissive; it was contrary to his judgment, at least, to his own inclination, to do it; yet as soon as he perceives that it is the mind of God, he makes no objections, but silently does as he is bidden, as one trained up to an implicit obedience. In sending them away without any attendants, on foot, and slenderly provided for, it is probable that he observed the directions given him. If Hagar and Ishmael had conducted themselves well in Abraham's family, they might have continued there; but they threw themselves out by their own pride and insolence, which were thus justly chastised. Note, By abusing我们的 privileges, we forfeit them. Those that know not when they are well off in such a desirable place as Abraham's family, deserve to be cashiered, and to be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them.

2. Their wandering in the wilderness, missing their way to the place Abraham designed them for a settlement. 1. They were reduced to great distress there; their provisions were spent, and Ishmael was sick; he that used to be full fed in Abraham's house, where he waxed fat and kicked, now fainted and sunk, when he was brought to short allowance. Hagar is in tears, and sufficiently mortified; now she wishes for the crumbs she had wasted, and made light of, at her master's table; like one under the power of the spirit of bondage, she desairs of relief, counts upon nothing but the death of the child. (ver. 15, 16.) though God had told her, before he was born, that he should live to be a man, a great man. We are apt to forget former promises, when present providences seem to contradict them; for we live by sense.

2. In this distress, God graciously appeared for their relief; he heard the voice of the lad, ver. 17. We read not of a word he said; but his signs, and energies, and calamitous state, cried loud in the ears of mercy. An angel was sent to comfort Hagar, and was with her first thing. So God comforts a wilderness; she had thankfully acknowledged the former kind visit which God made her in such a case, ch. 16. 13, and therefore God now visited her again with seasonable succours. (1.) The angel assures her of the cognizance God took of her distress; God has heard the voice of the lad where he is, though he is in a wilderness; for wherever we are, there is a way open heavenward; therefore lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand, ver. 18. Note, God's readiness to help us when we are in trouble, must not slacken, but quicken, our endeavours to help ourselves. (2.) He repeats the promise concerning her son, that he should be a great nation, as a reason why she should bestir herself to help him. Note, It should engage our care and pains about children and young people, to consider that we know not what God has determined concerning them, nor whether they may make of them.

3. He directs her to a present supply, ver. 19, he opened her eyes, which were swollen, and almost blinded, with weeping; and then she saw a well of water. Note, Many that have reason enough to be comforted, go mourning from day to day, because they do not see the reason they have for comfort. There is a well of water by them in the covenant of grace, but they are not aware of it, and have no idea that God has given them, till the same God that opened their eyes to see their wound, opens them to see their remedy, John 16. 6, 7. Now the apostle tells us, that these things concerning Hagar and Ishmael are our example, Gal. 4. 21, they are to be allegorized; this will serve to illustrate the folly of these. [1.] Who like the unbelieving Jews, seek for righteousness by the law, and the carnal ordinances of it, and not by the promise made in Christ, whereby running themselves into a wilderness of want and despair. Their comforts are soon exhausted, and if God save them not by his special prerogative, and by a miracle of mercy open their eyes, and undeceive them, they are undone. [2.] Their folly also, who seek for satisfaction and happiness in the world and the things of it. Those that forsake the comforts of the covenant and communion with God, and choose pleasures in this earth, take up with a bottle of water, poor and slender provision, and that, soon spent; they wander endlessly in pursuit of satisfaction, and, at length, sit down short of it.

III. The settlement of Ishmael, at last, in the wilderness of Paran, ver. 20, 21, a wild place, fittest for a wild man; and such an one he was, ch. 16. 12. They that are born after the flesh, take up with the wilderness of this world, while the children of the promise abide in the heavenly Canaan, and cannot be at rest till they are there. Observe, 1. He had some tokens of God's presence, God was with the lad; his outward prosperity was owing to this. 2. By trade he was an archer, which intimates that craft was his excellency, and spent his business; rejected Esau was a cunning hunter. 3. He matched among his mother's relations; she took him a wife out of Egypt; as great an archer as he was, he did not think he took his aim well in the business of marriage, if he proceeded without his mother's advice and consent.

22. And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech, and Phichol the chief captain
of his host, spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest. 23. Now therefore swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24. And Abraham said, I will swear. 25. And Abraham reproved Abimelech, because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26. And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it but to-day. 27. And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech: and both of them made a covenant. 28. And Abimelech set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves. 29. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe-lambs, which thou hast set by themselves? 30. And he said, For these seven ewe-lambs, shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31. Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba: because there they sware both of them. 32. Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba: and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33. And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. 34. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days.

Observe, 1. Abraham, being got into a good neighbourly, knew when he was well off, and continued a great while there; there he planted a grove for a shade to his tent, or perhaps an orchard for fruit trees, and there, though we cannot say how much, for God would have him, while he lived, to be a stranger and a pilgrim; yet he sojourned many days, as many as would consist with his character, as Abraham the Hebrew, or passenger.
2. There he made not only a constant practice, but an open profession of his religion. There he called the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, probably, in the grove he planted, which was his oratory or house of prayer. Christ prayed in a garden, on a mountain. (1.) Abraham kept up public worship, to which, probably, his neighbours resorted, that they might join with him. Note, Good men should not only retain their good names where they go, but do all they can to propagate it, and make others good. (2.) In calling on the Lord, we must cry him as the everlasting God, the God of the world; so some. Though God had made himself known to Abraham as his God in particular, and in covenant with him, yet he forgets not to give glory to him as the Lord of all; the everlasting God, who was before the worlds, and will be when time and days shall be no more. See Isa. 40. 28.

CHAP. XXII.

We have here that famous story of Abraham’s offering up his son Isaac, that is, his offering to offer him, which is justly looked upon as one of the wonders of the church. Here is, I. The strange command which God gave to Abraham concerning it, v. 1, 2. II. Abraham’s strange obedience to it, v. 3, 4. III. The strange event of the trial. 1. The sacrifice of Isaac was countermanded, v. 11, 12. 2. Another sacrifice was provided, v. 13, 14. 3. The covenant was renewed with Abraham, hereupon, v. 15, 16. Lastly, An account of some of Abraham’s relations, v. 20—29.

1. AND it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Behold here I am. 2. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

Here is the trial of Abraham’s faith, whether it continued so strong, so vigorous, so victorious, after a long settlement in communion with God, as it was at first, when by he left his country: then, it was made to appear that he loved God better than his father; now, that he loved him better than his son. Observe here,

I. The time when Abraham was thus tried; (v. 1.) after these things; after all the other exercises he had had, all the hardships and difficulties he had gone through; now, perhaps, he was beginning to think that God would allow the promises to stand; but after all the other exercises, it came to this, that it was to be proved that he loved God better than his father: now, that he loved him better than his son.

Observe, (1.) The time. When Abraham was thus tried; (v. 1.) after these things; after all the other exercises he had had, all the hardships and difficulties he had gone through; now, perhaps, he was beginning to think that God would allow the promises to stand; but after all the other exercises, it came to this, that it was to be proved that he loved God better than his father: now, that he loved him better than his son.

II. The Author of the trial; God tempted him, not to draw him to sin, so Satan tempts: if Abraham had sacrificed Isaac, he had not sinned; his orders would have justified him, and borne him out; God tempted him, to discover his graces, how strong they were, that they might be found to praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. 1. 7. Thus God tempted Job, that he might appear not only a good man, but a great man. God did tempt Abraham; he did lift up Abraham, so some read it; as a scholar that improves well, is lifted up when he is put into a higher form. Note, Strong faith is often exercised with strong conflicts. Sometimes the most learned, and even the best, have needed strong faith to back them, to lift them up.

III. The trial itself; God appeared to him as he had formerly done, called him by name, Abraham, that name which had been given him in ratification of the promise. Abraham, like a good servant, readily answered, “Here am I; what says my Lord unto his servant?” Probably, he expected some renewed promise like those, ch. 15. 1, and 17. 1. But, to his great amazement, that which God has to say to him, is, in short, Abraham, go, kill thy son; and this command is given him in such aggravating language, as makes the temptation abundantly more grievous. When God speaks, Abraham, no doubt, takes notice of every word, and listens attentively to it; and every word here is a sword in his bones; the trial is steeped with trying phrases. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict? No, it is not; yet when Abraham’s faith is to be tried, God seems to take pleasure in the aggravation of the trial, v. 2. Observe,

1. The person to be offered; (1.) Take thy son, not thy bullocks and thy lambs; how willingly would Abraham have parted with them by thousands to redeem Isaac! No, I will take no bull but of thy son. Perhaps, it was that no servant, no, not the steward, not of thine house, that shall not serve the turn; I must have thy son. Jephtha, in pursuance of a vow, offered a daughter; but Abraham must offer his son, in whom the family was to be built up. “Lord let it be an adopted son;” No, (2.) Thine only son; thine only son by Sarah. Ishmael was lately cast out to the grief of Abraham; and now Isaac only was left, and must he go too? Yes, (3.) Take Isaac; hear his laughter, that son indeed, c. 17. 19, not. "Send for Ishmael back, and offer him; no, it must be Isaac: But, Lord, I love Isaac, he is to me as my own soul; Ishmael is not, and wilt thou take Isaac also? All this is against me?” Yes, (4.) That son whom thou lovest. It was a trial of Abraham’s love to God, and therefore it must be in a beloved son, that strong must be touched most upon: in the Hebrew it is expressed more emphatically, and, I think, might very well be read thus, Take now that son of thine, that only one of thine, whom thou lovest, that Isaac. God’s command must over-rule all these considerations.

2. The place; in the land of Moriah, three days’ journey off; so that he might have time to consider it, and, if he did it, might do it deliberately, that it might be a service the more reasonable, and the more honourable.

3. The manner; offer him for a burnt-offering; he must not only kill his son, but kill him as a sacrifice, kill him devoutly, kill him by rule, kill him with all that pomp and ceremony, with all that solemnity and composition of mind, with which he used to offer his burnt-offerings.

3. And Abraham rose up early in the morning; and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. 6. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. 7. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? 8. And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-
offering: so they went both of them together.

9. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. 10. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took a knife to slay his son.

We have here Abraham’s obedience to this severe command: Being tried, he offered up Isaac, His only son.

I. The difficulties which he brake through in this act of obedience; much might have been objected against it.

1. It seemed directly against an antecedent law of God, which forbids murder, under a severe penalty, ch. 9. 5. 6. Now can the unchangeable God contradict himself? He that hates robbery for burnt-offering, (Isa. 61. 8.) cannot delight in murder for it.

2. How would it consist with natural affection to his own son? It would be not only murder, but the worst of murders. Cannot Abraham be obedient, but he must be unnatural? If God insist upon a human sacrifice, is there none but Isaac to be the offerer; and none but Abraham to be the offerer? Must the father of the faithful be the monster of all fathers?

3. God gave him no reason for it. When Ishmael was to be cast out, a just cause was assigned, which satisfied Abraham; but here Isaac must die, and Abraham must kill him, and neither the one nor the other must know on what account. If Isaac had been to die a martyr for the truth, or his life had been the ransom of some other life more precious, it had been another matter; or if he had died as a criminal, a rebel against God or his parents, as in the case of the lordlet, (Deut. 21. 18. 19.) it might have passed as a sacrifice to justice; but the case is not so: he is a dutiful, obedient, hopeful son: “Lord, what profit is there in his blood?”

4. How would this consist with the promise? Was it not said that in Isaac should thy seed be called? But what comes of that seed, if this pregnant had been lost? In so sad a case?

5. How should he ever look Sarah in the face again? With what face can he return to her and his family, with the blood of Isaac sprinkled on his garments, and staining all his raiment? Surely a bloody husband hast thou been unto me, would Sarah say, as Exod. 4. 25. 26. and it would be likely to alienate her affections from ever both from him and from his God.

6. What would the Egyptians say, and the Canaanites and Perizzites which dwelt then in the land? It would be an eternal reproach to Abraham, and to his altar. Welcome nature, if this be grace. These, and many the like objections, might have been made; but he was infallibly assured that it was indeed a command of God, and not a delusion; and that was sufficient to answer them all. Note, God’s commands must not be disputed, but obeyed: we are not to mix flesh and blood about them, (Gal. 1. 15. 16.) but with gracious obstinacy persist in our obedience to them.

II. The several steps of this obedience; all which help to magnify it, and to show that he was guided by prudence, and governed by faith, in the whole transaction.

1. He rises early, v. 3. Probably, the command was not in the visions of the night, and early the next morning, he set himself about the execution of it, did not delay, did not meditate, did not take time to deliberate; for the command was peremptory, and would not admit of a debate. Note, These that do the will of God heartily, will do it speedily; while we delay, time is lost, and the heart hardened.

2. He gets things ready for a sacrifice, and as if he himself had been a Gibeonite, it should seem, with his own hands he elects the wood, which might not be to seek, when the sacrifice was to be offered; spiritual sacrifices must be thus prepared for.

3. It is very probable that he said nothing of it to Sarah; this is a journey which she must know nothing of, lest she prevent it. There is so much in our own hearts to hinder our progress in duty, that we have need, as much as may be, to keep out of our way of God’s work.

4. He carefully looked about him, to discover the place appointed for the sacrifice, which God had promised by some sign to direct him to. Probably the direction was given by an appearance of the Divine Glory in the place, some pillar of fire reaching from heaven to earth, visible at a distance, and to which he pointed, when he said, (v. 5.) We will go inender, where you see the light, and worship.

5. He left his servants at some distance off, (v. 5.) lest they should ha e interposed, and created him some disturbance in his strange oblation; for Isaac was, no doubt, the darling of the whole family. Thus, when Christ was entering upon his agency in the garden, he took only three of his disciples with him, and left the rest at the garden door. Note, It is our wisdom and duty, when we are going to worship God, to carry with us all those things which may divert us from the service, leave them at the bottom of the hill, that we may attend on the Lord without distraction.

6. He obliged Isaac to carry the wood, (both to try his obedience in a lesser matter, first, and that he might typify Christ, who carried his own cross, John 19. 17.) while he himself, though he knew what he did, with a steady and unblemished resolution, carried the fatal knife and fire, v. 6. Note, Those that through grace are resolved upon the substance of any service or suffering for God, must overlook the little circumstances which make it doubly difficult to flesh and blood.

7. Without any ruffle or disorder, he talks it over with Isaac, as if it had been but a common sacrifice that he was going to offer, v. 7, 8. (1.) It was the very offering that Isaac asked him, as they were going together: My father, said Isaac, it was a melting word, which, (one would think,) should strike deeper in the breast of Abraham, than his knife could in the breast of Isaac. He might have said, or thought at least, Call me not thy father, who am now to be thy murderer; can a father be so barbarous, so perfectly lost to all the tenderness of a father? Yet he keeps his temper, and keeps his conscience to himself: he only waits for his son’s question, and this is it, Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? See how expert Isaac was in the law and custom of sacrifices; this it is to be well catechized. This is,

[1.] A trying question to Abraham. How could he endure to think that Isaac is himself the lamb? So it is, but Abraham, as yet, dares not tell him so; when God knew how much to be an armour of proof indeed, without the Spirit, are but like wood without fire, but the Spirit works by them,) all things are now ready; but where is the lamb? Where is
11. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. 12. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son, from me. 13. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. 14. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day. In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

Hitherto this story has been very melancholy, and seems to hasten towards a most tragic period; but here the sky, of a sudden, clears up, the sun breaks out, a bright and pleasant scene opens; the same hand that had wounded and cast down, here heals and lifts up; for though he cause grief, he will have compassion. The angel of the Lord, that is, God himself, the eternal Word, the Angel of the covenant, who was to be the great Redeemer and Comforter; he interposed, and gave a happy issue to this trial.

I. Isaac is rescued, v. 11, 12. The command to offer him was intended only for trial, and it appearing, upon trial, that Abraham did indeed love God better than he loved Isaac, the end of the command was answered; and therefore the order is countermanded, without any reflection at all upon the unchangeableness of the divine councils; Lay not thine hand upon the lad. Note, 1. Our creature-comforts are not to be continued to us, when we are most willing to resign them up to God's will. 2. God's time to help and relieve his people, is, when they are brought to the greatest extremity. The more imminent the danger is, and the nearer to be put into execution, the more wonderful, and the more welcome is the deliverance.

II. Abraham is not only approved, but applauded. He obtains an honourable testimony, that he is righteous. Now I know that thou fearest God. God knew it before, but now, Abraham had given a most memorable evidence of it. He needed do no more; what he had done, was sufficient to prove the religious regard he had to God and his authority. Note. 1. When God, by his providence, hinders the performance of our sincere intentions in his services, he graciously accepts the will for the deed, and the honest endeavour, though it come without the manner. This is the mercy, when God, in pardoning God, is, our being willing to serve and honour him with that which is dearest to us, and to part with all to him, or for him.

III. Another sacrifice is provided instead of Isaac, v. 13. Now that the altar was built, and the wood laid in order, it was necessary that something should be offered. For, 1. God must be acknowledged with thankfulness for the deliverance of Isaac; and the sooner the better, when here is an altar ready. 2. Abraham's words must be made:
God will provide himself a lamb. God will not disappoint those expectations of his people, which are of his own raising; but, according to their faith, it is to them. Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established. 3. Reference must be had to the promised Messiah, the blessed Seed. (1.) Christ was sacrificed in our stead, as this ram instead of Isaac, and his death was our discharge; Here it is, I (said he) let them sacrifice my son. Though the ram was lastly promised, and now typified by Isaac, yet the offering of him up should be suspended till the latter end of the world; and, in the mean time, the sacrifice of beasts should be accepted, as this ram was, as a pledge of that expectation which should one day be made by that great Sacrifice. And it is observable, that the temple, the place of sacrifice, was afterward built upon this mount Moriah, (2 Chron. 3. 1.) and mount Galmor, where Christ was crucified, was not far off. 4. A new name was given to that place, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of all believers to the end of the world, cheerfully to trust in God in the way of obedience; Jehovah-jireh, The Lord will provide, v. 14. probably alluding to what he had said, v. 8, God will provide himself a lamb. It was not owing to any contrivance of Abraham, nor was it in answer to his prayer, though he was a distinguished intercessor; but it was purely the Lord's doing. Let it be recorded for generations to come, 1. That the Lord will see; he will always have his eye upon his people, in their straits and distresses, that he may come in with seasonable succour in the critical juncture. 2. That he will be seen, be seen in the mount, in the greatest perplexities of his people; he will not only manifest, but may, his wisdom, power, and goodness in their deliverance; where God sees and provides, he should be seen and praised; and, perhaps, it may refer to God manifest in the flesh. 15. And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 16. And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not with-held thy son, thine only son; 17. That in blessing will I bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. 19. So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up, and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba. Abraham's obedience was graciously accepted, but that was not all; here we have it recompensed, abundantly recompensed, before he stirred from the place; probably, while the ram he had sacrificed, was yet burning, God sent him this gracious message, renewed and ratified his covenant with him. All covenants were made by sacrifice, so was this by the typical sacrifices of Isaac and the ram; very high expressions of God's favour to Abraham are employed in this confirmation of the covenant with him, expressions exceeding any he had yet heard from his Lord. Not only his services shall be crowned with extraordinary honours and comforts; and favours in the promise, though not yet performed, ought to be accounted real and valuable recompenses.

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And Bethuel begat Rebekah: these eight Milcah did bear to Nabor Abraham's brother. 24. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tehah, and Nahor, and Thahash, and Maachah.

This is recorded here, 1. To show that though Abraham saw his own family highly dignified with peculiar privileges, admitted into covenant, and blessed with the entail of the promise; yet he did not look with contempt and disdain upon his relations, but was glad to hear of the increase and prosperity of their families. 2. To make way for the following story of the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah, a daughter of this family.

CHAP. XXIII.

Here is, 1. Abraham a mourner for the death of Sarah, v. 1, 2. 2. Abraham a purchaser of a burying-place for Sarah. 1. The purchase humbly proposed by Abraham, v. 3, 4. 2. Fairly treated of, and agreed to, with a great deal of mutual civility and respect, v. 5, 15. The purchase-money paid, v. 16. 3. The premises conveyed and assigned to Abraham, v. 17, 19, 20. 5. Sarah's funeral, v. 19.

1. AND Sarah was an hundred and seven years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. 2. And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba; that is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

We have here, 1. Sarah's age, v. 1. Almost 40 years before, she had called her self old, ch. 18, 12. Old people die will never the same, but may die the better, for reckoning themselves old. 2. Her death, v. 2. The longest liver must die at last. Abraham and Sarah had lived comfortably together many years; but death parts those whom nothing else could part. The special friends and favourites of heaven are not exempted from the stroke of death. She died in the land of Canaan, where she had been above 60 years as a sojourner. 3. Abraham's mourning for her; and he was a true mourner. He did not only perform the ceremonies of mourning, according to the custom of those times, as the mourner that go about the streets; but he did sincerely lament the great loss he had of a good wife, and gave proof of the constancy of his affection to her to the last. The words are used, he came both to mourn and to weep. His sorrow was not com¬
tertitia, but real. He came to her tent, and set down by the corpse, there to pay the tribute of his tears, that his eye might affect his heart, and that he might pay the greater respect to the memory of her that was gone. Note, It is not only lawful, but it is a duty, to lament the death of our near relations, both in compliance with the providence of God, and without any calling to weeping and mourning, and in honour of those to whom honour is due. Tears are a tribute due to our deceased friends; when the body is sown, it must be watered; but we must not sorrow as those that have no hope; for we have a good hope through grace both concerning them, and concerning ourselves.

3. And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, 4. I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. 5. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

6. Hear us, my lord; thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. 7. And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. 8. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight; hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, 9. That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which beloth, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth, he shall give it me for a possession of a burying-place among you. 10. And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, 11. Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee; and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee; bury thy dead. 12. And Abraham bowed himself down himself before the people of the land. 13. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. 14. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, 15. My lord, hearken unto me: the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead.

Here is,

1. The humble request which Abraham made to his neighbours the Hittites, for a burying-place among them, v. 3, 4. It was strange he had this to do now; but we are to impute it rather to God's providence than to his improvidence, as appears Acts 7, 5, where it is said God gave him inheritance in Canaan. It was well, if all those who take care to provide burying-places for their bodies after death, were as careful to provide a resting-place for their souls. Observe here,

1. The convenient diversion which this affair gave, for the present, to Abraham's grief; he stood up from before his dead. Those that find themselves in danger of over-grieving for their dead relations, and are entering into that temptation, must take heed of pouring upon their losses, and of sitting alone and melancholy. There must be a time of standing up from before their dead, and ceasing to mourn. For, thanks be to God, our happiness is not bound up in the life of any creature. Care of the funeral may be improved to divert grief for the dead, as here, at first, when it is most in danger of tyrannising. Weeping must not hinder sowing.

2. The argument he used with the children of Heth; which was this, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you, therefore I am unprovided, and must become a humble sojourner to you for a burying-place." This was one occasion which Abraham took to confess that he was a stranger and a pilgrim.
upon earth; he was not ashamed to own it thus publicly, Heb. 11. 13. \textit{Note.} The death of our relations should effectually remind us that we are not at home in this world. When they are gone, say, \textit{We have a home.}"

3. His meanness, till th'o affair was settled, intimated in that word, that \textit{I may bury my dead out of my sight.} \textit{Note.} Death will make those unpleasant to our sight, who, while they lived, were the desire of our eyes. The countenance that was fresh and lively becomes pale and ghastly, and fit to be removed into the land of darkness. While she was in his sight, it renewed his grief, which he would prevent.

If the generous offer which the children of Heth made to him, \textit{v. 5, 6.} They compliment him, 1. With a title of respect; \textit{Thou art a prince of God among us.} So the word is, not only great, but good. He called himself a stranger and a sojourner; they call him a great prince; for those that humble themselves, shall be exalted. God had promised to make Abraham's name great. 2. With a tender of the best of their burying-place. Even the light of nature teaches us to be civil and respectful towards all, though they be strangers and sojourners. The noble generosity of these Canaanites shames and condemns the closeness, and selfishness, and ill-humour, of many that call themselves Israelites. Observe, These Canaanites would be glad to mingle their dust with Abraham's, and to have their last end like his.

3. The particular proposal which Abraham made to them, \textit{v. 7, 9.} He returns them his thanks for their kind offer, with all possible decency and respect; though a great man, an old man, and now a mourner, yet he stands up, and bows himself humbly before them, \textit{v. 7.} \textit{Note.} Religion teaches good manners; and those abuse it, that place it in rudeness and clownishness. He then pitches upon the place he thought most convenient, namely, the cave of Machpelah, which probably lay near him, and had not yet been used for a burying-place. The present owner was Ephron; Abraham cannot pretend to any interest in him, but he desires that they would improve their's with him, to get the purchase of that cave, and the field in which it was. \textit{Note.} A moderate desire to obtain that which is convenient for us, by fair and honest means, is not such a coveting of that which is our neighbour's, as is forbidden in the tenth commandment.

4. The present which Ephron made to Abraham of his field, \textit{v. 16, 11.} \textit{The field give I thee.} Abraham thought he must be entreated to sell it; but, upon the first mention of it, without entreaty, he freely gives it. Some men have more generosity than they are thought to have. Abraham, no doubt, had taken all occasions to oblige his neighbours, and do them service that lay near him; and now they return his kindness; for he that watereth, shall be watered also himself. \textit{Note.} If those that profess religion, adorn their profession by eminent civility and serviceableness to all, they shall find it will redound to their own comfort and advantage, as well as to the glory of God.

5. Abraham's modesty and sincere refusal to Ephron's kind offer, \textit{v. 15, 13.} Abundance of the field. \textit{v. 12.} His purchase made was his assurance to him before the people of the land, that they might respect Ephron the more, for the respect they saw Abraham give him, \textit{1 Sam. 15. 30;} but resolves to give him money for the field, even the full value of it. It was not in pride that Abraham refused the gift, because he scorned to be helden to Ephron; but, 1. In justice. Abraham was rich in silver and gold, \textit{ch. 13. 2;} and was able to pay for the field, and therefore would not take advantage of Ephron's generosity. \textit{Note.} Honesty, as well as honour, forbids us to squeeze upon our neighbours, and to impose upon the price of the field. And I say, \textit{v. 14.} We shall also shew that he had not eaten the fruits of his land without money, \textit{Job 31. 39.} 2. In prudence. He would pay for it, lest Ephron, when this good humour was over, should upbraid him with it, and say, \textit{I have made Abraham rich, ch. 14. 23.} Or, lest the next heir should question Abraham's title, (because that grant was made without any consideration,) and claim back the field. Thus David afterwards repaid Abraham's offer, \textit{2 Sam. 24. 24.} We know not what affronts we may hereafter receive from those that are now most kind and generous.

6. The price of the land ascertained by Ephron, but not insisted on, \textit{v. 14, 15.} \textit{The land is worth 400 shekels of silver, about 50 pounds of our money; but what is that between me and thee?} He would rather oblige his friend than have so much money in his pocket. Herein Abraham discovers, 1. A great contempt of worldly wealth. \textit{What is that between me and thee? It is a small matter, not worth speaking of.} Many a one would have said, \textit{It is a deal of money, it will go far in a child's portion;} but Ephron says, \textit{What is that?} \textit{Note.} It is an excellent thing for people to have low and mean thoughts of this world and the wealth of it; it is that which is not, and in the abundance of which a man's life does not consist, \textit{Is. 12. 15.} 2. Great courtesy and obligingness to his friend and Abraham. Ephron was not jealous of Abraham as a foreigner and an inmate, nor envious at him as a man likely to thrive and grow rich; he bore him no ill-will for his singularity in religion, but was much kinder to him than most people new-arrivals are to their own brothers. \textit{What is that between me and thee?} \textit{Note.} No little thing should occasion democracies and differences between true friends. When we are tempted to be hir'n in resenting affronts, high in demanding our rights, or hard in denying a kindness, we should answer the temptation with this question, \textit{What is that between me and my friend?}
light, and choose to be clandestine; but they that design honestly in their bargains, care not who are witnesses to them. Our law countenances sales made in market-ovet, and by deed enrolled.

1. Abraham, without fraud, covin, or further delay, pays the money: v. 16. he pays it readily, without hesitation; it pays in full, without diminution: and it pays by weight, current in the country, without discount. See how honestly money was used for the help of commerce; and see how honestly money should be paid where it is due. Observe, Though all the land of Canaan was Abraham’s by promise, yet the time of his possessing being not come, what he had now occasion for, he bought and paid for. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. The saints’ title to an eternal inheritance, does not hasten the consumation of possessions of this world, nor pay them in doing wrong.

II. Ephron honestly and fairly makes him a good title to the land, v. 17, 18, 20. The field, with all its appurtenances, is conveyed to Abraham and his heirs for ever, in open court, (not by writing, it does not appear that writing was then used,) by such a public solemn declaration before witnesses as was sufficient to pass it. Note, As that which is bought must be honestly paid for; so that which is sold must be honestly delivered and secured.

III. Abraham, thereupon, takes possession, and buries Sarah in the cave or vault, (whether framed by nature or art, is not certain,) which was in the purchased field. It is probable that Abraham had buried servants out of his family, since he came to Canaan, but the graves of the common people (2 Kings 23. 6.) might suffice for them; now that Sarah was dead, a peculiar place was found for her remains. It is worth noting, 1. That a burying-place was the first spot of ground Abraham was possessed of in Canaan. Note, When we are entering into the world, it is good to think of our going out of it; for as soon as we are born, we begin to die. 2. That it was the only piece of land he was ever possessed of, though it was all his own in a primary sense. These that have least of this earth find a grave in it. Abraham provided, not cities, as Cain and Nimrod, but a sepulchre. (1.) To be a constant memorandum of death to himself and his posterity, that he and they might learn to die daily. This sepulchre is said to be at the end of the field, v. 9, for, whatever our possessions are, there is a sepulchre at the end of them. (2.) To be a token of his belief and expectation of the resurrection; for why should such care be taken in the burying the body, if it be thrust away for ever, and must not rise again? Abraham, in this, said plainly that he sought a better country, that is, a heavenly. Abraham is content to be still walking, while he lives, but secures a place where, when he dies, his flesh may rest in hope.

CHAP. XXIV.

Marriages and marriages are the changes of families, and the common news among the inhabitants of the villages. In the foregoing chapter we had an account of Abraham and his wife, here, we have him marrying his son. These stories concerning his family, with their minute circumstances, are largely related, while the histories of the kingdom of the world, in being with them, their revolutions, are buried in silence; for the Lord knows them that are his. The subjoining of Isaac’s marriage to Sarah’s funeral (with a particular reference to it, v. 67.) shews how much importance the Old Testament authors made of generation comes; and thus the entail both of the human nature, and of the covenant, is preserved. Here is, 1. Abraham’s care about the marrying of his son, and the consideration which he had about his son’s being married. H. I. His servant’s journey into Abraham’s country, to seek a wife for his young master among his own relations, v. 10, 14. II. The kind providence which brought him acquainted with Rebekah, whose father was Isaac’s cousin-german, v. 15, 28. IV. The treaty of marriage with her relations, v. 29, 40. V. Their consent obtained, v. 50, 60. VI. The happy meeting and marriage between Isaac and Rebekah, v. 61, 67.

1. AND Abraham was old, and well-stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 2. Abraham spake unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: 3. And I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son Isaac. 5. And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? 6. And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again. 7. The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that spake unto me, Unto thy seed will I give this land: he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. 8. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. 9. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter.

Three things we may observe here concerning Abraham.

1. The care he took of a good son, to get him married, well-married. It was high time to think of it now, for Isaac was about forty years old, and it would be best to have his grandfather with his ancestors to marry at 50, or sooner, ch. 11. 14, 18, 22, 24. Abraham believed the promise of the building up of his family, and therefore did not make haste; not more haste than good speed. Two considerations moved him to think of it now, (v. 1.) 1. That he himself was likely to leave the world quickly, for he was old, and well-stricken in age, and it would be a satisfaction to him to see his son settled, before he died; and, 2. That he had a good estate to leave behind him, for the Lord had blessed him in all things; and the blessing of the Lord, that makes rich. See how much religion and piety befriend outward prosperity. Now Abraham’s pious care concerning his son, was, (1.) That he should not marry with a daughter of Canaan, but with one of his kindred; because he saw by observation that the Canaanites were degenerating into great wickedness, and knew he revelation that they were designed for ruin; and therefore he would not marry his son among them, lest they should be either a snare to his soul, or, at least, a blot to his name. (2.) That yet he should not leave the land of Canaan, to go himself among his kindred, nor even for the purpose of choosing a wife, lest he should be tempted to settle there. This caution is given, v. 6, and repeated, v. 8,
"Bring not my son thither again, whatever comes of it. Let him rather want a wife than expose himself to that temptation." Note, Parents, in disposing of their children, should carefully consult the welfare of their souls, and their furtherance in the way to Heaven. Those who through grace have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, and have brought up their children accordingly, should take heed of doing any thing by which they may be again entangled therein, and overcome, 2 Pet. 2. 20. Beware that you bring them not thither again, Heb. 11. 15.

11. The charge he gave to a good servant: probably, Elizer of Damascus, one whose conduct, fidelity, and faithfulness, he had himself been long experience of. He trusted him with this great affair, and not Isaac himself; because he would not have Isaac go at all into that country, but marry there by proxy; and no proxy so fit as this swear'd of his house. The matter is settled between the master and the servant with a great deal of care and solemnity. 1. The servant must be bound by an oath to do his utmost to get a wife for Isaac, from among the heathen. v. 7. 2. Abraham swears him to it, both for his own satisfaction, and for the engagement of his servant to all possible care and diligence in this matter. Thus God swears his servants to their work, that, having sworn, they may perform it. Honour is here done to the eternal God; for he it is, that is sworn by, to whom alone those appeals ought to be made. And some think honour is done to the covenant of circumcision, by the circumstance here used of putting his hand under his thigh. Note, Swearing, being an ordinance, not peculiar to the church, but common to mankind, is to be performed by such signs as are the appointments and common usages of our country, for binding the person sworn. 2. He must be clear of his oath, if, when he had done his utmost, he could not prevail. This proviso the servant prudently inserted, v. 8. putting the case, that the woman would not follow him; and Abraham allowed the exception, v. 8. Note, Oaths are to be taken with great caution, and the matter sworn to should be rightly understood and limited, because it is a snare to devour that which is holy, and, after vows, to make the inquiry which should have been made before.

12. The confidence he put in a good God, who, he doubted not, will give his servant success in this undertaking; and he remembered his promise to him and his vow, v. 7. and he remembered that God had wonderfully brought him out of the land of his nativity, by the effectual call of his grace; and therefore doubts not but he will succeed him in his care not to bring his son thither again. He remembers also the promise God had made and confirmed to him, that he would give Canaan to his seed; and thence infers that God would own him in his endeavor to match his son, not among those devoted to idolatry, but to the cult of his God, to such a seed. "Fear not, therefore, he shall send his angel before thee to make thy way prosperous." Note. 1. Those that carefully keep in the way of duty, and govern themselves by the principles of their religion in their designs and undertakings, have good reason to expect prosperity and success in them. God will cause that to issue in our comfort, in which we sincerely aim at his glory. 2. God's promises, and our own experience, are sufficient to encourage our dependence upon God, and our expectations from him, in all the affairs of this life. 3. God's angels are ministering spirits, sent forth, not only for the protection, but for the guidance, of the heirs of promise, Heb. 1. 14, "He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt walk speed well." 10. And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. 11. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. 12. And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. 13. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: 14. And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know thou hast showed kindness unto my master. 15. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. 16. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. 17. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. 18. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. 19. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. 20. And she hasted, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. 21. And the man, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous, or not. 22. And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekel weight of gold; 23. And said, Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in? 24. And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which bare unto Nahor. 25. She said moreover unto him, We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in. 26. And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. 27. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the
way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren. 28. And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house these things.

Abraham's servant now begins to make a figure in this story; and though he is not named, yet much is here recorded, to his honour, and for an example to all servants, who shall be honoured, if, by faithful serving God and their masters, they adorn his doctrine of Christ. Compare Prov. 27. 18, with Titus 2. 10, for there is no respect of persons with God, Col. 3. 24, 25. A good servant that makes conscience of the duty of his place, and does it in the fear of God, though he make not a figure in the world, nor have praise of men, yet shall be owned and accepted of God, and have praise of him. Observe here,

I. That faithful Abraham's servant approved himself to his master. Having received his charge, with all expedition he took his journey, putting himself into an equipage fit for his negotiation, v. 10, and he had all the goods of his master, that is, a schedule or particular account of them, in his hand, to show to those with whom he was to treat; for, from first to last, he consulted his master's honour. Isaac being a type of Christ, some make this fetching of water to signify the espousing of the church, by the agency of his servant the ministers. The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. 21. 9. Christ is the Bridegroom, and ministers the friends of the Bridegroom, (John 3. 28.) whose work it is to persuade souls to consent to him, 2 Cor. 11. 2. The spouse of Christ must not be of the Canaanites, but of his own kindred, born again from above. Ministers, like Abraham's servant, must not take themselves with the utmost wisdom and care to serve their master's interest herein.

II. How devoutly he acknowledged God in this affair, like one of that happy household which Abraham had commanded to keep the way of the Lord, &c. ch. 18. 19. He arrived early in the evening (after many days' journeying) at the place he designed for, and reposed himself with a well of water, to consider how he might manage his business for the best. And,

1. He acknowledged God by a particular prayer, v. 12., 14., wherein, (1.) He petitions for prosperity and good success in this affair; Send me good speed, this day. Note, We have to leave to be particular in recommending our affairs to the conduct and care of the Divine Providence. Those that would have good speed, must pray for it, this day, in this affair; thus we must in all our works acknowledge God, Prov. 3. 5. And if we thus look up to God in every undertaking where we are in care about, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty, whatever the issue be. (2.) He pleads God's covenant with his master Abraham; O God of my master Abraham, show kindness to him. Note, As the children of good parents, so the servants of good masters, have peculiar encouragement in the prayers they offer to God for prosperity and success.

(3.) He proposes a sign, v. 14., not by it to limit God, or with a design to proceed no further, if he were not gratified in it; but it is a prayer, [1.] That God would provide a good wife for his young master; and that was a good prayer. He knew that a prudent wife is from the Lord, (Prov. 19. 14.) and therefore that for this he will be inquired of. He desires that his master's wife might be a humble and industrious woman, bred up to care and labour, and willing to put her hand to any work that was to be done; and that she might be of a courteous disposition, and charitable to strangers. When he came to seek a wife for his master, he did not go to the playhouse or the park, and pray that he might meet one there, but to the well of water, expecting to find one there well-employed. [2.] That he would please to make his way, in this matter, plain and clear before him, by the concurrence of minute circumstances in his favour. Note, First, It is the comfort, as well as the belief, of a good man, that God's providence extends itself to the smallest occurrences, and admirably serves its own purposes by them. Our times are in God's hand; not only events there, but the means of them, are in his disposal. Secondly, It is our wisdom, in all our affairs, to follow Providence; and folly to force it. Thirdly, It is very desirable, and that which we may lawfully pray for, while in the general we set God's will betwixt us as our rule, that he will, by hints of providence, direct us in the way of our duty, and give us indications what his mind is. Thus he guides his people by his own voice, (Ps. 32. 8.) and leads them in a plain path, Ps. 27. 10.

2. God owned him by a particular providence. He decreed the thing, and it was established to him, Job 22. 28. According to his faith, so was it unto him. The answer to this prayer, was, (1.) Speedily, before he had made an end of speaking, v. 13, as it is written, (Isa. 65. 25.) While they are yet speaking, I will hear. Though we are backward to pray, God is forward to answer; and (2.) Satisfactorily, he was the first that came to draw water, — came and did, in every thing, according to his own heart. [1.] She was so well qualified, that in all respects she answered the character he wished for in a wife that was to be his master's wife, handsome and healthful, humble and industrious, very courteous and obliging to a stranger, and having all the marks of a good disposition; when she came to the well, (Isa. 14.) she spake first, and now she came up to go home with it; she did not stand to gaze upon the strange man and his camels, but minded her business, and would not have been diverted from it but by an opportunity of doing good; she did not curiously or confidently enter into discourse with him, but modestly answered him with all the decorum that became her sex. What a degenerate age do we live in, in which appear all the graces of the grace of God; beauty, modesty, and prudence, and of Rebekah's character, whose daughters few are. Those instances of goodness which were then in honour, are now in contempt. [2.] Providence so ordered it, that she did that which exactly answered to his sign, and was wonderfully the counterpart of his proposal; she not only gave him drink, but, which was more than could have been expected, she offered her service to give his camels drink, which was the very sign he proposed.

Note, First, God, in his providence, does sometimes wonderfully own the prayer of faith, and gratify the innocent desires of his praying people, even in little things; that he may show the extent of his care, and may encourage them at all times to seek to him, and trust in him; yet we must take heed of being over bold in prescribing to God, lest the events should tend to his faith rather than strengthen it. Secondly, It is good to take all opportunities of showing a humble, courteous, charitable disposition, because, some time or other, it may turn more to our honour and benefit than we think of: some hereby have entertained angels, and Rebekah hereby, quite beyond her expectation at this time, was brought into the line of Christ and the covenant. Thirdly, There may be a great deal of obligations to kindness in that which costs but little; our servant has promised a reward for a cup of cold water, like this here, Matt. 10. 42. Fourthly, The concomitance of providences and their minute circumstances, for the furtherance of our success in any business, ought to be particularly observed, with won
der and thankfulness, to the glory of God; the man wondered, v. 21. We have been wanting to ourselves, both in duty and in comfort, by neglecting to observe Providence. [3] Upon inquiry, he found, to his great satisfaction, that she was a near relation to his master, and that the family she was of, was considerable, and able to give him entertainment, v. 23. 25. Note, Providence sometimes, wonderfully directs those that by faith and prayer seek direction from heaven in the choice of suitable yoke-fellows: happy are those are likely to be, that are made in the fear of God; and those, we are sure, are made in heaven.

3. Abraham's servant acknowledges God in a particular thanksgiving. He first paid his respects to Rebekah, in gratitude for her civility, (v. 22.) obliging her with such ornaments and attire as a maid, especially a bride, cannot forget. (Jer. 2: 22.) which yet, we should think, ill-suit the figure of a servant, but the ear-rings and bracelets she sometimes wore, did not make her think herself above the labours of a virtuous woman, (Prov. 31. 13.) who works willingly with her hands; nor the service of a child, who while under age, differs nothing from a servant, Gal. 4. 1. Having done this, he turns his wonder (v. 21.) into worshipping, v. 26, 27. Blessed be the Lord God of my master, the Lord hath led me hither, v. 26. (1.) He had prayed for good speed, (v. 12.) and now that he had sped well, he gives thanks. Note, What we win by prayer, we must wear with praise; for mercies, in answer to prayer, lay us under particular obligations. (2.) He had as yet but a comfortable prospect of mercy, and was not certain what the issue might prove; yet he gives thanks. Note, When God's favours are coming towards us, we must meet them with our praises. (3.) He blesses God for success, when the way is negotiating for his master. Note, We should be thankful for our friends' mercies as for our own. (4.) He gives thanks that, being in the way, at a loss what course to steer, the Lord had led him. Note, In doubtful cases, it is very comfortable to see God leading us, as he ledIsrael in the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire. (5.) He thinks himself very happy, and owns God in it, that he was led, the holy, safe, Sion, the temple that were come out of Ur of the Chaldees, though they were not come to Canaan, but remained in Haran. They were not idolaters, but worshippers of the true God, and inclined to the religion of Abraham's family. Note, God is to be acknowledged in providing suitable yoke-fellows, especially such as are agreeable in religion. (6.) He acknowledges that God, herein, had not left his master destitute of his mercy and truth. God had promised to build up Abraham's family, yet it seemed destitute of the benefit of that promise; but now, Providence is working toward the accomplishment of it. Note, [1.] God's faithful ones, how destitute soever they may be of worldly comforts, shall never be left destitute of God's mercy and truth; for God's mercy is an inexhaustible fountain, and his truth an inviolable foundation. [2.] It adds much to the comfort of any blessing, to see in it the continuance of God's mercy and truth.

29. And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. 30. And it came to pass, when he saw the ear-ring, and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. 31. And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? For I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. 32. And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. 33. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. 34. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. 35. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. 36. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old; and unto him hath he given all that he hath. 37. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: 38. But thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son. 39. And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. 40. And he said unto me, The Lord, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house. 41. Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred, and if they give not thee wife, thou shalt be clear from my oath. 42. And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go: 43. Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink; 44. And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman, whom the Lord hath appointed for my master's son. 45. And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water; and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee. 46. And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also. 47. And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the ear-ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon
Thus came the scripture servant, the beast, the ox, the ewe, the he-goat, the lamb, and the rams, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

We have here the making up of the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah; it is related very largely and particularly, even to the minute circumstances, which, we should think, might have been spared, which are not the most material (Matt. 25:30). (See the story of Melchizedek) are related in few words. Thus God conceals that which is curious from the wise and prudent, reveals to babes that which is common, and level to their capacity, (Matt. 11:25.) and rules and saves the world by the foolishness of weakness, 1 Cor. 1:21. Thus also we are directed to take notice of God's providence in the little common occurrences of human life, and in them to exercise our own prudence and other graces. For the scripture was not intended only for the use of philosophers and statesmen, but to make us all wise and virtuous in the conduct of ourselves and families.

Here is, I. The very kind reception given to Abraham's servant by Rebekah's relations. Her brother Laban went to invite and conduct him in, but not till he saw the ear-rings and bracelets (led upon his sisters' hands, v. 9.) "O," thinks Laban, "here is a man that there is something to be got by, a man that is rich and generous; we will be sure to give him welcome!" We know so much of I. Laban's character, by the following story, as to think that he would not have been so free of his entertainment, if he had not hoped to be well paid for it, as he was, v. 53. Note, A man's gift maketh room for him; Prov. 18:16.) which may appease it, and forestall, Prov. 17:8. 2. The invitation was kind; v. 31. Come in, thou blessed of the Lord. They saw he was rich, and therefore pronounced him blessed of the Lord; or, perhaps, because they heard from Rebekah, (v. 28.) of the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, they conducted him a good man, and therefore, blessed of the Lord. Note, Those that are blessed of God, should be welcome to us. It is good owning those whom God owns. 2. The entertainment was kind; v. 32, 33. Both the house and stable were well furnished, and Abraham's servant was invited to the free use of both. Particular care was taken of the camels; for a good man regardeth the life of his beast, Prov. 12:16. If the ox knows his owner to serve him, the owner should know his ox to provide for him that is fattening for him. 3. The full account which he gave them of his errand, and the count he makes to them for their constant respecting Rebekah. Observe, 1. How intently he was upon his business; though he was come off a journey, and come to a good house, he would not eat till he had told his errand. 2. The doing of our work, and the fulfilling of our trust, either for God or man, should be preferred by us before our necessary food: it was our Saviour's meat and drink, John 4:34. 2. How ingenious he was in the management of it: he approved himself, in this matter, both a prudent man, and a man of integrity, faithful to his master by whom he was trusted, and just to those relations with whom he was charged. (1.) He gives a short account of the state of his master's family, v. 34. 36. He was welcome before, but we may suppose him doubly welcome, when he said, I am Abraham's servant; Abraham's name, no doubt, was well-known among them, and respected, and we may suppose them not altogether ignorant of his state, for Abraham knew their ch. 22. 20. 24. Two things he suggests, to recommend his proposal. [1.] That his master Abraham, through the blessing of God, had a very good estate; and, [2.] That he had settled it all upon Isaac, for whom he was now a suitor. (2.) He tells them the charge his master had given him, to fetch a wife for his son from among his kindred, with the reason of it, v. 37, 38. Thus he insinuates a pleasing hint, that though Abraham was removed too country at so great a distance, yet he still retained a remembrance of, and a respect for, his relations that he had left behind. The highest degrees of divine affection must not divest us of natural affection. He likewise obviates an objection, That if Isaac were deserving, he need not send so far off for a wife: why did he not marry nearest home? "For a good reason," (says he,) "my master's son must not match with a Canaanite." He further recommends his proposal. [1.] From the sentence of his master, which has been, he would give his son no wife but of his kindred, Abraham took encouragement from the testimony of his conscience, that he walked before God in a regular course of holy living, and thence inferred that God would prosper him; probably, he refers to that covenant which God had made with him, ch. 17. 1. I am God all-sufficient, walk before me. Therefore, (says he,) the God before whom I walk, will send his angel. Note, While we make conscience of the charge and care of finding a wife for our children, we must not be wanting to apply general promises to particular cases, as there is occasion. [2.] From the care he himself had taken to preserve their liberty of giving or refusing their consent, as they should see cause, without incurring the guilt of perjury, v. 39. 41. which showed him, in general, to be a cautious man, and particularly careful that their consent might not be forced, but free, or at least, willing. (3.) He relates to them the wonderful concurrence of providences, to comemmence and further the proposal, plainly showing thefinger of God in it. [1.] He tells them how he had prayed for direction by a sign, v. 42. 44. Note, It is good dealing with those, who by prayer take God along with them in their dealings. [2.] How God had answered his prayer in the very letter of it. Though he did amak in his heart, (v. 45.) which perhaps he mentions, lest it should be suspected that Rebekah had overheard his prayer, and designedly humored it; "No," says he, "I speak it in my heart, so that none heard it but God, to whom thoughts are words, and from him the answer came," v. 46, 47. [3.] How he had immediately acknowledged God's goodness to him therein, lead¬ing him, by way of consequence, to repent for his evil way. Note, God's way is always the right way, Ps. 107. 7, and these are well-led, whom he leads. (4.) He fairly refers the matter to their consideration, and waits their resolution, v. 49. "If you
I. Abraham's servant presses for a dismissal; though he and his company were very welcome, and very cheerful there, yet he said, send me away, v. 54, and again, v. 56. He knew his master would expect him home with some impatience; he had business to do at home, which wanted him, and therefore, as one that preferred his work before his pleasure, he was for hastening home. Note, Lingering and lottering no way become a wise and serious servant; for his master is very near afield, and may be abroad, we must not delay our return to our business at home, nor be longer from it than needs must: for as the bird that wanders from his nest, so is he that wanders from his place, Prov. 27. 8.

II. Rebekah's relations, from natural affection, and according to the usual expression of kindness in that case, solicited for her stay some time among them; and, as God was pleased to be their comforter in the instance of the vanity of this world, that there is nothing in it so agreeable, but it h. its ally, Nulla est sincera voluptas.—There is no unmingled pleasure. They here were pleased that they had matched a daughter of their family so well; and yet, when it came to the last, it was with great reluctance that they sent her away.

III. Rebekah herself determined the matter; to her they appealed, as it were, that they should, v. 57. Call the damsel, (who was retired to her apartment with a modest silence,) and inquire at her mouth. Note, As children ought not to marry without their parents' consent, so parents ought not to marry them without their own. Psc r the matter is resolved on, " Ask at the damsel's mouth;" she is a party principally concerned, and therefore ought to be principally consulted. Rebekah consented, not only to go, but to go immediately, v. 58, I will go. We may hope that the notice she had taken of the servants' piety and devotion, gave her such an idea of the prevalence of religion and godliness in the family she was to go to, as made her desires to hasten thither, and willing to forget her own people and her father's house, where religion had not so much the same credit.

IV. Hereupon, she is sent away with Abraham's servant; not, we may suppose, the very next day after, but very quickly; her friends see that she puts a good heart on it, and so they dismiss her, I. With suitable attendants; her nurse, v. 59, her damsels, v. 61. It seems then, that when she went to the well for water, it was not because she had not servants at command, but because she took a pleasure in exemplifying humility and industry. In that she was going among strangers, it was fit to take those with her with whom she was acquainted with. Here is nothing said of her portion; her personal merits were a portion in her; she needed none with her, nor did th. ever come into the treaty of marriage.

2. With hearty good wishes; (v. 60.) they blessed Rebekah, said unto her, When our relations are entering into a new condition, it is usual for the nearer relation to recommend them to the blessing and grace of God. Now that she was going to be a wife, they prayed that she might be a mother both of a numerous and of a victorious progeny. Perhaps Abraham's servant had told them of the promise God had lately made his master, which, it is likely, Abraham accused of his head withal, that God would multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and that they should possess the gate of their enemies,
ch. 22, 17, to which promise they had an eye in this blessing, Be thou the mother of that seed.

62. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country. 63. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. 64. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. 65. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, it is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself.

66. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. 67. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Isaac and Rebekah are, at length, happily brought together.

I. Isaac was well employed, when he met Rebekah, v. 62, 63. He went out to meditate, or pray in the field at even-tide. Some think he expected the return of his servants about this time, and went out on purpose to meet them. But it should seem, he went out on another errand, to take the advantage of a silent evening, and a solitary field, for meditation and prayer, those divine exercises by which we converse with God and our own hearts. Note, 1. Holy souls love retirement; it will do us good to be often left alone, walking alone, and sitting alone; and if we have the art of improving solitude, we shall find we are never less alone than when alone. 2. Meditation and prayer ought to be both our business and our delight, when we are alone; while we have a God, a Christ, and a Heaven, to acquaint ourselves with, and to secure our interests in, we need not want matter either for meditation or prayer, which, if they go together, will mutually befriend each other. 3. Our walks in the field are then truly pleasant, when in them we apply ourselves to meditation and prayer; we there have a free and open prospect of the heavens above us, and the earth around us, and the hosts and riches of both, by the view of which we should be led to the contemplation of the Maker and Owner of all. 4. The exercises of devotion should be the refreshment and entertainment of the evening, after the care and business of the day, to relieve the fatigue of that, and before the repose and sleep of the night, to prepare us for that. Merciful providences are then doubly comfortable, when they find us well-employed, and in the way of our duty. Some think Isaac was now praying for good success in this affair that was depending, and meditating upon that which was proper to encourage his hope in God concerning it; and now, when he sets himself, as it were, upon his watch-tower, to see what God would answer him, as the prophet, Hab. 2. 1, he sees the camels coming; sometimes God sends in the mercy prayed for, immediately, Acts 12, 1.

II. Rebekah behaved herself very becomingly, when she met Isaac: understanding who he was, she lighted off her camel, v. 64, and took a veil, and covered herself, v. 65, in token of humility, modesty, and subjection; she did not reproach Isaac for not coming himself to fetch her, or at least to meet her a day's journey or two; did not complain of the tediousness of her journey, or the difficulty of leaving her relations, to come into a strange place; but having seen Providence going before her in the affair, she accommodates herself with cheerfulness to her new relation. These that by faith are espoused to Christ, and would be presented as brides with this meekness, must be as good for this meekness to his example, humble themselves, as Rebekah, who lighted, when she saw Isaac on foot, and must put themselves into subjection to him who is their head, Eph. 5. 24, as Rebekah, signifying it by the veil she put on, 1 Cor. 11. 10.

III. They were brought together, (probably, after some further acquaintance,) to their mutual comfort, v. 67. Observe here, 1. What an affectionate husband he was to his mother. 2. What a tender relation these that have approved themselves well in one relation, it may be hoped, will do so in another. She became his wife, and he loved her; there was all the reason in the world why he should, for so ought men to love their wives even as themselves. The duty of the relation is then done, and the comfort of the relation is then enjoyed, when mutual love governs; for there the Lord commands the blessing.

CHAP. XXV.

The sacred historian, in this chapter, 1. Takes his leave of Abraham, with an account, of his children by another wife, v. 1—4. 2. Of his last will and testament, v. 5—6. 3. Of his age, death, and burial, v. 7—10. 11. He takes his leave of Ishmael, with a short account of his children, v. 12—16. 2. Of his age and death, v. 17—18. 3. He enters upon the history of Isaac. 1. His prosperity, v. 11. 4. The conception and birth of his two sons, with the oracle of God concerning them, v. 19—31. 3. Their different characters, v. 27—29. 4. Esau's selling his birth-right to Jacob, v. 29—34.

I. THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2. And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3. And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummin. 4. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5. And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east-country. 7. And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred three score and fifteen years. 8. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. 9. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10. The field which Abraham purchased of the
sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

Abraham lived, after the marriage of Isaac, 35 years, and all that is recorded concerning him during that time, lies here in a very few verses; we hear no more of God's extraordinary appearances to him, or trials of him; for all the days, even of the best and greatest saints, are not eminently days, some slide on silently; and neither come nor go with observation: such were these last days of Abraham. We have here,

1. An account of his children by Keturah, another wife, which he married after the death of Sarah. He had buried Sarah, and married Isaac, the two dear companions of his life, and was now solitary; he wanted a nurse, his family wanted a governor, and it was not good for him to be thus alone; he therefore marries Keturah, probably the chief of his maid-servants, born in his house, or bought with money. Marriage is not forbidden to old age. By her he had six sons, in whom the promise made to Abraham, concerning the great increase of his posterity, was in part fulfilled, which, it is likely, he had an eye to in this marriage. The strength he received by the promise, still remained in him, to show how much the virtue of the promise exceeds the power of nature.

2. The disposition which Abraham made of his estate. Birth of these sons, he set his house in order, with prudence and justice. He made Isaac his heir, as he was bound to, in justice to Sarah his first and principal wife, and to Rebekah who married Isaac upon the assurance of it, ch. 24. 36. In this all which he settled upon Isaac, are included, perhaps the promise of the land of Canaan, and the entail of the covenant. Or, God having already made him the heir of the promise, Abraham therefore made him heir of his estate. Our affection and gifts should attend God's. He gave portions to the rest of his children, both to Ishmael, though at first he was sent empty away, and to his sons by Keturah. It was justice to provide for them; parents that do not imitate him are worse than infidels. It was prudent to settle them in places distant from Isaac, that they might not pretend to divide the inheritance with him; nor he any way a care or expense to him. Observe, He did this while he yet lived, lest it should not have been done, or not so well done, afterward. Note, In many cases, it is wisdom for men to make their own hands their executors, and what they find to do, to do it while they live, as far as they can. The sons of the concubines were sent into the country that lay east from Canaan, and their posterity were called the children of the east, famous for their numbers. Judg. 6. 5, 33. Their great increase was the fruit of the promise made to Abraham, that God would multiply his seed. God, in dispensing his blessings, does as Abraham did; common blessings he gives to the children of this world, as to the sons of the bondwoman; but, covenant blessings he reserves for the heirs of promise. All that he has, is their's, for the sake of Isaac's, from whom the rest shall be for ever separated.

III. The age and death of Abraham. v. 7, 8. He lived 175 years; just 100 years after he came to Canaan; so long he was a sojourner in a strange country. Though he lived long, and lived well, though he did good, and could be ill-spared, yet he died at last. Observe how his death is here described. He gave up the ghost. His life was not extorted from him, but he cheerfully resigned it; into the hands of the Father of spirits he committed his spirit. He died in a good old age, an old man; so God had promised him. His death was his discharge from the burthen of his age; an old man would not so live; always: it was also the crown of the glory of his old age. 3. He was full of years; or full of life, (as it might be supplied,) including all the conveniences and comforts of life. He did not live till the world was weary of him, but till he was weary of the world; he had had enough of it, and desired no more, Vixi quantum satiast —I have lived long enough. Seneca. A good man, though he should not die old, dies full of days, satisfying himself, and longing to live in a better place. 4. He was gathered to his people. His body was gathered to the congregation of the dead, and his soul to the congregation of the blessed. Note, Death gathers us to our people. Those that are our people while we live, whether the people of God, or the children of this world, are the people to whom death will gather us.

IV. His burial, v. 9, 10. Here is nothing recorded of the pomp or ceremony of his funeral; only we are told, 1. Who buried him; His sons Isaac and Ishmael, it was the last office of respect they had to pay to their good father. Some distance there had formerly been between Isaac and Ishmael; but it seems either that Abraham had himself brought them together while he lived, or, at least, that his death reconciled them. 2. Where they buried him; in his own burying-place, which he had purchased, and in which he had buried Sarah. Note, Those that in life have been very dear to each other, may not only innocently, but laudably desire to be buried together, that in their deaths they may not be divided, and in token of their hopes of rising together.

11. And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi. 12. Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah his handmaid, bare unto Abraham. 13. And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam. 14. And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa. 15. Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16. These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. 17. And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. 18. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

Immediately after the account of Abraham's death, Moses begins the story of Isaac, (v. 11,) and tells us where he dwelt, and how remarkably God blessed him. Note, The blessing of Abraham did not die with him, but survived to all the children of the promise. But he presently digresses from the story of Isaac, to give a short account of Ishmael, forasmuch as he also was a son of Abraham, and God had made some promises concerning him, which it was requisite we should know the accomplishment of. Observe here what is said,

1. Concerning his children; he had twelve sons,
12. princes they are called, (v. 16.) heads of families, which, in process of time, became nations, distinct tribes, numerous, and very considerable. They peopled a very large continent that lay between Egypt and Assyria, called Arabia. The names of his twelve sons are recorded. Midian and Kedar we often read of in scripture. And some very good expositors have taken notice of the signification of those three names which are put together, (v. 14.) as containing good advice to us all, Mishma, Dimah, and Massa, that is, hear, keep silence, and be wise; they have them together in the same order, Jan. 1. 19. Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. The posterity of Ishmael had not equalled his brethren in the fields, wherein they now raged in times of peace; but they had towns and castles, (v. 16.) wherein they fortified themselves in time of war. Now the number and strength of this family were the fruit of the promise made to Hagar concerning Ishmael, ch. 16. 10. and to Abraham, ch. 17. 20. and 21. 13. Note, Many who are strangers to the covenants of promise, yet are blessed with outward prosperity for the sake of their godly ancestors. Wealth and riches shall be in their house.

2. Concerning himself; here is an account of his age; he lived 137 years, (v. 17.) which is recorded, to show the effcacy of Abraham's prayer for him, ch. 17. 18. O that Ishmael might live before thee! Here is an account too of his death; he also was gathered to his people; but it is not said that he was full of days, though he lived to so great an age: he was not so weary of the world, nor so willing to leave it, as his godly father. Those words, he fell in the presence of all his brethren, whether they mean, as we take them, he died, or as others, his lot fell, are designed to show the fulfilling of that word to Hagar, ch. 16. 12. He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren, that is, he shall flourish and be eminent among them, and shall hold his own to the last. Or, he died with his friends about him, which is comfortable.

19. And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac: 20. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. 21. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. 22. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went inquired of the Lord. 23. And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. 24. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. 25. And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. 26. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. 27. And the boys grew; and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. 28. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

We have here an account of the birth and of Esau, the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah; their entrance into the world was (which is not usual) one of the most considerable parts of their story; nor is much related concerning Isaac, but what had reference to his father while he lived, and to his sons afterward. For Isaac seems not to have been a man of action, nor much tried, but to have spent his days in quietness and silence.

Now concerning Jacob and Esau we are told, 2. That they were prepared for; their parents, after they had been long childless, obtained them by prayer, v. 20, 21. Isaac was 40 years old when he was married; though he was an only son, and the person from whom the promised seed was to come, yet he made no haste to marry. He was 60 years old when his sons were born, (v. 26.) so that, after he was married, he had no child for 20 years. Note, Though the accomplishment of God's promise is always sure, yet it is not always so soon as the promise seems to be concerned in the time; it is the exercise of providence; that the faith of believers may be tried, their patience exercised, and mercies long waited for may be the more welcome when they come. While this mercy was delayed, Isaac did not approach to a handmaid's bed, as Abraham had done, and Jacob afterward; for he loved Rebekah, ch. 24. 67. But, 1. He prayed; he entreated the Lord for his wife; though God had promised to multiply his family, he prayed for it. For God's promises must not be pressed, but encourage our prayers, and be improved as the groundwork of our faith. Though he had prayed for this mercy very often, and had continued his supplication many years, and it was not granted, yet he did not leave off praying for it; for men ought always to pray, and not to faint, (Luke 18. 1.) to pray without ceasing, and knock till the door be opened. He prayed for his wife; some read it, with his wife. Note, Husbands and wives should pray together, which is intimated in the apostle's caution, that their prayers be not hindered, 1 Pet. 3. 7. The Jews have a tradition, that Isaac, at length, took his wife with him to Mount Moriah, where God had promised that he would multiply Abraham's seed, ch. 22. 17, and there in his prayer with her; and for her, pleaded the promise made in that very place, as God had his prayers, and was entreated of him. Note, Children are the gift of God. Those that continue instant in prayer, as Isaac did, shall find at last that they did not seek in vain, Is. 45. 19.

II. That they were prepared of before they were born; and great mysteries were wrought up in the prophecies which went before of them, v. 22, 23. Long had Isaac prayed for a son; and now his answer was twofold, 1. to recompense him for his long waiting. Thus God often outdoes our prayers, and gives more than we are able to ask or think. Now Rebekah being with child of these two sons, observe here,

1. How she was perplexed in her mind concerning her present case; the children struggled together within her. The connexion she felt, was altogether extraordinary, and the hermeneut; which she was so sensible of that the birth would be her death, or that she was weary of the intestine tumult, or that she suspected it to be an ill omen, it seems she was ready to wish that either she had not been with child, or that she might die immediately, and not bring forth such a struggling brood. If it be so, or, since it is so, Why am I
thus? Before, the want of children was her trouble, w. 25. the struggle of the children is no less so. Note. (1.) The comforts we are most desirous of, are sometimes found to bring along with them more occasion of trouble and uneasiness than we thought of; vanity being written upon all things under the sun, God thus teaches us to read it. (2.) We are to expect that we shall be concerned with God about the cause of the uneasiness that attends them. We know not when we are pleased; we knew neither how to want, nor how to abound. This struggle between Jacob and Esau in the womb, represents the struggle that is between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, 1. [1.] In the world; the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, have been ever since the fall in conflict with each other. It was put between them, ch. 3. 15. and it has occasioned a constant uneasiness among men. Christ himself came to send fire on earth, and this division, Luke 12. 49, 51. But let not this be an offence to us. A holy war is better than the peace of the Devil's palace. [2.] In the hearts of believers; no sooner is Christ formed in the soul, than immediately there begins a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, Gal. 5. 17. The stream is not turned without a mighty struggle, which yet ought to engage us. It is better to have a conflict with sin, than tamely to submit to it.

2. What course she took for her relief. She went to inquire of the Lord. Some think Melchizedek was now consulted as an oracle, or, perhaps some Urin or Teraphim were now used to inquire of God by, as afterward in the breast-plate of judgment. Note. The word and prayer, by both which we now inquire of the Lord, give greater relief to those that are, upon any account, perplexed. It is an ease to the mind to speak our case before the Lord, and ask counsel at his mouth, Go into the sanctuary, Ps. 73. 17.

3. The information given her upon her inquiry, which expounded the mystery. Two nations are in thy womb, v. 25. She was now big, not only with two children, but two nations, which should not only in their manners and dispositions greatly differ from each other, but in their interests, clash and contend with each other; and the issue of the contest should be, that the elder should serve the younger, which was fulfilled in the subjection of the Edomites for many ages, to the house of David, till they revolted, 2 Chron. 21. 8. Observe here, (1.) That God is a free Agent in dispensing his grace; it is his prerogative to make a difference between those who have not as yet themselves done either good or evil. This the Apostle infers from hence, Rom. 9. 12. (2.) That in the struggle between grace and corruption in the soul, grace, the younger, shall certainly get the upper hand at last.

III. That when they were born, there was a great difference between them, which served to confirm what had been foretold, (v. 25.) was a present of accomplishment of it, and served greatly to illustrate the type.

1. There was a great difference in their bodies, v. 25. Esau, when he was born, was rough and hairy, as if he had been already a grown man; whence he had his name Esau, made, reared already. This was an indication of a very strong constitution, and gave cause to suspect that he would be a very robust, daring, active, man. But Jacob was small, tender and mild. The difference of men's capacities, and consequently of their condition in the world, arises very much from the difference of their natural constitution; some are plainly designed by nature for activity and honour, others as manifestly marked for obscurity. This instance of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of providence, may perhaps help to reconcile us to the doctrine of the divine sovereignty in the kingdom of grace. (2.) It is God's usual way to choose the weak things of the world, and to pass by the mighty, 1. Cor. 1. 26, 27.

2. There was a manifest contest in their births; Esau, the stronger, came out first; but Jacob's hand took hold on his heel, v. 26. This signified, (1.) Jacob's pursuit of him, and having the advantage of him; for, as soon as he reached forth to have caught hold of it, and if possible, to have prevented his brother. (2.) His prevailing for it at last; that, in process of time, he should undermine his brother, and gain his point. This passage is referred to, Hos. 12. 3, and from hence he had his name Jacob, a supplanter.

3. They were very unlike in the temper of their minds, and the way of living they chose, v. 27. This seems to be a prophecy of their actions.

4. They are mentioned as a figure of those that were to be members of Christ's church, and the other the types of those that were to be members of the church of the world. (1.) Esau was a man for this world; a man addicted to his sports, for he was a cunning hunter; recreation was his business, he studied the art of it, and spent all his time in it. He never loved a book, nor cared for being within doors, but he was a man of the field; like Nimrod and Ishmael, all for the game, and never well but when he hunted after the red deer, or the wild boar. He set up for a gentleman, and a soldier. (2.) Jacob was a man for the other world; he was not cut out for a statesman, nor did he affect to look great, but he was a plain man, dwelling in tents; an honest man that always meant well, and dealt fairly, that preferred the true delights of solitude and retirement, to all the pretended pleasure of busy noisy sports: he dwelt in tents, 1. [1.] As a shepherd. He was attached to that safe and silent employment of keeping sheeps, to which also he bred up his children, ch. 46. 34. Or, [2.] As a student. He frequented the tents of Melchizedek, or Heber, as some understand it, to be taught by them divine things. And this was that son of Isaac, on whom the covenant was entailed.

4. Their interest in the affections of their parents was likewise different. They had but these two children, and it seems, one was the father's darling, and the other the mother's, v. 28. (1.) Isaac, though he was not a stirring man himself, (for when he went into the fields, he went to meditate and pray, not to hunt,) yet he loved to have his son active. Esau knew how to please him, and showed a great respect for him, by treating him often with venison, which gained him the affections of the good old man, and won upon him more than one would have thought. (2.) Rebekah was mindful of the oracle of God, which had given the preference to the younger, and therefore she preferred him in her love. And if it be lawful for parents to make a difference between their children upon any account, doubtless Rebekah was in the right, that loved him whom God loved.

29. And Jacob sod pottage: And Esau came from the field, and he was faint: 30. And Esau said to Jacob, feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. 31. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right. 32. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right do to me? 33. And Jacob said, Swear to me this day, and he sware unto him: and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob. 34. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birth-right.
We have here a bargain made between Jacob and Esau about the birth-right, which was Esau's by promise, and yet taken away by Jacob's by promise. It was a spiritual privilege, including the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power, as well as the double portion, ch. 49. 3. It seemed to be such a birth-right as had then the blessing annexed to it, and the entail of the promise. Now see,

I. Jacob's pious desire of the birth-right, which yet he sought to obtain by indirect ways, not agreeable to his character as a plain man. It was no out of pride or ambition that he bargained for the birth-right, but with an eye to spiritual blessings, which he had got well-acquainted with in his tents, while Esau had lost the scent of them in the field. For this, he is to be commended, that he covetted earnestly the best gifts; yet in this he cannot be justified, that he took advantage of his brother's necessity, to make him a very hard bargain, v. 31. Sell me this day thy birth-right. Probably, there had formerly been some communication between them about this matter, and then it was not so great a surprise upon Esau as here it seems to be; and, it may be, Esau had sometimes spoken slightly of the birth-right and its appurtenances, which encouraged Jacob to make this proposal to him. And if so, Jacob is in some measure, excusable in what he did to gain his point. Note, plain men, that have their conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity, and without vanity, are the wisest of all for their souls and eternity. These are wise indeed, that are wise for another world. Jacob's wisdom appeared in two things. 1. That he chose the exact time; took the opportunity when it offered itself, and did not let it slip. 2. That having made the bargain, he made it sure, and got it confirmed by Esau's oath, Swear to me this day, v. 33. He took Esau when he was in the mind, and would not leave him to the sport of imagination. In a case of this nature, it is good to be sure.

II. Esau's profane contempt of the birth-right, and the foolish sale he made of it. He is called firo—

fane Esau for it, Heb. 12. 16, because, for one morsel of meat, he sold his birth-right; as dear a morsel as ever was eaten since the forbidden fruit; and he lived to regret it, when it was too late. Never was there such a foolish bargain as that which Esau now made; and this, in a manner, has been so dishonoured and the reputation of a cunning-man; and perhaps had often bantered his brother Jacob as a weak and simple man. Note. 1. There are those that are penny-wise and pound-foolish, cunning hunters that can out-wit others and draw them into their snares, and yet are themselves imposed upon by Satan's wiles, and led captive by him at his will. 2. God often chooses the foolish things of the world, by them to confound the wise. Plain Jacob makes a fool of cunning Esau. Observe the instances of Esau's folly.

(1.) His appetite was very strong, v. 29, 30. Poor Jacob had got some bread and pottage (v. 34.) for his dinner, and was sitting down to it contentedly enough, without venison; when Esau came from hunting, hungry and weary, and perhaps had caught nothing: and now Jacob's pottage pleased his eye better than ever his game had done. Given me (says he) some of that red, that red, as it is in the original; it suited his own colour, v. 25, and, in reproach to him, for this he was ever afterward called Edom, Red. Now, it should seem, he was so faint, that he could not feed himself, nor had he a servant at hand to help him, but entreats his brother to feed him. Note, [1.] Those that addict themselves to sport, greedily watch for their fruit, and will have their own way, are ready to satisfy their covetous appetites. They might do the most useful business, and gain the greatest advantages, with half the pains they take, and half the perils they run, in pursuit of their foolish pleasures. [2.] Those that work with quickness, are more constantly and comfortably provided for, than those that work by promise. It was not always to the wise, but they that trust in the Lord and do good, verily they shall be fed, fed with daily bread; not as Esau, sometimes feasting, and sometimes fainting. [3.] The gratifying of the sensual appetite, is in such as furnishes thousands of precious souls: surely if Esau was hungry and faint, he might have got a meal's meat cheaper than at the expense of his birth-right; but he was unaccountably fond of the pottage and his pot, and could not deny himself the satisfaction of a mess of it, whatever it cost him. Never better can come of it, when men's hearts walk after their eyes, Job 31. 7, and when they serve their own bellies; therefore, Look not thou upon the wine, or, as Esau, upon the pottage, when it is red, when it gives that colour in the cup, in the dish, which is most inviting, Prov. 23. 31. If we use ourselves to deny ourselves, we break the force of most temptations.

(2.) His reasoning was very weak, v. 32. Behold I am at the point to die; and if I were, would nothing serve to keep him alive but this pottage? If the famine were now in the land, (ch. 26. 1.) as Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, we cannot suppose Isaac so poor, or Rebekah so bad a housekeeper, but that he might have been supplied with food convenient, other ways, and might have saved his birth-right; and either would have been more agreeable to him. But no lingering condition, nothing will please him but this red, this red pottage, and to palliate his desire, he pretends he is at the point to die; if it had been so, was it not better for him to die in honour than to live in disgrace; to die under a blessing than to live under a curse? The birth-right was typical of spiritual privileges, those of the church of the first-born. Esau was now tried how he would value them, and whether he would have them under some sacrifices; may be but get relief against them, he cares not for his birth-right. Naboth was better principled, who would lose his life rather than sell his vineyard, because his part in the earthly Canaan signified his part in the heavenly, 1 Kings 21. 5. [1.] If we look on Esau's birth-right as only a temporal advantage, what he said, had something of truth in it, namely, that our worldly enjoyments, even those that we are naturally entitled to, are not, nor will be made by our hands. Ps. 49. 6. 8. They will not put by the stroke of death, nor cause the pangs, nor remove the sting; yet Esau, who set up for a gentleman, should have had a greater and more noble spirit, than to sell even such an honour a cheap bargain. [2.] But being of a spiritual nature, his undervaluing of it was the greatest profaneness imaginable. Note, It is egregious folly to part with our interest in God, and Christ, and Heavens, for the riches, honours, or pleasures of this world; as bad a bargain as he sold a birth-right for a dish of broth.

(3.) Repentance was hid from his eyes, v. 34. He did eat and drink, pleased his palate, satisfied his cravings, blessed himself when he thought what a good meat's meat he had had, and then carelessly rose up and went his way, without any serious reflections upon the advantage he had lost, nor any show of regret: thus Esau despised his birth-right; he used no means at all to get the bargain revoked; made no appeal to his father about it, nor proposed to his brother to compound the matter; but the bargain which his necessity had made, (supposing it were so,) his profaneness confirmed ex post facto—after the deed; and by his subsequent neglect and contempt, he did, as it were, make a new bargain which he had made a false bargain in fact; he had done as he put the bargain past recall. Note, People are ruined, not so much by doing what is miss, as by doing it and not repenting of it, doing it and standing to it.
CHAP. XXVI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Isaac in adversity, by reason of a famine in the land, which 1. Obliges him to change his quarters, v. 1. But, 2. God visits him with direction and comfort, v. 2, 3. He foolishly denies his wife, being in distress, and is reproved for it by Abimelech, v. 6, 7. II. Isaac in prosperity, by the blessing of God upon him, v. 19. III. The Philistines were envious at him, v. 14. 17. 2. He continued industrious in his business, v. 18. 23. 3. God appeared to him, and encouraged him, not to devouly acknowledge, v. 24. 25. IV. The Philistines, at length, made court to him, and made a covenant with him, v. 26. 33. 5. The disagreeable marriage of his son Esau was an allay to the comfort of his prosperity, v. 34, 35.

1. And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. 2. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in this land, which I shall tell thee of: 3. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; and unto thy seed will I give all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; 5. Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Here, 1. God tried Isaac by providence; Isaac had been trained up in a believing dependence upon the divine grace of the land of Canaan to him and his heirs; yet now that there was a famine in the land, v. 1, what shall he think of the promise when the promised land will not find him bread? Is such a grant worth accepting, upon such terms, and after so long a time? Yes, Isaac will still cleave to the covenant; and the less valuable Canaan in itself seems to be, the better he is taught to value it. 1. As a token of God's grace towards him; and 2. As a type of heaven's everlasting blessedness. Note, The intrinsic worth of God's promises cannot be lessened in a believer's eye by any cross providences.

II. He directed him under this trial by his word. Isaac finds himself straitened by the scarcity of provisions; somehow he must go for supply; it should seem, he intends for Egypt, whither his father went in the like state, but he takes Gerar in his way, full of thoughts, no doubt, which he had best steer his course, till God graciously appeared to him, and determined him, abundantly to his satisfaction.

1. God bid him stay where he was, and not go down into Egypt, v. 2, 3. Sojourn in this land; there was a famine in Jacob's days, and God bid him go down into Egypt, ch. 46. 5, 4; a famine in Isaac's days, and God bid him, not to go down into Egypt, v. 5. 6; a famine in Abraham's days, and God left him to his liberty, directing him neither way; this variety in the divine procedure (considering that Egypt was always a place of trial and exercise to God's people) some ground upon the different characters of these three patriarchs. Abraham was a man of very high attainments, and intimate communion with God; and to him all places and conditions were alike. Isaac was a very good man, but not cut out for hardship; therefore he is forbidden to go to Egypt. Jacob was inured to difficulties, strong, and patient; and therefore he must go down into Egypt, that the trial of his faith might be to praise, and honour, and glory. Thus God proportioned his people's trials to their strength.

2. He promised to be with him, and bless him, v. 3. As we may go any whither with comfort, when God's blessing goes with us; so we may stay anywhere contentedly, if that blessing rest upon us.

3. He renewed the covenant with him, which had so often been made with Abraham, repeating and ratifying the promises of the land of Canaan, a numerous issue, and the Messiah, v. 5, 4. Note, That which must live by faith, have need often to be renewed, and confirmed to them, that the promises they are to live upon, especially when they are called to any instance of suffering or self-denial.

4. He recommended to him the good example of his father's obedience, as that which had preserved the entail of the covenant in his family, v. 5. Abraham obeyed my voice, Do thou do so too, and the promise shall be sure to thee. Abraham's obedience is here celebrated, to his honour; for by the obedience of a good and perfect man, God and men. A great variety of words is here used to express the divine will, to which Abraham was obedient, my voice, my word, my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws, which may intimate that Abraham's obedience was universal; he obeyed the original laws of nature, the revealed laws of divine worship, particularly that of circumcision, and all the external precepts of the covenant, and the law of quitting his country, and that (which some think is more especially referred to) of the offering up of his son, which Isaac himself had reason enough to remember. Note, Those only shall have the benefit and comfort of God's covenant with their godly parents, that tread in the steps of their obedience.

6. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar: 7. And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah, because she was fair to look upon. 8. And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines, looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. 9. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, lest I die for her. 10. And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldst have brought guiltiness upon us. 11. And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death. Isaac had now laid aside all thoughts of going into Egypt, and in obedience to the heavenly vision, sets up his staff in Gerar, the country in which he was born, v. 6. yet there he enters into temptation, the same temptation that his good father had been once and again surprised and overcome by, namely, to deny his wife, and to give out that she was his sister. Observe, 1. How he sinned, v. 7. Because his wife was handsome, he fancied the Philistines would find
some way or other to take him off, that some of them might marry her; and therefore she must pass for his sister. It is an unaccountable thing, that both these great and good men should be guilty of so strange a piece of dissimulation, by which they so much exposed both their own persons and their wives’ reputation. But we see, (1.) That they had indeed not made themselves guilty of very great faults and follies. Let these therefore that stand, hearken lest they fall, and those that are fallen, not desirous of being helped up again. We see, (2.) That there is an aptness in us to imitate even the weaknesses and improprieties of those we have a relish for; we have not the sense to keep our own feet, lest we aim to tread in the steps of good men, we sometimes tread in their by-steps.

2. How he was detected, and the cheat discovered by the king himself. Abimelech (not the same that was in Abraham’s days, ch. 20, for this was near 100 years after that) was the common name of the Philistine kings, as Caesar of the Roman emperors; he saw Isaac more familiar and pleasant with Rebekah than he knew he would be with his sister; (v. 8.) he saw him sporting with her, or laughing; it is the same word with that from which Isaac had his name; he was rejoicing with the wife of his youth, Prov. 5. 18. It becomes those in that relation to be pleasant with one another, as those that are pleased with one another. No where, may a man more glorify himself to be innocent in marriage, than with his own wife and children. Abimelech charged him with the fraud; (v. 9.) showed him how frivolous his excuse was, and what might have been the bad consequences of it; (v. 10.) and then, to convince him how groundless and unjust his jealousy of them was, took him and his family under his particular protection, forbidding any injurious proceeding; and kept his name; his wife of his youth, v. 11. Note, (1.) A lying tongue is bad for a moment. Truth is the daughter of time; and in time, it will out. (2.) One sin is often the inlet to many, and therefore the beginnings of sin ought to be avoided. (3.) The sins of professors shame them before those that are with us. (4.) God can make those that are incensed against his people, though they be the children of his own name, as to know that it is at their peril, if they do them any hurt. See Ps. 105. 14, 15.

12. Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred fold: and the Lord blessed him: 13. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great. 14. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. 15. For all the wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. 16. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we. 17. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. 18. And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. 19. And Isaac’s servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. 20. And the herdmens of Gerar did strive with Isaac’s herdmens, saying, The water is our’s: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. 21. And they digged another well, and strove for that also; and he called the name of it Sitnah. 22. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. 23. And he went up from thence to Beersheba. 24. And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake. 25. And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants digged a well.

Here we have,

I. The tokens of God’s good will to Isaac; he blessed him, and prospered him, and made all that he had, to thrive under his hands. 1. His corn multiplied strangely, v. 12. He had no land of his own, but took land of the Philistines, and sowed it; and (be it observed for the encouragement of poor tenants, that occupy other people’s lands, that are honest and industrious) God blessed him with a great increase. He reap’d an hundred fold; and there seems to be an emphasis laid upon the time; it was that same year, when there was a famine in the land; while others scarcely reap’d at all, he reaped thus plentifully. See Isa. 65. 15. My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry, Ps. 37. 19. In the days of famine, they shall be satisfied. 2. The corn was increased, v. 13. And he did that. 3. He had great store of revenue, whom he employed and maintained. Note, As goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, Ecol. 5. 11.

II. The tokens of the Philistines’ ill-will to him: they envied him, v. 14. It is an instance, 1. Of the vanity of the world, that the more men have of it, the more they are envied, and exposed to sense and injury. Who can stand before envy? Prov. 27. 4. See Eccl. 4. 4. Of the corruption of nature; for that is a bad principle indeed, which makes men grieve at the good of others; as if it must needs be ill with me, because it is well with my neighbour. (1.) They had already showed their ill-will to his family, by stepping up the wells which his father had digged, v. 13. And from this ill-doing done; because they had not flocks of their own to water at these wells, they would not leave them for the use of others; so absurd a thing is malice. And it was perfidiously done; contrary to the covenant of friendship they had made with Abraham, ch. 21. 31, 32. No hand will hold ill-nature. (2.) They envied his country, v. 16. They called it with a jealous eye. Isaac’s house was like a court, and his riches and retinue eclipsed Abimelech’s; and therefore he must go further off; they were weary of his neighbourhood, because they saw that the Lord blessed him; whereas, for that reason, they should the rather have courted his stay, that they also might
be blessed for his sake. Isaac does not insist upon the bargain he had made with them for the lands he held, nor upon his occupying and improving of them, nor does he offer to contest with them by force, though he was become very great; but very peaceably departs thence further from the royal city, and proclaims himself to be a peaceable man. Note, We should deny ourselves both in our rights and in our conveniences, rather than quarrel; a wise and a good man will rather retire into obscurity, like Isaac here into a valley, than sit high, to be the butt of envy and ill-will.

III. His constancy and continuance in his business still.

1. He kept up his husbandry, and continued in due course to find wells of water, and to fit them for his use, v. 18, &c. Though he was grown very rich, yet he was as solicitous as ever about the state of his flocks, and still looked well to his herds; when men grow great, they must take heed of thinking themselves too big and too high for their business. Though he was driven from the conveniences he had had, and could not follow his husbandry with the same case and advantage as before, yet, if he had the best of it in the way of God, he was come into, which it is every man's prudence to do. Observe, (1.) He opened the wells that his father had digged, v. 18. and, out of respect to his father, called them by the same names that he had given them. Note, Though we must use the light of former ages, it does not therefore follow that we must rest in it, and make no advances; we must still be building upon their foundation, running to and fro, that knowledge may be increased, Dan. 12. 4.

In digging his wells, (1.) He met with much opposition, v. 20, 21. Those that open the fountains of truth, must expect contradiction. The two first wells they digged, were called Ezek and Sitmah, Contention and Hatred. See here, First, What is the nature of worldly things; they are make-bates, and occasions of strife. Secondly, What is often the lot even of the most quiet and peaceable men in this world; those that are quiet and striving Gang after the same, cannot avoid being driven with, Ps. 120. 7. In this sense, Jeremiah was a man of contention, (Jer. 15. 10.) and Christ himself, though he is the Prince of peace. Thirdly, What a mercy it is to have plenty of water, to have it without striving for it! The more common this mercy is, the more reason we have to be thankful for it: [2.] At length he removed to a quiet settlement, clearing to his peaceable prey, proving himself in his quietness, and the goodness of his time, to dwell with them that hated peace, Ps. 120. 6. He preferred quietness to victory. He digged a well, and for that they strove not, v. 22. Note, Those that follow peace, sooner or later, shall find peace; those that study to be quiet, seldom fail of being so.

How unlike was Isaac to his brother Ishmael, who, right or wrong, would hold what he had, against all the world ch. 16. 12. And of these would we be foolish to set in calumny: Rehoboam, Enlargements, room enough; in the two former wells we may see what the earth is, straitness and strifes; men cannot thrive, for the throng of their neighbours; this well shows us what heaven is; it is enlargement and peace, room enough there, for there are many mansions.

2. He continued firm to his religion, and kept up his communion with God. (1.) God graciously afeared to him, v. 24. When the Philistines expelled him, forced him to remove from place to place, and gave him continual molestation, then God visited him, and gave him fresh assurances of his favour. Note, When men are found false and unkind, we may comfort ourselves that God is faithful and gracious; and his time to show himself so, is when we are most disappointed in our expectations from men. When Isaac was come to Beersheba, (v. 23.) it is probable that it troubled him to think of his unsettled condition, and that he could not be suffered to stay long in a place; and, in the multitude of these thoughts within him, that same night that he came weary and uneasy to Beersheba, God replenished all his comforts to delight his soul. Probably, Isaac was apprehensive the Philistines would not let him rest there? Fear not, says God to him, I am with thee, and will bless thee. These may remove with comfort, that are sure of God's presence with them whithersoever they go. (2.) He was not wanting in his returns of duty to God; for there he built an altar, and called upon the name of the Lord, v. 25. Note, Thus we go, we must take our religion along with us. Probably, Isaac's altars and his religious worship gave offence to the Philistines, and provoked them to be the more troublesome to him: yet he kept up his duty, whatever ill-will he might be exposed to by it. [2.] The comforts and encouragements God gives us by his word, should excite and quicken us to all instances of devotion, by which God may be honoured, and our intercourse with heaven maintained.

26. Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army. 27. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? 28. And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; 29. That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord. 30. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink, 31. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. 32. And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had dug, and said unto him, We have found water. 33. And he called it Sheba: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

We have here the contests that had been between Isaac and the Philistines issuing in a happy peace and reconciliation.

1. Abimelech makes a friendly visit to Isaac, in token of the respect he had for him, v. 26. Note, When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him, Prov. 16. 7. King's hearts are in his hands, and when he pleases, he can turn them to favour his people.

2. Isaac prudently and cautiously questions his sincerity in this visit, v. 27. Note, In settling
friendships and correspondences, there is need of the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove. Nor is it any transgression of the law of meekness and love, fairly to signify our strong perception of injuries received, and to stand upon our guard in dealing with those that have acted unfairly.

3. Abimelech professes his sincerity, in this address to Isaac, and earnestly courts his friendship, v. 28, 29. Some suggest that Abimelech pressed for this league with him, because he feared lest Isaac growing rich, should some time or other, avenge himself upon them for the injuries he had received. How can the professes to do it from a principle of love rather. (1.) He makes the best of their behaviour toward him. Isaac complained that they had hated him and sent him away; No, said Abimelech, we sent thee away in peace. They turned him off from the land he held of them; but they suffered him to take away his stock, and all his effects with him. Note, The lessening of injuries is necessary to the preserving of friendship; for the aggravating of them exasperates and widens breaches. The unkindness done to us might have been worse. (2.) He acknowledges the tokens of God's favour to him, and makes that the ground of their desire to be in league with him. The Lord is with thee, and thou art the blessed of the Lord, as if he had said, Be persuaded to overlook and pass by the injuries offered thee; for God has abundantly made up to thee the damage they have done thee. Note, Those whom God blesses and favours, have reason enough to forgive those who hate them, since the worst enemy they have, cannot do them any real hurt. Or, "For this reason, we desire thy friendship, because God is with thee." Note, It is good to be in covenant and communion with those who are in covenant and communion with God. 1 John 1. 3. Zech 8. 23. (3.) He assures him that they profess no malicious design against his address to him, the result of mature deliberation. We said, let there be an oath between us; whatever some of his peevish envious subjects might mean otherwise, he, and his prime-ministers of state whom he had now brought with him, designed no other than a cordial friendship. Perhaps Abimelech had received by tradition, the warning God gave to his predecessor not to hurt Abraham, (ch. 20. 7.) and that made him stand in such awe of the power and pleasure of God, as much the favourite of Heaven as Abraham was.

4. Isaac entertains him and his company, and enters into a league of friendship with him, v. 30, 31. Here see how generous the good man was, (1.) In giving; he made them a feast, and bid them welcome. (2.) In forgiving; he did not insist upon the unkindnesses they had done him, but freely entered into a covenant of friendship with them, and bound himself never to the injury they had put upon him. Note, Rehebra teaches us to be neighbourly, and as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.

5. Providence smiled upon what Isaac did: for the same day that he made this covenant with Abimelech, his servants brought him the tidings of a well of water they had found, v. 32, 33. He had not insisted upon the restitution of the wells which the Philistines had taken away, lest he should have broken off the treaty, but sat down silent under the injury; and, to recompense him for that, immediately he is enriched with a new well, which, because it suited so well to the occurrence of the day, he called by an old name, Beer-sheba, The well of the oath.

34. And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beer the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: 35. Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

Here is, 1. Esau's foolish marriage; foolish, some think, in marrying two wives together, for which he is called a fornicator, Heb. 12. 16, rather in marrying Canaanites, who were strangers to the blessing and the seed of Abraham, and were at the time of Noah, for which he is called frigidae; for hereby he intimated that he neither desired the blessing, nor dreaded the curse, of God. 2. The grief and trouble it created to his tender parents. (1.) It grieved them, that he married without asking, or at least, without taking, their advice and consent; see whose steps those children tread in, who either consent or contrive their parents in disposing of themselves. In it, however, he may be said to have been regarded among those who had no religion among them; for Esau knew what were his father's care and mind concerning him, that he should by no means marry a Canaanite. (2.) It should seem, the wives he married, were provoking in their conduct towards Isaac and Rebekah; those children have little reason to expect the blessing of God, who do that which is a grief of mind to their good parents.

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CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter, we return to the typical story of the struggle between Esau and Jacob. Esau had professedly sold the birth-right to Jacob; but Esau hoped he should be never the poorer of it. Jacob the richer, for he retained all he preserves his interest in his father's affections, and so secures the blessing. Here therefore we find how he was unjustly punished for his contempt of the birth-right, (which he foolishly deprived himself of, with the loss of the blessing, which Jacob fraudulently deprived of him.) Thus this story is explained Heb. 12. 16, 17, because he sold the birth-right, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For they that make light of the name and profession of religion, and throw it away for a trifle, thereby forfeit the powers and privileges of it. We have here, I. Isaac's purpose to entail the blessing upon Esau, v. 1. 4. II. Rebekah's plot to procure the blessing for Jacob, v. 2. 5. 12. J. Abraham's management of the plot, and his obtaining of the blessing, v. 18. 29. IV. Esau's resentment of this; in which, 1. His great importunity with his father to obtain a blessing, v. 30. 40. 2. His great emnity to his brother for depriving him of the first blessing, v. 41. 46. 47. 48.

1. AND it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: And he said unto him, Behold, here am I. 2. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: 3. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; 4. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. 5. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.
the common method of settlements, than he ought to have been, if he knew (as it is probable he did) the intimations God had given of his mind in this matter. Note, We are very apt to take our measures rather from our own reason than from divine revelation, and thereby often miss our way; we think the wise and learned, the mighty and noble, should inherit the promise, but God sees not as man sees. See 1 Sam. 16. 6, 7.

2. The directions he gave to Esau, pursuant to this design: he calls him to him, v. 1. For Esau, though married, was not yet removed; and though he had greatly grieved his parents by his marriage, yet they had not expelled him, but, it seems, were pretty well reconciled to him, and made the best of it. Note, parents that are justly offended at their children, yet must not be implacable towards them. (1.) He tells him upon what considerations he resolved to do this now, v. 2, "If I am old, and therefore must die shortly, yet I know not the day of my death, nor when I must die; I will therefore do that at this time, which must be done some time." Note, [1.] Old people should be reminded by the growing infirmities of age, to do quickly, and with all the little might they have, what their hands beth to do. See 1 Sam. 16. 14. [2.] We ought to consider the certainty of the time of our departure out of the world, (which God has wisely kept us in the dark about,) should quicken us to do the work of the day in its day. The heart and the house should both be set, and kept, in order, because at such an hour as we think not, the son of man cometh; because we know not the day of our death, we are concerned to mind the business of life. (2.) He bids him hence to go, the things being ready for the solemnity of executing his last will and testament, by which he designed to make him his heir, v. 3, 4. Esau go must a hunting, and bring some venison, which his father will eat of, and then bless him. In this, he designed, not so much the refreshment of his own spirits, that he might give the blessing in a lively manner, as it is commonly taken, but rather the receiving of a fresh instance of his son's filial duty and affection to him, before he bestowed this favour upon him; perhaps Esau, since he was married, had brought his venison to his wives, and sowed it to his father, as formerly, (ch. 25. 28.) and therefore Isaac, before he would bless him, would have him show this piece of respect to him. Note, It is fit, if the less be blessed of the greater, that the greater should be served and honoured by the lesser (of course as a rule, That my soul would bless thee before I die. Note, [1.] The work of the soul, and not of the lips only; as the soul must be employed in blessing God, (Ps. 103. 1.) so it must be in blessing ourselves and others: the blessing will not come to the heart, if it do not come from the heart. [2.] The work of life must be done before we die, for it cannot be done afterward; (Eccl. 9. 16.) and it is very desirable, when we come to take off, that we should have done our best. [3.] See also, 1. Tho. on 5. 27. Note, God seems to think that they shall die the sooner, for making their wills, and getting ready for death.

6. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 7. Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord, before my death. 8. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. 9. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: 10. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. 11. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: 12. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver: and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. 13. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. 14. And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his father: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. 15. And Rebekah took kindly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her youngest son: 16. And she put the skins of the kids upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck. 17. And she gave the savoury meat, and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

Rebekah is here contriving to procure for Jacob the blessing which was designed for Esau. And here,

I. The end was good, for she was directed in this intention by the oracle of God, by which she had been governed in dispensing her affections. God had said it should be so, but the elder should serve the younger; and therefore Rebekah resolved it shall be so, and cannot hear to see her husband designing to thwart the oracle of God. But,

II. The means were bad, and no way justifiable. If it were not a wrong to Esau, to deprive him of the blessing, (he himself having forfeited it by selling the birth-right,) yet it was a wrong to Isaac, taking advantage of his infirmity, to impose upon him. It was a wrong to Jacob too, in whom he was taught to deceive, by putting a lie into his mouth at least, by putting one into his right hand. It would likewise expose him to endless scruples about the blessing, if he should obtain it thus fraudulently, whether it would stand him or his in any stead, especially if his father should revoke it, upon the discovery of the cheat, and plead, as he might, that it was nullified by an Error Personæ—A mistake of the Person. He himself also was aware of the danger lest, (v. 12.) if she should miss of the blessing, as she might, probably, have done, he should bring upon himself his father's curse, which he dreaded above all things; besides, he laid himself open to that divine curse which is pronounced upon him that causeth the blind to wander out of the way, Deut. 27. 18. If Rebekah, when she heard Isaac promise the blessing to Esau, had gone, at his return from hunting, to Isaac, and, with humility and meekness, put him in remembrance of that which God had said concerning their sons; if she further had showed him how Esau had forfeited the blessing, by selling his birth-right, and by marrying strange wives: it is probable that Isaac would have been prevailed with knowingly and willingly to have conferred the blessing upon Jacob, and needed not thus to have been cheated into it. This had been honourable and laudable, and would have looked well in the history; but God left her to herself, to take this indirect course, that he might have the glory of bringing good out of evil, and of serving his own purposes by the sins and follies of men, and
that we might have the satisfaction of knowing that though there is so much wickedness and deceit in the world, God governs it according to his will, to his own praise. See Job 12, 16. With him are strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceived are his. Isaac had lost the sense of seeing, which, in this case, could not have been imposed upon, Providence having so admirably well ordered the difference of features, that no two faces are exactly alike: conversation, and commerce could scarcely be maintained, if there were not some variety. Therefore she endeavours to deceive.

1. His sense of tasting, by dressing some choice pieces of kid, seasoning it, serving it up, so as to make him believe it was venison; which was no hard matter to do. See the folly of those that are nice and curious in their appetite, and take a pride in humouring it. It is easy to impose upon them with that which they pretend to despise and dislike, so little perhaps does it differ from that to which they give a decided preference. Solomon tells us that dainties are deceitful meat; for it is possible for us to be deceived by them, more ways than one, Prov. 23. 3.

2. His sense of feeling and smelling: she put Esau's clothes upon Jacob, his best clothes, which it might be supposed, Esau would put on, in token of joy and respect to his father, when he was to receive the blessing. Isaac knew these, by the stuff, and, no doubt, to be Esau's. If we would obtain a blessing of our heavenly Father, we must come for it in the garments of our elder Brother, clothed with his righteousness, who is the First-born among many brethren. Last the smoothness and softness of Jacob's hands and neck should betray him, she covered them, and, probably part of his face, with the skins of the kids that were newly killed, v. 16. Esau was rough indeed, when nothing less than these would serve to make Jacob like him. Those that affect to seem rough and rugged in their carriage, put the beast upon the man, and really shame themselves, by thus disguising themselves.

And lastly, it was a very rash word which Rebekah spake, when Jacob objected the danger of a curse. Upon me be thy curse, my son, v. 13. Christ is the abomination of God, that serveth iniquity: if a curse be laid upon me, he has said, Upon me be the curse, only obey my voice; he has born the burden of the curse, the curse of the law, for all those that will take upon them the yoke of the command, the command of the gospel. But it is too daring for any creature to say, Upon me be the curse, unless it be that curse causeless, which we are sure shall not come, Prov. 26. 2.

18. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? 19. And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou hast bid me: arise, I pray thee, and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. 20. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the Lord thy God brought it to me. 21. And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near me, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not. 22. And Jacob went near unto Isaac, his father: and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. 23. And he discerned him not, bcause his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. 24. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am. 25. And he said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought it near to him, and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank. 26. And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near me now, and kiss me, my son. 27. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his incense, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field, which the Lord hath blessed. 28. Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; 29. And let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren; and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.

Observe here,

1. The art and assurance with which Jacob managed this intrigue: who would have thought that this plain man could have played his part so well in a design of this nature? His mother having put him in the way of it, and encouraged him in it, he dexterously applies himself to these methods which he had never before practised, and always conceived an abhorrence of. Note, Lyng is soon learned. The Psalmist speaks of these, who, as soon as they are born, speak lies, Ps. 58. 3. Jer. 9. 5. I wonder how honest Jacob could so readily turn his tongue to say, (v. 19.) I am Esau, thy first born; nor do I see how the endeavours of some to bring him off, with that equivocation, I am made thy son, and thy father's, namely by pure hiring, does him any service; for when his father asked him, (v. 24.) Wilt thou my very son Esau? he said, I am. How could he say, I have done as thou biddest me, when he had received no command from his father, but was doing as his mother bade him? How could he say, Eat of my venison, when he knew it came not from the field, but from the fold? But especially I wonder how he could have the assurance to father it upon God, and to use his name in the cheat, (v. 20.) The Lord thy God brought it to me. Is this Jacob? Is this Israel indeed without guile? It is certainly written, not for our imitation, but for our admonition. Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. Good men have sometimes fallen in the exercise of these graces for which they have been most eminent.

2. The success of this management: Jacob with some difficulty, gained his point, and got the blessing.

1. Isaac was, at first, dissatisfied, and would have discovered the fraud, if he could have trusted his own ears; for the voice was Jacob's voice, v. 22. Providence has ordered a strange variety of voices as well as faces, which is also of use to prevent our being imposed upon; and the voice is a thing not easily disguised or counterfeited. This may be adduced to, to illustrate the character of a hypocrite; his voice is Jacob's voice, but his hands are Esau's; he speaks the language of a saint, but does the works of a sinner; but the judgment will be (as here) by the hands.

2. At length he yielded to the power of the cheat,
because the hands were hairy, (v. 23.) not considering how easy it was to counterfeit that circumstance; and now Jacob carries it on dexterously, sets his venison before his father, and waits at table very officiously, till dinner is done, and the blessing comes to be pronounced in the close of this solemn feast. That which in some small degree extenuates the crime of Rebekah and Jacob, is, that the fraud was intended, not so much to hasten the fulfilling, as to prevent the thwarting, of the oracle of God: the blessing was just going to be put upon the wrong head, and they thought it was time to bestir themselves.

Now let us see how Isaac gave Jacob his blessing.

1. **He kissed him,** (v. 27.) in token of a particular affection to him. Those that are blessed of God, are kissed by God the first month, they do, by love and loyalty, kiss the Son, Ps. 2. 12.

2. **He prayed him,** v. 27. He smelled the smell of his venison, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed; that is, like that of the most fragrant flowers and spices. It appeared that God had blessed him, and therefore Isaac will bless him; compare v. 28.

3. **He prayed for him, and therein prophesied concerning him.** It is the duty of parents to pray for their children, and to bless them in the name of the Lord. And thus, as well by their baptism, to do what they can, to preserve and perpetuate the entail of the covenant in their families. But this was an extraordinary blessing; and Providence so ordered it, that Isaac should bestow it upon Jacob ignorantly and by mistake, that it might appear he was beholden to God for it, and not to Isaac. Three things Jacob is here blessed with: [1.] **Plenty:** (v. 28.) heaven and earth counselling to make him rich. [2.] **Power:** (v. 29.) particularly dominion over his brethren, namely Esau and his posterity. [3.] **Prevalency with God,** and a great interest in Heaven; "Cursed be every one that curseth thee. Let God be a friend to all thy friends, and an enemy to all thine enemies." More is certainly comprised in this blessing than appears, prima facie—at first sight; it must amount to an entail of the promise of the Messiah, and the church: that was, in the patriarchal dialect, the blessing; something spiritual, doubtless, is included in it. First, that from him should come the Messiah, who should have a sovereign dominion on earth. It was that top-branch of his family, which people should seek to him, Num. 24. 19. Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, the Star and Sceptre, v. 17. Jacob's dominion over Esau was to be only typical of this, ch. 49. 10. Second, That from him should come the church that should be particularly owned and favoured by Heaven. It was part of the blessing of Abraham, when he was first called to be the father of the faithful, ch. 12. 3. I will bless them that bless thee therefore when Isaac afterward confirmed the blessing to Jacob, he called it the blessing of Abraham, ch. 28. 4. Balaam explains this too, Num. 24. 9. Note, It is the best and most desirable blessing, to stand in relation to Christ and his church, and to be interested in Christ's power, and the church's favours.

30. And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. 31. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father,
selves in such perplexities as these. But he soon
recovers himself, and ratifies the blessing he had
given to Jacob. *I have blessed him, and he shall be
blessed;* he might upon very plausible grounds, have
recalled it, but now, at last, he is sensible that he
was in an error, when he designed it for Esau.
Either himself recollecting the divine oracle, or
rather having found himself more than ordinarily
filled with the Holy Ghost when he gave the bless-
ing to Jacob, he perceived that God did, as it were,
tspeak through him.

Note, (1.) Jacob was hereby confirmed in his pos-
session of the blessing, and abundantly satisfied of
the validity of it, though he obtained it fraudulently;
hence too he had reason to hope that God graciously
overlooked and pardoned his mismanagement.

(2.) Isaac hereby acquiesced in the will of God,
though it contradicted his own expectation and af-
fection. He had a mind to give Esau the blessing,
but when he perceived the will of God was other-
wise, he submitted; and this he did by faith, (Heb.
11. 20.) as Abraham before him, when he had so-
lcited for Ishmael. May not God do what he will
with his own?

(3.) Esau was hereby cut off from the expecta-
tions of that special blessing which he thought to
have preserved to himself when he sold his birth-
right. We, by this instance, are taught, [1.] That
it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,
but of him that showeth mercy, Rom. 9. 16. The
Apostle seems to allude to this story. Esau had a
good will to the blessing, and ran for it; but God
that showed mercy, designed it for Jacob that the
purpose of God according to election might stand,
v. 11. and the Jew, like Esau, hunted after the law
of righteousness, (v. 51.) yet missed of the blessing
of righteousness, because they sought it by the works
of the law; (v. 52.) while the Gentiles, who, like
Jacob, sought it by faith in the oracle of God, ob-
tained it by force, with that violence which the
Kingdom of heaven suffers. See Matt. 11. 12. [2.]
That those who undervalue their spiritual birth-
right, and can afford to sell it for a morsel of meat,
forfeit spiritual blessings, and it is just with God
to deny them those favours they were careless of.
Those that will part with their wisdom and grace,
with their faith and a good conscience, for the
honours, wealth, or pleasures of this world, how-
ever they pretend a zeal for the blessing, have al-
ready judged themselves unworthy of it, and so
shall their doom be. [3.] That those who lift up
dead in wrath, lift them up in vain. Esau, instead
of repenting of his own folly, reproved his broth-
er, unjustly charged him with taking away the
right which he had fairly sold to him, (v. 36.)
and conceived malice against him for what he had
done, v. 41. These are not likely to speed in
prayer, who turn these resentment upon their
brethren, which they should turn upon themselves,
and lay the blame of their miscarriages upon others,
when they should take shame to themselves. [4.]
That those who seek not till it is too late, will be re-
jected. This was the ruin of Esau, he did not
come in time. As there is an accepted time, a time
when God will be found, so there is a time when he
will not answer those that call upon him, because
they neglected the appointed season. See Prov. 1.
28. *The time of God's patiente and our probation
will not last always; the day of grace will come to
an end, and the flood will be shut. Then many
that now despise the blessing, will seek it carefully;
for then they will know how to value it, and will
see themselves undone, for ever undone, without it,
but to no purpose, Luke 13. 24. 27. 0 that we
would therefore, in this our day, know the things
that belong to our peace!*

II. Here is a common blessing bestowed upon
Esau.

1. This he desired; *Bless me also,* v. 34. *Hast
thou not reserved a blessing for me?* v. 36. Note,
(1.) The worst of men know how to wish well to
themselves; and even those who profanely sell their
birth-right, seem pious to desire the blessing; faint
casts of it, as some would have a right choice of the
end, and a right use of the means, deceive many
into their own ruin. Multitudes go to hell with
their mouths full of good wishes. The desire of
the slothful and unbelieving kills them. Many will
seek to enter in, as Esau, who shall not be able,
because they do not strive, Luke 13. 24. (2.) It is
the folly of most men, that they are willing to take
up with any; *though I have not the blessing of
the church, yet let me have some blessing,*
2. This he had; and let him make his best of it, v.
39, 40.

(1.) It was a good thing, and better than he
deserved. It was promised him, [1.] That he should
have a competent livelihood; the *fattiness of the
earth, and the dew of heaven.* Note, Those that
come short of the blessings of the covenant, may
yet have a very good share of outward blessings.
God gives good ground, and good weather, to many
that reject his covenant, and have no part or lot in
it. [2.] That by degrees he should recover his
liberty; if Jacob must rule, (v. 29.) Esau must
serve; but he has this to comfort him, he shall live
by his sword; he shall serve, but he shall not starve;
and, at length, after much skirmishing, he shall
break the yoke of bondage, and wear the marks of
freedom. This was fulfilled, (2 Kings 8. 20. 22.)
when the Edomites revolted.

(2.) Yet it was far short of Jacob's blessing; for
him God had reserved some better thing. [1.] In
Jacob's blessing, the *dew of heaven* is put first,
as that which he most valued and desired, and depend-
ed upon; in Esau's, the *fattiness of the earth* is put
first, for that was it, which he had the first and
principal regard to. [2.] Esau has these, but Ja-
cob has them from God's hand. *God give thee
the dew of heaven,* v. 28. It was enough to Esau
to have the possession; but Jacob desired it by pro-
mise, and to have it from covenant love. [3.] Ja-
cob shall have dominion over his brethren; for the
Israelites often ruled over the Edomites. Esau
shall have dominion, that is, he shall gain some
power and interest, but shall never have dominion
over his brother; we never find that the Jews were
sold into the hands of the Edomites, or that they
oppressed them, but the great difference is, that
there is nothing in Esau's blessing that points at
Christ; nothing that brings him or his into the
church and covenant of God; and without that, the
fattiness of the earth, and the dew of heaven, the
plunder of the field, will stand him in little stead.
Thus Isaac by faith blessed them both according as their lot should be. Some observe that Jacob was blessed with a *kiss,* (v. 27.) so was not Esau.

41. And Esau hated Jacob because of the
blessing wherewith his father blessed him:
and Esau said in his heart, the days of
mourning for my father are at hand;
then will I slay my brother Jacob.
42. And these words of Esau her elder son,
were told to Rebekah; and she sent and
called Jacob her younger son, and said un-
to him. Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. 43. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; 44. And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; 45. Until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day? 46. And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: If Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

Here is,

I. The malice Esau bore to Jacob upon account of the blessing which he had obtained, vi. 41. Thus he went in the way of Cain, who slew his brother, because he had gained that acceptance with God which he had rendered himself unworthy of. Esau's hatred of Jacob was, 1. A causeless hatred; he hated him for no other reason, but because his father blessed him, and God loved him. Note, The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom Heaven blesses, Hell curses. 2. It was a cruel hatred; nothing less would satisfy him than to slay his brother. It is the blood of the saints that persecutors thirst after. I will slay my brother: how could he say that word, without horror? How could he call him brother, and yet vow his death? Note, The rage of persecutors will not be tied up by any bonds, no not the strongest and most sacred. 3. It was a hatred that calculated on gratifying his rage; he expected his father would soon die, and then titles must be tried, and interests contested, between the brothers, which would give him a fair opportunity of revenge. He thinks it not enough to live by his sword himself, vi. 40.) unless his brother die by it. He is loath to grieve his father while he lives, and therefore puts off the intended murder till his death, not caring how much he then grieved his surviving mother. Note, (1.) Those are bad children to whom their good parents are a burthen, and who, upon any account, long for the days of mourning for them. (2.) Bad men are long held in by external restraints from doing the mischief they would do, and so their wicked purposes come to nought. (3.) Those who think to defeat God's purposes, will undoubtedly be disappointed themselves. Esau aimed to prevent Jacob, or his seed from having the dominion, by taking away his life before he was carried into the world, who can dissuade what God has spoken. Men may fret at God's counsels, but cannot change them. II. The method Rebekah took to prevent the mischief. 1. She gave Jacob warning of his danger, and advised him to withdraw for a while, and shift for his own safety. She tells him what she heard of Esau's design, and the motive of it. The hope of having an opportunity to kill his brother, vi. 42. Would one think that such a bloody barbarous thought as this could be a comfort to a man? If Esau could have kept his design to himself, his mother had not suspected it; but men's impudence in sin is often their infatuation; and they cannot accomplish their wickedness, because their rage is too violent to be concealed, and a bird of the air carries the voice. Observe here, (1.) What Rebekah feared; lest she should be deprived of them both in one day; (v. 43.) deprived not only of the murdered, but of the murderer, who either by the magistrate, or by the immediate hand of God, would be sacrificed to justice; which she herself must acquiesce in, and not obstruct; or, if not so, yet henceforward she would be deprived of all joy and comfort in him. Those that are lost to virtue, are in a manner lost to all their friends. With what pleasure can a child be looked upon, that can be looked upon as no other than a child of the Devil? (2.) What Rebekah hoped. That if Jacob for a while kept out of sight, the affront which his brother resented so fiercely, would by degrees go out of mind. The strength of passions is weakened and taken off by the distances both of time and place. She promised herself, that his brother's anger would turn away. Note, Yielding pacifies great offences; and even those that have a good cause and God on their side, must yet use that as other prudent expedients for their own preservation.

We have here, 1. Jacob parting with his parents, to go to Padan-aram; the charge his father gave him, v. 1, 2. the blessing he sent him away with, v. 3, 4. his obedience to the orders given him, v. 5, 6. and the influence this had upon his mind in choosing his wife, v. 9, 10, 11. II. His journey, v. 12, 13, 14. He went out of the way of temptation. Even he was in danger, both of following the bad example of his brother, and of being drawn into a snare by it. We must not presume too far upon the wisdom and resolution, no not of those children that are most hopeful and promising; but care must be taken to keep them out of harm's way.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

We have here, 1. Jacob parting with his parents, to go to Padan-aram; the charge his father gave him, v. 1, 2. the blessing he sent him away with, v. 3, 4. his obedience to the orders given him, v. 5, 6. and the influence this had upon his mind in choosing his wife, v. 9, 10, 11. II. His journey, v. 12, 13, 14. He went out of the way of temptation. Even he was in danger, both of following the bad example of his brother, and of being drawn into a snare by it. We must not presume too far upon the wisdom and resolution, no not of those children that are most hopeful and promising; but care must be taken to keep them out of harm's way.

1. And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. 2. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother's brother. 3. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply

*Esau would have stated this differently.—Ed.*
there, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; 4. And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. 5. And Isaac sent away Jacob; and he went to Padan-aram, unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

Jacob had no sooner obtained the blessing, than immediately he was forced to run his country; and as if it were not enough that he was a stranger and sojourner there, he must go, to be more so, and not better than an exile in another country. Now Jacob fled into Syria, Hos. 12. 12. He was blessed with plenty of corn and wine, and yet he goes away poor; was blessed with government, and yet goes out to service, a hard service. This was, 1. Perhaps to correct him for his dealing fraudulently with his father. The blessing shall be confirmed to him, and yet he shall smart for the indirect course he takes to obtain it. While there is such an allay as there is, of sin in our duties, we must expect an allay of trouble in our comforts. However, 2. It was to teach us, that they who inherit the blessing, must expect persecution; and that they who have possessions in this world, must expect the afflictions of the world. John 16. 33. We must neither think it strange, being told of it before, nor think it hard, being assured of a recompense for it hereafter. We may observe, likewise, that God's providences often seem to contradict his promises, and to go cross to them; and yet when the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see that all was for the best; and that cross proveth, if not all that the promises do, yet the accomplishment of them the more illustrious. Now Jacob is here dismissed by his father.

I. With a solemn charge, v. 1, 2. He blessed him, and charged him. Note, These, that have the blessing, must keep the charge annexed to it, and not think to separate what God has joined. The charge is like that, (2 Cor. 6. 14.) Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; and all that inherit the promises of the remission of sins, the Church, the Spirit, and the Holy Ghost, must keep this charge, which follows those promises, Save yourselves from this unwise generation, Acts 2. 38, 40. Those that are entitled to peculiar favours, must be a peculiar people. If Jacob be an heir of promise, he must not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; those that profess religion, should not marry with those that are irreligious.

II. With a solemn blessing, v. 3, 4. He had before blessed him unwittingly; now he does it designedly, for the greater encouragement of Jacob in that melancholy condition to which he was now removing. This blessing is more express and full than the former; it is an entail of the blessing of Abraham, that blessing which was poured on the head of Abraham like the anointing oil, thence to run down to his chosen seed, as the skirts of his garments. It is a gospel-blessing, the blessing of church privileges; that is the blessing of Abraham which comes upon the Gentiles through faith, Gal. 3. 14. It is a blessing from God Almighty, by which name God appeared to the patriarchs, Exod. 6. 3. Those are blessed indeed, whom God Almighty blesses; for he commands, and effects the blessing. Two great promises Abraham was blessed with; and Isaac here entails them both upon Jacob.

1. The promise of heirs; (v. 2.) God make thee fruitful and multiply thee. (1.) Through his sins should descend from Abraham, that people, which should be numerous as the stars of heaven, and the sand of the sea, and which should increase more than the rest of the nations, so as to be an assembly of people, as the margin reads it. And never was such a multitude of people so often gathered into one assembly, as the tribes of Israel were in the wilderness, and afterward. (2.) Through his loins should descend from Abraham, that Person, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, and to whom the gathering of the people should be. Jacob had in him a witness of the settlement of all things in heaven and earth are united in Christ; (Eph. 1. 10.) all centre in him, that corn of wheat, which falling to the ground, produced much fruit, John 12. 24.

2. The promise of an inheritance for those heirs; (v. 4.) that thou mayest inherit the land of thy sojournings. Canaan was hereby entitled upon the seed of Jacob, exclusive of the seed of Esau. Isaac was now sending Jacob away into a distant country, to settle there for some time; and lest this should look like disinherit him, he here confirms the settlement of it upon him, that he might be assured that the discontinuance of his possession should be no defeasance of his right. Observe, He is here told that he should inherit the land wherein he sojourned. Those that are sojourners now, shall be heirs for ever; and even now, those do most inherit the earth, (through they do not inherit most of it;) that are most like strangers in it. Those have the best enjoyment of present things, that sit most loose to them. This promise looks as high as heaven, of which Canaan was a type. This was the better country, which Jacob with the other patriarchs, had in his eye, when he confessed himself a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, Heb. 11. 15.

Jacob having taken leave of his father, was hastened away with speed, and his brother should find an opportunity to do him mischief, and away he went to Padan-aram, v. 5. How unlike was his taking a wife from thence, to his father's? Isaac had servants and camels sent to fetch his; Jacob must go himself, go alone, and go afoot, to fetch his; he must go too in a fright from his father's house, not knowing when he might return. Note, If God, in his providence, dispose us, the more, the worse, we need not complain; though we cannot keep up the state and grandeur of our ancestors. We should be more in care to maintain their piety than to maintain their port, and to be as good as they than to be as great. Rebekah is here called Jacob and Esau's mother; Jacob is named first, not only because he had always been his father's darling; but because he was now made his father's heir, and Esau was, in this sense, a stranger. Note, The time will come, when pietv with have preeminency, whatever it has now.

6. When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him, he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan; 7. And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram. 8. And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; 9. Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebiokoth, to be his wife.

This passage concerning Esau comes in, in the
10. And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. 11. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. 12. And he dreamed, and beheld, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. 13. And, behold, the Lord stood above it; and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. 14. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

We have here Jacob upon his journey toward Syria, in a very dejected condition, like one that has been sent to seek his fortune; but we find, that though he was alone, yet he was not alone, for the father was with him, John 16. 32. If what is here recorded, happened (as it should seem it did) the first night, he had made a long day's journey from Beer-sheba to Bethel, above forty miles. Providence brought him to a convenient place, probably shaded with trees, to rest him in that night; and there he had, Ps. 138. 8. A haven, a safe harbor, in the deep waters, for the fowlers, and the heavens for his canopy and curtains. As the usage then was, perhaps this was not so bad as it seems now to us; but we should think, 1. He lay very cold; the cold ground for his bed, and, which, one would suppose, made the matter worse, a cold stone for his pillow, and in the cold air. 2. Very uneasy; if his bones were sore with his day's journey, his night's rest would but make them sore. 3. Very much exposed: he forgot that he was fleecing for his life; for had his brother, in his rage, pursued, or sent a murderer after him, here he lay ready to be sacrificed, and destitute of shelter and defence: we cannot think it was by reason of his poverty that he was so ill accommodated, but, (1.) It was owing to the plainness and simplicity of those times, when men did not take so much pains and care of the plain people, as they have done in later times of softness and effeminacy. (2.) Jacob had been particularly used to hardships, as a plain man dwelling in tents; and, designing now to go to service, he was the more willing to incur himself to it; as it proved it was well, ch. 31. 40. (3.) His comfort in the divine blessing, and his confidence in the divine protection, made him easy, even then when he lay thus exposed; being sure that his God made him to dwell in safety, he could lie down and sleep upon a stone.

11. In his hard lodging, he had a pleasant dream; any Israelite indeed would be willing to take up with Jacob's pillow, provided he might have but Jacob's dream. Then and there, he heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty: it was the best night's sleep he ever had in his life. Note, God's time is his time, and his year is his year; it is, when they are most destitute of other comforts, and other conforters; when afflictions in the way of duty (as these here were) do abound, then shall consolations so much the more abound. Now observe here,

1. The encouraging vision Jacob saw, v. 12. He saw a ladder which reached from earth to heaven, the angels ascending and descending upon it, and God himself at the head of it. This now represents the two things that are very comfortable to good people at all times, and in all conditions.

(1.) The providence of God, by which there is a constant correspondence kept up between heaven and earth. The counsels of heaven are executed on earth, and the actions and affairs of this earth are all known in heaven, and judged there. Providence does its work, and in it is employed as ministering spirits, to see e very purpose and design of Providence, and the wisdom of God is at the upper end of the ladder, directing all the motions of second causes to the glory of the First Cause. The angels are active spirits, continually ascending and descending; they rest not day, nor night, from service, according to the posts assigned them. They ascend, to give account of what they have done, and to receive new orders; and then descend to execute the orders they have received. Thus we should always abound in the work of the Lord, that we may do it as the angels do it, Ps. 103. 20,
21. This vision gave very seasonable comfort to Jacob, letting him know that he had both a good guide, and a good guard, in his going out and coming in; that though he was made to wander from his father’s house, yet still he was the care of a kind providence, and the charge of the holy angels. This is comfort to us all, though we should not admit the notion which some have, that the tutelar angels of Canaan were ascending, having guarded Jacob out of their land, and the angels of Syria descending to take him into their custody. Jacob was now the type and representative of the whole church, which the angels are intrusted with the guardianship of.

(2.) The humiliation of Christ: he is the ladder, the foot of earth in his human nature, the top in heaven in his divine nature; or, the former in his humiliation, the latter in his exaltation. All the intercourse between heaven and earth, since the fall, is by this ladder. Christ is the way; all God’s favours come to us, and all our services go to him, by Christ. If God dwell with us, and we with him, it is by Christ; we have no way of getting to heaven than by this ladder; if we climb up any other way, we are driven by robbers.

This vision our Saviour alludes to, when he speaks of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man; (John 1. 51.) for the kind offices the angels do us, and the benefits we receive by their ministration are all owing to Christ, who has reconciled things on earth, and things in heaven, (Col. 1. 20.) and made them all meet in himself, Eph. 1. 10.

2. The encouraging words Jacob heard. God brought him into the wilderness, and spoke comfortably to him, spake from the head of the ladder, for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven, come through Jesus Christ.

(1.) The former promises made to his father, are repeated and ratified to him, v. 13, 14. In general, God intimates to him that he would be the same to him, that he had been to Abraham and Isaac.

Those that tread in the steps of their godly parents, are interested in their covenant, and entitled to their privileges. Particularly, [1.] The land of Canaan is settled upon him, the land whereon thou liest; as if by his lying so contentedly upon the bare ground, he had taken livery and seisin of the whole land. [2.] It is promised him that his posterity should multiply exceedingly, as the dust of the earth, that though he seemed now to be plucked off as a withered branch, yet he should become a flowery dale, where the branches should run into the sea. These were the blessings with which his father had blessed him, (v. 3, 4.) and God here said, Amen to them, that he might have strong consolation.

[3.] It is added that the Messiah should come from his loins, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. Christ is the great blessing of the world: all that are blessed, whatever family they are of, are blessed in him, and none of any family that should spring from blessedness, in him, but those that exclude themselves.

(2.) Fresh promises were made to him, accommodated to his present condition, v. 15. [1.] Jacob was apprehensive of danger from his brother Esau; but God promises to keep him. Note, These are safe, whom God protects, whoever pursues them. [2.] He had now a long journey before him, was to travel and wander in an unknown country; but, behold I am with thee, says God. Note, Wherever we are, we are safe, and may be easy, if we have God’s favourable presence with us. [3.] He knew not, but God foreknew, what hardships he would meet with in his uncle’s service, and therefore promises to preserve him in all places.

Note, God knows how to give his people graces and comforts accommodated to the events that shall be, as well as to those that are. [4.] He was now going as an exile into a place far distant, but God promises him to bring him back again to this land. Note, he that preserves his people’s going out will also take care of their coming in, Ps. 121. 8. [5.] He seemed to be forsaken of all his friends, but God here gives him this assurance, I will not leave thee. Note, Whom God loves, he never leaves. This promise is sure to all the seed, Heb. 13. 5. [6.] Providence seemed to contradict the promises; he is therefore assured of the performance of them in their season: All shall be done that I have spoken to thee of. Note, Saying and doing are not two things with God, whatever they are with us.

16. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. 17. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. 18. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. 19. And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. 20. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, 21. So that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: 22. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

God manifested himself in his favour to Jacob, when he was asleep and purely passive; for the spirit hek ew the wind, blows where it list, and God’s grace, like the dew, which not for the sets of men, Mich. 5. 7. But Jacob applied himself to the improvement of the visit God had made him, when he was awake; and we may well think he was awakened, as the prophet did, (Jer. 31. 26.) and he hold his sleep was sweet to him. Here is much of Jacob’s devotion on this occasion.

1. He expresses great surprise at the tidings he had of God’s special presence with him in that place, v. 16. Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. Note, 1. God’s manifestations of himself to his people, carry their own evidence along with them. God can give undeniable demonstrations of his presence with his people, and particular satisfaction to the souls of the faithful, that God is with them of a truth; satisfaction, not communicable to others, but convincing to themselves. 2. We sometimes meet with God there where we little thought of meeting with him. He is there where we did not think he had been; is found there where we asked not for him. No place excludes divine visits, (ch. 16. 13.) here, though we are, in the city or in the desert, in the house or in the field, in the shop or in the street, we may keep up our intercourse with Heaven, if it be not our own fault.

2. It struck an awe upon him, v. 17. He was afraid; so far was he from being puffed up, and exalted above measure, with the abundance of the revelations, (2 Cor. 12. 7.) that he was afraid.
Note. The more we see of God, the more cause we see for holy trembling and blushing before him. Those whom God is pleased to manifest himself to, are thereby laid, and kept very low in their own eyes, and see cause to fear, even the Lord and his goodness, Hos. 3. 5. He said, How precious is this place! That is, "The appearance of God in this place is never to be thought of, but with holy awe and reverence. I shall have a respect for this place, and remember it by this token, as long as I live:" not that he thought the place itself any nearer the divine visions than other places; but what he saw there at this time, was as it were, the house of God, the residence of the Divine Majesty, and the gate of heaven. Thus it is that, is the general rendezvous of angels, inhabitants of the upper world, as the meetings of a city were in their gates; or, the angels ascending and descending, were like travellers passing and re-passing through the gates of a city. Note, 1. God is, in a special manner, present there where his grace is revealed, and where his covenants are published and sealed, as of old, by the ministry of angels, so now by instituted ordinances, Matt. 28. 20. 2. There where God meets us with his special presence, we ought to meet him with the most humble reverence, remembering his justice and holiness, and our own meanness and vileness. III. He took care to preserve the memorial of it two ways.

1. He set up the stone for a pillar; (v. 18.) not as if he thought the visions of his head were any way overruled, or lost to us, but that he would mark the place against he came back, and erect a lasting monument of God's favour to him, and because he had not time now to build an altar here, as Abraham did in the places where God appeared to him, ch. 12. 7. He therefore poured oil on the top of this stone, which, probably was the ceremony then used in dedicating their altars, as an earnest of his building an altar here; but thus he would have conveniences for it, as afterward he did, in gratitude to God for this vision, ch. 35. 7. Note, Grants of mercy call for returns of duty; and the sweet communion we have with God, ought ever to be remembered.

2. He gave a new name to the place, v. 19. It had been called Luz, an almond-tree; but he will have it henceforward called Bethel, the house of God, the house of God's presence, which put a greater honour upon it, and made it more remarkable, than all the almond-trees that flourished there. This is that Bethel, where, long after, it is said, God found Jacob, and there, in what he said to him, he spake with us, Hos. 12. 4. In process of time, this Bethel, the house of God, became Bethaven, a house of vanity and iniquity, when Jeroboam set up one of his calves there.

IV. He made a solemn vow upon this occasion, v. 20. 22. By religious vows we give glory to God, we own our dependence upon him, and we lay a bond upon our own souls, to engage and quicken our obedience to him. Jacob was now in fear and distress; and it is seasonable to make vows, in times of trouble, or when we are in pursuit of any spiritual benefit, John 1. 16. Ps. 66. 13. 14. 1 Sam. 1. 11. Numb. 21. 1. 3. Jacob had now had a gracious visit from Heaven, God had renewed his covenant with him, and the covenant is mutual: when God ratifies his promises to us, it is proper for us to repeat our promises to him. Now in this vow, observe, 1. Jacob's faith: God had said, v. 15. I am with thee and will keep thee; and he takes hold of that, and infers 'Seeing God will be with me, and keep me, as he has said, and (which is implied in that promise) will provide comfortably for me; and seeing he has promised to bring me again to this land, that is, to the house of my father, whom I hope to find alive at my return in peace,' (so unlike was he to Esau who longed for the days of mourning for his father,) "I depend upon it." Note, God's promises are to be the guide and measure of our desires and expectations.

2. Jacob's modesty and great moderation in his desires; he will cheerfully content himself with bread to eat, and raiment to put on; and though God's promise had now made him heir to a very great estate, yet he indemnifies not for soft clothing and dainty meat. Agur's wish is his, Feed me with food convenient for me: and see 1 Tim. 6. 8. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less.

3. Those that have most, have, in effect, no more for themselves, than as God will make it convenient for them; they have only either the keeping of, or the giving of, not the enjoyment of: if God give us more, we are bound to be thankful, and to use it for him; if he give us but this, we are bound to be content, and cheerfully to enjoy him in it.

III. Jacob's piety and his regard to God, which appear here, (1.) In what he desired; that God would be with him, and provide for him. This we dare no more to make us easy and happy, wherever we are, than to have God's presence with us, and to be under his protection: it is comfortable, in a journey, to have a guide in an unknown way, a guard in a dangerous way, to be well-carried, well provided for, and to have good company in any way; and they that have God with them, have all this in the best manner. (2.) In what he designed; the special end of his bargaining with Laban, that he might have the opportunity to come unto Jacob, as Lord, as his God in covenant. Then shall the Lord be my God. Not as if he would disdain him and cast him off, if he should want food and raiment; nor, though he slay us, we must cleave to him; but then I will rejoice in him as my God; then, I will more strongly engage myself to abide with him. Note, Every mercy we receive from God, should be improved as an additional call upon us to walk closely with him as our God. [2.] In particular, that he would perform some special acts of devotion, in token of his gratitude. First, This pillar shall keep possession here, till I come back in peace, and then it shall be God's house, that is, "an altar shall be erected here to the honour of God." Secondly, The house of God shall not be unshaken, nor his altar without a sacrifice; of all things that were given me for an inheritance I will give the tenth unto thee, to be spent either upon God's altars, or upon his poor," both which are his receivers in the world. Probable, it was according to some general instructions received from Heaven, that Abraham and Jacob offered the tenth of their acquisitions to God. Note, 1. God must be honoured with our estates, and must have his dues out of them. When we receive more than ordinary mercy from God, we should study to give some signal instances of gratitude to him. 2. The tenth is a very fit proportion to be devoted to God, and employed for him; though, as circumstances vary, it may be more or less, as God prosper us, 1 Cor. 16. 2.

CHAP. XXIX.

This chapter gives us an account of God's providences concerning Jacob, pursuant to the promises made him in the foregoing chapter. 1. How he was brought in safety to his journey's end, and directed to his relations there, with much welcome and entertainment. He was comfortably disposed of in marriage, v. 15. 30. 31. How his family was built up in the birth of four sons, v. 31. 35. 3. The affairs of princes and mighty nations that were then prevailing, as well recorded in the book of God, but are left to be buried in oblivion; while these small domestic concerns of holy Jacob are particularly recorded, with their minute circumstances, that they may be in everlasting remembrance. For the memory of the just is blessed.
THEN Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. 2 And he looked, and, behold, a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. 3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place. 4 And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? and they said, Of Haran are we. 5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. 6 And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. 7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them. 8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

All the stages of Israel's march to Canaan are distinctly noticed, but no particular journal is kept of Jacob's expedition further than Bethel; no, he had no more such happy nights as he had at Bethel, no more such visions of the Almighty: that was intended for a feast, he must not expect it to be his daily fare, Heb. 12. 1.

2. How happily he arrived at his journey's end; Providence brought him to the very field where his uncle's flocks were to be watered, and there he met with Rachel that was to be his wife. Observe,

(1.) The Divine Providence is to be acknowledged in all the little circumstances which concur to make a journey, or other undertaking, comfortable and successful. If, when we are at a loss, we meet seasonably with those that can direct us; if we meet with a disaster, and those are at hand, that will help us: we must not say that it was by chance, or that fortune therein favoured us, but that it was by Providence, and that God therein favoured us. Our ways are ways of pleasantness, if we continually acknowledge God in them. (2.) Those that have flocks must look well to them, and be diligent to know their state, Prov. 27. 23. What is here said of the constant care of the shepherds concerning their sheep, (v. 2, 3, 7, 8.) may serve to illustrate the tender concern which our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, has for his flock, the church; for he is the good Shepherd, that knows his sheep, and is known of them, John 10. 14. The stone, at the well's mouth, which is so often mentioned here, was either to secure their property in; for water was scarce, it was not there une commodious fountain—for every one's use; or, it was to save the well from receiving damage from the heat of the sun, or from any spiteful hand, or to prevent the cattle from being driven out of it.

(3.) Separate interests should not take us from joint and mutual help; when all the shepherds came together with their flocks, then like loving neighbours at watering time, they watered their flocks together. (4.) It becomes us to speak civilly and respectfully to strangers. Though Jacob was no countryman, but a plain man dwelling in tents, and a stranger, so to compliment, yet he addresses himself very obligingly to the people he met with, and calls them his brethren, v. 4. The law of kindness in the tongue has a commanding power, Prov. 31. 26. Some think he calls them brethren, because they were of the same trade, shepherds like him. Though he was now upon his preferment, he was not ashamed of his occupation. (5.) Those that shew respect, have usually, respect showed them. As Jacob was civil to these strangers, so he found them civil to him. When he undertook to teach them how to despatch their business, (v. 7.) they did not bid him meddle with his own concerns, and let them alone; but though he was a stranger, they gave him the reason of their delay, v. 8. Those that are neighbourly and friendly, shall have neighbourly and friendly usage.

9. And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. 10. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. 12. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father. 13. And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him; and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. 14. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

Here we see, 1. Rachel's humility and industry; she kept her father's sheep, (v. 9.) that is, she took care of them, having servants under her that were employed about them. Rachel's name signifies a sister. Note, Honest useful labour is that which nobody needs to be ashamed of, nor ought it to be a hindrance to any one's preferment. 2. Jacob's tenderness and affection; when he understood that this was his kinswoman, (probably, he had heard of her name before,) keeping his tenderness concealed as long as that could, he may suppose it struck into his mind immediately, that this must be his wife, he being already smitten with her ingenuous and comely face, though it was, probably, sun-burnt, and she was in the homely dress of a shepherdess: hence, he is attentive, and courteous, and peculiarly anxious to serve her, v. 10. Hence he addresses himself to her with tears of joy and kisses of affection, v. 11. She runs with all haste to tell her father; for she will by no means entertain her kinsman's
address, without her father's knowledge and approbation, v. 12. These mutual respects, at their first interview, were good presages of their being a happy couple. 3. Providence made that which seemed contingent and fortuitous, to give speedy satisfaction to Jacob's mind, as soon as ever he came to the place which he was bound for. Abraham's servant, when he came upon a like errand, met with the like encouragement. Thus God guides his people with his eye, Ps. 32. 8. It is a groundless Conceit which some of the Jewish writers have, that Jacob, when he kissed Rachel, wept because he had not been set in his journey, as the eldest son of Esau, at the command of his father, and robbed of all his money and jewels, which his mother had given him when she sent him away: it is plain that it was his passion for Rachel, and the surprise of this happy meeting, that drew these tears from his eyes. 4. Laban, though none of the best humoured men, bid him welcome, was satisfied in the account he gave of himself, and of the reason of his coming in such poor circumstances; while we avoid the extreme, on the one hand, of being foolishly credulous, we must take heed of falling into the other extreme, of being uncharitably jealous and suspicious. Laban owned him for his kinsman, v. 14. Thou art my bone and my flesh. Note, Those are hard-hearted indeed, that are unkind to their relations, and that hide themselves from their own flesh, Isa. 58. 7.

15. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for naught? Tell me, what shall thy wages be? 16. And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17. Leah was tender-eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured. 18. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. 19. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. 20. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. 21. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. 22. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. 23. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. 24. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid, for an hand-maid. 25. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? Did not I serve with thee for Rachel? Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? 26. And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born. 27. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. 28. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also. 29. And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. 30. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with her yet seven other years.

Here is,

I. The fair contract made between Laban and Jacob, during the month that Jacob spent there as a guest, v. 14. It seems, he was not idle, nor did he pass his time without work and usefulness, but as like a husband of business, though he had no stock of his own, he applied himself to serve his uncle, as he had begun, (v. 10.) when he watered his flock. Note, Wherever we are, it is good to be employing ourselves in some useful business, which will turn to a good account to ourselves or others. Laban, it seems, was so taken with Jacob's ingenuity and industry about his flocks, that he was desirous he should continue with him, and for very early reasons he thus, (v. 15.) 'Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for naught? No, what reason for that?' If Jacob be so respectful to his uncle as to give him his service without demanding any consideration for it, yet Laban will not be so unj uis to his nephew as to take advantage either of his necessity or of his good-nature. Note, Inferior relations must not be imposed upon; if it be their duty to serve us, it is our duty to reward them. Now Jacob had a fair opportunity to make known to Laban the affection he had for his daughter Rachel; and, having no worldly goods in his hand with which to endow her, he promises him seven years' service, upon condition that, at the end of seven years, he would bestow her upon him for his wife. It appears by computation that Jacob was now 77 years old when he had himself apprentice for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep, Hos. 12. 12. His pesty are there reminded of it long afterward, as an instance of the meanness of their original: probably, Rachel was young, and scarcely marriageable, when Jacob first came, which made him the more willing to stay for her till his seven years' service were expired.

II. Jacob's honest performance of his part of the bargain, in serving seven years for Rachel; and seven years for Bilhah: if Rachel still continued to keep her father's sheep as she did, (v. 9.) his innocent and religious conversation with her, while they kept the flocks, could not but increase their mutual acquaintance and affection; (Solomon's song of love is a pastoral;) if she now left off, his easing her of that care was very obliging. Jacob honestly served out his seven years, and did not forfeit his indentures, though he was old, nay, he served them cheerfully, they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her. As it was more his desire to earn her than to have her. Note, Love makes long and hard services short and easy; hence we read of the labour of love, Heb. 6. 10. If we know how to value the happiness of heaven, the sufferings of this present time and be as nothing to us, in comparison of it. An age of work will be but as few days to those that love God, and long for Christ's appearing.

III. The base cheat which Laban put upon him when he was out of his time; he put Leah into his arms instead of Rachel, v. 23. This was Laban's sin; he wronged both Jacob and Rachel, whose affections, doubtless, were engaged to each other, and upon some (v.) Leah was herein no better than an adulteress, it was no small reproach to her. But it was Jacob's afflication, a damp to the ninth of the marriage-feast, when in the morning, behold, it was Leah, v. 25. It is easy to observe here how Jacob was paid in his own coin. He had cheated
his own father when he pretended to be Esau, and now his father-in-law cheated him. Herein, how unrighteous soever Laban was, the Lord was righteous; as Judg. 1. 7. Even the righteous, if they take a false step, are sometimes thus recompensed in the end. Now, at a certain, like Jacob, he supposed in the person, soon find themselves, as much to their grief, disappointed in the character. The choice of that relation therefore on both sides, ought to be made with good advice and consideration, that if there should be a disappointment, it may not be aggravated by a consciousness of management.

IV. The excuse and atonement Laban made for the theft.

1. The excuse was frivolous, v. 26. It must not be so done in our country. We have reason to think there was no such custom of his country, as he pretends; only he banter Jacob with it, and laughs at his mistake. Note, Those that do go wickedly, and then think to turn it off with a jest, though they may deceive themselves and others, will find, at last, that God is not mocked. But if there had been such a custom, and he had resolved to observe it, he should have told Jacob so, when he undertook to serve him for his younger daughter. As ait the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness precedes from the wicked, 1 Sam. 24. 13. Those that deal with treacherous men, must expect to be dealt treacherously with.

2. The atonement he made of the matter did but make bad worse: We will give thee this also, v. 27. Hereby he drew Jacob into the sin, and snare, and dispute, of multiplying wives, which remains a blot in his escutcheon, and will be so to the end of the world. Honest Jacob did not design it, but to have kept as true to Rachel as his father had done to Rebecca; he that had lived without a wife to the 84th year of his age, could then have been very well content with one: but Laban, to dispose of his two daughters without portions, and to get seven years' service more out of Jacob, thus imposes upon him, and draws him into such a stratagem by his fraud, that (the matter not being yet settled as it was afterward by the divine law, Lev. 18. 18, and more fully since by our Saviour, Matt. 19. 3.) he had some colourable reason for marrying them both. He could not refuse Rachel, for he had espoused her, but still he could refuse Leah; and therefore Jacob must be content, and take two talents, 2 Kings 5. 23. Note, One sin is commonly the inlet of another. They that go in by one door of wickedness, seldom find the way out but by another. The polygamy of the patriarchs was, in some measure, excusable in them, because, though there was a reason against it as ancient as Adam's marriage, (Mal. 2. 13.) yet they were not expressly commanded against it; it was in them a sin of ignorance, it was not the product of any sinful lust, but for the building up of the church, which was the good that Providence brought out of it: but it will by no means justify the like practice now, when God's will is plainly made known, that one man and one woman only must be joined together. 1. Common to all other men of mankind's life is well enough with the common sensual spirits of the Mahometan impose, which allows it; but we have not so learned Christ. Dr. Lightfoot makes Leah and Rachel to be figures of the two churches, the Jews under the law, and the Gentiles under the gospel: the younger, the more beautiful, and more in the thoughts of Christ when he came in the form of flesh; but the other, like Leah, first embraced; yet, in this, the allegory does not hold, that the Gentiles, the younger, were more fruitful, Gal. 4. 27.

31. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. 32. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction: now therefore my husband will love me. 33. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. 34. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. 35. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she said, Now will I praise the Lord: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

We have here the birth of four of Jacob's sons, all by Leah. Observe,

I. That Leah, who was less beloved, was blessed with children, when Rachel was denied that blessing, v. 31. See how Providence, in dispensing its gifts, observes a proportion, to keep the balance even, setting crosses and comforts one over-against another, that none may be either too much elevated, or too much depressed. Rachel wants children, but she is blessed with her husband's love; but Leah wants children, but she is fruitful. There was a difference between Elkanah's two wives; (1 Sam. 1. 5.) for the Lord is wise and righteous. When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, that is loved less than Rachel, in which sense it is required that we hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ, (Luke 14. 26.) then the Lord granted her a child; which was a rebuke to Jacob, for making so great a difference between those that he was equally related to; a check to Rachel, who perhaps insulted over her sister upon that account; and a comfort to Leah, that she might not be overwhelmed with the contempt put upon her: thus God gave abundant honour to that which lacked, 1 Cor. 12. 24.

II. That the names she gave her children, were expressive of her respectful regards both to God and to her husband. 1. She appears to have had the ambition of her husband's love: she reckoned the way that was best for her affliction; (v. 32.) not upbarring him with it as his fault, nor reproaching him for it, and so making herself uneasy to him, but laying it to heart as her grief, which yet she had reason to bear with the more patience, because she herself was consenting to the fraud by which she became his wife; and we may well bear that trouble with patience, which we bring upon ourselves by our own wicked folly. She promised herself that the children she bare him, would gain her the interest she desired in his affections. She called her first-born Reuben, See a son, with this pleasant thought, Now will my husband love me; and her third son Levi, Joined, with this expectation, Now will my husband be joined unto me, v. 34. Mutual affection is both the duty, and engaging upon ourselves by our own wicked folly. She promised herself that the children she bare him, would gain her the interest she desired in his affections. She called her first-born Reuben, See a son, with this pleasant thought, Now will my husband love me; and her third son Levi, Joined, with this expectation, Now will my husband be joined unto me, v. 34. Mutual affection is both the duty, and engaging upon ourselves by our own wicked folly. She promised herself that the children she bare him, would gain her the interest she desired in his affections.
and tender mercy. Her fourth she called Judah, Praise, saying, "Now will I praise the Lord," v. 35. Andrew with her, and she conceived of them, and she called his name, Judah, the Lord favours, and yet we find no unmeaning between her and Isaac; but here, because Leah bears children, Rachel cannot live peaceably with Jacob.

1. Rachel frets; (v. 1.) she envied her sister; envy is grieving at the good of another, than which no sin is more offensive to God, or more injurious to our neighbour and ourselves. She considered not that it describes God that she had, and he it bestows; in this single instance, her sister was preferred before her, yet in other things she had the advantage. Let us carefully watch against all the risings and workings of this passion in our minds. Let not our eye be evil towards any of our fellow-servants, because our master’s is good. But this was not all; she said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. Note, We be given up, like a woman, to the desire of temporal mercies, as Rachel here; (1.) One child would not content her; but, because Leah has more than one, she must have more too; Give me children. (2.) Her heart is inordinately set upon it, and if she have not what she would have, she will throw away her life, and all the comforts of it. "Give them me, or else I die," that is, "I shall fret myself to death; the want of this satisfaction will shorten my days." See here the end to which an inordinate heart will carry itself. Upon bad grounds, if needs be, she imposes a like burden upon herself, if she could not obtain this mercy. (3.) She did not apply herself to God by prayer, but to Jacob only, forgetting that children are an heritage of the Lord, Ps. 127. 3. We wrong both God and ourselves, when our eye is more to men, the instruments of our crosses and comforts, than to God the Author. Observe a difference between Rachel’s thinking for this mercy, and Hannah’s, 1 Sam. 1. 10.

2. Rachel envied Hannah’s wept; Rachel must have children, and she died of the second; Hannah prayed for one child, and she had four more. Rachel is importunate and peremptory, Hannah is submissive and devout. If thou wilt give me a child, I will give him to the Lord. Let Hannah be imitated, and not Rachel; and let our desires be always under the conduct and check of reason and religion.

3. Jacob chides, and most justly; (v. 2.) he lovel Rachel, and therefore reproved her for what she said amiss. Note, Faithful reproofs are products and instances of true affection, Ps. 141. 5. Prov. 27. 5, 6. Job reproved his wife when she spake the language of the foolish woman, Job 2. 10. See 1 Cor. 7. 16. He was angry, not at the person, but at the sin; he expressed himself so as to show his displeasure. Note, Sometimes it is requisite to rebuke, and even warn, in a severe manner; lest too hot, lest it scald the patient; yet not cold, lest it prove ineffectual. It was a very grave and pious reply which Jacob gave to Rachel’s peevish demand: Am I in God’s stead? The Chaldee paraphrases it well, Dost thou ask sons of me? Oughtest thou not to ask from before the Lord? The Arabic reads it, "Am I above God; can I give thee that which God denies?" This is said like a man, in answer to a false charge. (1.) He acknowledges the hand of God in the affliction which he was a sharer with her in. He hath withheld the fruit of the womb. Note, Whatever we want, it is God that withholds it, a sovereign Lord, most wise, holy, and just, that may do what he will with his own, and is debtor to no man; that never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

4. The keys of the kingdom of heaven, and of the grave, and of the womb, are four keys which God has in his hand, and which (the Rabbins say) he intrusts neither with angel nor seraphim. See Rev. 3. 7. Job 11. 10.—12. 14. (2.) He acknowledges his own inability to alter what God had appointed, "Am I in God’s stead? What! Dost thou make a god of me?" Deo qui rogat ile facit—He
to whom we offer supplications, is to us a God. Note, [1.] There is no creature that is or can be, to us, in God's stead. God may be to us instead of any creature, as the sun instead of the moon and stars: but the moon and all the stars will not be to us instead of the sun. No creature's wisdom, power, and love, will be to us instead of God's. [2.] It is therefore our sin and folly to place any creature in God's stead, or to place that confidence in any creature, which is to be placed in God only.

II. An unhappy agreement between him and the two handmaids.

1. At the persuasion of Rachel, he took Bilhah her handmaid to wife, that, according to the usage of those times, his children by her might be adopted and owned as her mistress's children, v. 3, &c. She would rather have children by reputation than none at all; children that she might fancy to be her own, and call her own, though they were not so. One would think her own sister's children were nearer akin to her than her maid's, and she might with more satisfaction have made them her own, if she had so pleased; but (so natural is it for us all to be fond of power) children that she had a right to rule, were more desirable to her than children that she had more reason to love; and, as an early instance of her dominion over the children born in her adoption, she is given pleasure in giving them any names that carry in them nothing but marks of union with her sister. As if she had overcome her, (1.) At all vs. she calls the first son of her handmaid Dan, Judgment, saying, "God hath judged me," v. 6. (that is) "given sentence in my favour." (2.) In battle; she calls the next Naphtali, Writings, saying, I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed; (v. 8.) of all Jacob's sons must be born men of renown. See what roots of bitterness, envy and strife are, and what mischief they make among relations.

2. At the persuasion of Leah, he took Zilpah her handmaid to wife also, v. 9. Rachel had done that absurd and preposterous thing, of giving her maid to her husband, in emulation with Leah; and now Leah (because she missed one year in bearing children) does the same, to be even with her, or rather, to keep before her. See the power of jealousy and rivendish, and admire the wisdom of the divine appointment, in joining a man together with a woman only: for God hath called us to peace and purity, 1 Cor. 7. 15. Two sons Zilpah bare to Jacob, whom Leah looked upon herself as entitled to; in token of which, she called one God, (v. 11.) promising herself a little Troop of children; and children are the milieu of a family, they fill the quiver, Ps. 127. 4, 5. The other she called Asher, Happiness, thinking herself happy in him, and promising herself that her neighbours would think so too, v. 13. The daughters will call me blessed. Note, It is an instance of the vanity of the world, and the foolishness bound up in our hearts, that most people value themselves, and govern themselves, more by reputation, than either by reason or religion; they think themselves blessed, if the daughters do but call them so. There was much amiss in this promise, and competition between these two sisters, yet God brought good out of this evil; for the time being now at hand when the seed of Abraham must begin to increase and multiply, thus Jacob's family was replenished with twelve sons, heads of the thousands of Israel, from whom the celebrated twelve tribes descended, and were named.

14. And Reuben went in the days of wheat-harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. 15. And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldst thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall live with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. 16. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. 17. And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. 18. And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maid to my husband: and she called his name Issuah. 19. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. 20. And Leah said, God hath endowed me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. 21. And afterward she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah. 22. And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. 23. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach. 24. And she called his name Joseph; and said, the Lord shall add to me another son.

Here is, I. Leah fruitful again, after she had, for some time, left bearing. Jacob, it should seem, associated more with Rachel than with Leah. The law of Moses supposes it a common case, that if a man had two wives, one would be loved, and the other not, Deut. 21. 15. But, at length, Rachel's strong passions betrayed her into a bargain with Leah, that Jacob should return to her apartment. Reuben, a little lad, five or six years old, playing in the field, found mandrakes, dudaim. It is uncertain what they were, the critics are not agreed about them; we are sure they were some rarity, either fruits or flowers that were very pleasant to the smell, Cant. 7. 13. Note, The God of nature has provided, not only for our necessities, but for our delights: there are products of the earth in the exposed fields, as well as in the planted protected gardens, that are very valuable and useful. How plentifully is nature's house furnished, and her table spread! Her precious fruits offer themselves to be gathered by the hands of little children. It is a laudable custom of the devout Jews, when they find pleasure, suppose in eating an apple, to lift up their hearts, and say, "Blessed be he that made this fruit pleasant!" Or, in smelling a flower, "Blessed be he that made this flower sweet." Some think these mandrakes were jessamine flowers; whatever they were, Rachel could not see them in Leah's hands, into which the child had brought them, but she must covet them. She cannot bear the want of these pretty flowers, but at any rate, she will purchase them. Note, There may be great sin and folly in the inordinate desire of a small thing. Leah takes this advantage, (as Jacob had of Esau's coveting his red pottage,) to obtain that which was justly due to her, but which Rachel would not otherwise have consented to. Note, Strong passions often thwart one another, and
those cannot be continually uneasy, that are hurried by them. Leah is overjoyed that she shall have her husband's company again, that her family may yet further be built up, which is the blessing she desires and-devoutly prays for, as is intimated, v. 17, where it is said, God hearkened unto Leah. The learned Bishop Patrick very well suggests here, that the true reason of this contest between Jacob's wives for his company, and their giving of him their maids to be his wives, was, the earnest desire they had to fulfil the promise made to Abraham, (and now lately renewed to Jacob,) that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude; and that in me and my seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. And he thinks it had been below the dignity of this sacred history, to take such particular notice of these things, if there had not been some such great consideration in them.

Leah was now blessed with two sons; the first she called Isaacar, A hire, (v. 18,) and reckoning herself well repaid for her misdrakes, nay, (which is a strange construction of this providence,) rewarded for giving her head to her hand, and not abusing God's mercy, when we reckon that his favours countenance and patronise our follies. The other she called Teblulian, Dwelling, (v. 20,) owning God's bounty to her, God has endowed me with a good dowry. Jacob had not endowed her when he married her, nor had he whereabouts in possession; but she reckons a family of children, not a bill of charges, but a good dowry, Ps. 113. 9. She promises Rachel when she has this company, now that she had born him six sons, and that, in love to his children, at least, he would often visit her lodging. Mention is made, v. 21, of the birth of a daughter, Dinah, because of the following story concerning her, ch. 34. Perhaps Jacob had other daughters, though not registered.

2. Rachel fruitful at last, v. 22. God remembered Rachel whom he seemed to have forgotten, and hearkened to her whose prayers had been long denied; and then she bare a son. Note, As God justly denies the mercy we have been inordinately desirous of, so sometimes he graciously grants, at length, that which we have long waited for. He corrects our folly, and yet considers our frame, and does not contend for ever. Rachel called her son Joseph, which, in Hebrew, is akin to two words of a contrary significance. Thus he has it in his mouth, in his mouth; but in the mouth of another, it is not. For Joseph means in his mouth, as if the greatest mercy she had in this son was that she had saved her credit; and Joseph, Ad-didit, The Lord shall add to me another son, which may be looked upon, either as the language of her inordinate desire, (she scarcely knows how to be thankful for one, unless she may be sure of another,) or of her Lish; she takes this mercy as an earnest of further mercy; 'Has God given me this grace? I call him Joseph, for he shall add me more grace. Has he given me his joy? I may call it Joseph, and say, He will give me more joy. Has he begun, and shall he not make an end?'

25. And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wages, and let me go; for thou knowest my service which I have done thee. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it. 29. And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came; and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming, and now when shall I provide for mine own house also? 31. And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing; if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock: 32. I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and of such shall be my hire. 33. So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted amongst the goats, and brown amongst the sheep, that shall be accounted stolen with me. 34. And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word. 35. And he removed that day the he-goats that were ring-straked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hands of his sons. 36. And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

We have here,

1. Jacob's thoughts of home. He faithfully served his time out with Laban, even his second apprenticeship, though he was an old man, had a growing family to provide for, and it was high time for him to set up for himself; though Laban's service was hard, and he had cheated him in the first bargain he had made, yet Jacob honestly performs his engagements. Note, A good man, though he sweats, will not to to to his own hurt, will not change. And though others have deceived us, that will not justify us in deceiving them. Our rule is, to do as we would be done by, not as we are done by. Jacob's term being expired, he begs leave to be gone, v. 25. Observe, 1. He retained his affection for the land of Canaan, not only because it was the land of his nativity, and his father and mother were there, when he longed to see it, but because as the token of his dependence upon the promise of it; though he sojourn in Haran, he can by no means think of settling there. Thus should we be affected towards our heavenly country, locking upon ourselves as strangers here, viewing the heavenly country as our home, and longing to be there, as soon as the days of our service upon earth are numbered. We must not think of putting a finish to it, but for this is not our place and country, Heb. 13. 14. 2. He was desirous to go to Canaan, though he had a great family to take with him, and no provision yet made for them. He had got wives and children with Laban, but nothing else; yet he does not solicit Laban to give him either a portion with his wives, or the maintenance of some of his children. No, all his request is, Give me my wages and my children, and send me away, v. 25. 26. Note,
Those that trust in God, and in his providence and promise, though they have great families and small incomes, can cheerfully hope that he who sends mouths will send meat. He who feeds the bird of the ravens, will not starve the seed of the righteous.

II. Laban’s desire of his stay, v. 27. In love to himself, not to Jacob or to his wives or children, he speaks fairly and gently, that he may engage him to continue his chief shepherd; entreat him, by the regard he bore him, not to leave him; If I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry. Note, Curtilish selfish men know how to give good words, when it is to serve their own ends, and found that his stock had wonderfully increased with Jacob’s good management, and he owns it, with very good expressions of respect both to God and Jacob; Have learned by experience, that the Lord has blessed me for thy sake. Observe, 1. Laban’s learning. I have learned by experience. Note, There is many a profitable good lesson to be learned by experience. We are very unapt scholars, if we have not learned by experience the evil of sin, the decay of our own hearts, the vanity of the world, the goodness of God, the gains of godliness, and the like. 2. Laban’s lesson; he owns, (1.) That his prosperity was owing to God’s blessing; The Lord has blessed me. Note, Worldly men that choose their portion in this life, are often blessed with an abundance of this world’s goods. Common blessings are given plentifully to many that have not esteem of spiritual blessings. (2.) That Jacob’s piety had brought that blessing upon him; The Lord has blessed me, not for my own sake, (let not such a man as Laban, that lives without God in the world, think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, Jam. 1. 7.) but for thy sake. Note, [1.] Good men are blessings to the places where they live, even there where they live meanly and obscurely, as Jacob in the field, and Joseph in the prison, ch. 39. 25. [2.] God often blesses bad men with outward mercies, for the sake of their godly relations, though it is seldom that they have either the wit to see it, or the grace to own it, as Laban did here.

III. The new bargain they came upon. Laban’s craft and covetousness took advantage of Jacob’s plainness, honesty, and good nature; and, perceiving that Jacob began to be won upon by his fair speeches, inquired of him what he could sell. Jacob having offered his youngest son, as it may be thought, as he ought to have done, all things considered, he puts it upon him to make his demands; (v. 28.) Appoint me thy wages; knowing he would be very modest in them, and would ask less than he could for shame offer. Jacob accordingly makes a proposal to him, in which, 1. He shows what reason he had to insist upon so much, considering, (1.) That Laban was bound in good faith to deal with him, because he had served him not only faithfully, but very successfully, v. 50. Yet here observe, how he speaks, like himself, very modestly. Laban had said, The Lord has blessed me for thy sake; Jacob will not say so, but, The Lord has blessed thee since my coming. Note, Humble saints take more pleasure in doing good than in hearing of it again. (2.) That he himself was bound to take care of his own family; when shall I provide for mine own house also? Note, Faith and charity, though they are excellent things, must not take us off from making necessary provisions for our own support, and the support of our families. We must, like Jacob, trust in the Lord, and do good, and yet we must, like him, provide for our own houses also; he that does not, is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. 5. 8. 2. He is willing to refer himself to the providence of God, which, he knew, extends itself to the smallest things, event the colour of the cattle; and he will be content to have for his wages the sheep and goats of such and such a colour, speckled, spotted, and brown, which should hereafter be brought forth, v. 29, 30. This, he thinks, will be a most effectual way both to prevent Laban’s cheating him, and to secure himself from being suspected of cheating Laban. Some think he chose this colour, because, in Canaan it was generally most desired, and delight ed in; their shepherds in Canaan are called Nékö¬dom, (Amos 1. 1.) the word here used for speckled; and Laban was willing to consent to this bargain, because he thought if the few he had that were now speckled and spotted, were separated from the rest, yet by agreement was to be done immediately, the body of the flock which Jacob was to tend, being of one colour, either all black, or all white, would produce few or none of mixt colours, and so he should have Jacob’s service for nothing, or next to nothing. According to this bargain, these few that were party-coloured, were separated, and put into the hands of Laban’s sons, and sent three days’ journey off; so great was Laban’s jealousy, lest any of these should mix with the rest of the flock, to the advantage of Jacob. And now a fine bargain Jacob has made for himself! Is this his providing for his own house, to put it upon such an uncertainty? If these cattle bring forth, as usual cattle do, young ones of the same colour with themselves, he must still serve for nothing, and be a drudge and a beggar all the days of his life; but he knows whom he has trusted, and the event showed, (1.) That he took the best way that could be taken with Laban, who otherwise would certainly have been too hard for him. And, (2.) That it was not in vain to rely upon the Divine Providence, which owns and blesses honest humble diligence. Those that find men whom they deal with unjust and unkind, shall not find God so, but that, some way or other, he will right the injured, and be a good Par-Master to those that commit their cause to him.

37. And Jacob took him rods of green poplar and of the hazel and chesnut-tree, and piled white strakes in them, and made the white appear, which was in the rods. 38. And he set the rods, which he had piled, before the flocks in the gutters in the watering-troughs, when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. 39. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ring-straked, speckled, and spotted. 40. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ring-straked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not into Laban’s cattle. 41. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. 42. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban’s, and the stronger Jacob’s. 43. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses.
be: if he had not taken some course to help himself, it would have been a bad bargain indeed, which he knew Laban would never have considered, or rather, which he would have been well-pleased to see him a loser by; so little did Laban consult any one's interest but his own. Now Jacob's contrivances were

1. To set pilled sticks before the cattle where they were watered, that, looking much at those unusual party-coloured sticks, by the power of imagination, they might bring forth young ones in like manner party-coloured, v. 37. 39. Probably, this custom was commonly used by the shepherds of Canaan, who coveted to have their cattle of this motley colour. This would show a great deal of art, and would make the trade, whatever it is, and to be not only industrious, but ingenious in it, and to be versed in all its lawful arts and mysteries; for what is a man but his trade? There is a discretion which God teaches the husbandman, (as plain a trade as is,) and which he ought to learn, Isa. 28. 26.

2. When he began to have a stock of ring-straked and brown, he contrived to set them first, and to put the ring-straked and brown cattle, such as God had given him, sign as he did the former with; but would not let his own that were motley-coloured, look at Laban's that were of one colour, v. 40. Strong impressions, it seems, are made by the eye, with which therefore we have need to make a covenant.

3. When he found that his project succeeded, through the special blessing of God upon it, he contrived, by using it only with the stronger cattle, to secure to himself cattle that were most valuable, leaving the feeble to Laban, v. 41, 42. Thus Jacob increased exceedingly, (v. 43,) and grew very rich in a little time. This success of his policy, it is true, was not sufficient to justify it, if there had been any thing fraudulent or unjust in it, which we are sure there was not, for he did it by divine direction; (ch. 31. 12.) nor was there any thing in the thing itself, but the honest improvement of a fair bargain, which the Divine Providence wonderfully prospered, both in justice to Jacob, whom Laban had wrangled and dealt hardly with, and in pursuance of the particular promises made to him of the tokens of the divine favour. Note, Those, who, while their beginning is small, are humble and honest, and contented and industrious, are in a likely way to see their latter end greatly increasing; he that is faithful and industrious, will be much enriched with more he that is faithless in that which is another man's, shall be intrusted with something of his own. Jacob that had been a just servant, became a rich master.

CHAP. XXXI.

Jacob was a very honest good man, a man of great devotion, and integrity, and yet he had more trouble and vexation than any of the patriarchs. He had left his father's house in a fright, came to his uncle in distress, very hard usage he had met with there, and now is going back surrounded with tears. Here is, 1. His resolution to return, v. 12. 2. His clandestine departure, v. 17. 21. 3. Laban's pursuit of him in displeasure, v. 22. 25. 4. The hot words that passed between them, v. 28. 42. 5. Their amicable agreement at last, v. 43. 55.

1. A ND he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory. 2. And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, beheld, it was not toward him as before. 3. And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. 4. And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the fold unto his flock, 5. And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. 6. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. 7. And your father hath deceived me and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. 8. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then all the cattle bare ring-straked. 9. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. 10. And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle, were ring-straked, speckled, and girdled. 11. And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. 12. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leapt upon the cattle, are ring-straked, speckled, and girdled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. 13. I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred. 14. And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? 15. Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured our money. 16. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is our's, and our children's; now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Jacob is here taking up a resolution immediately to quit his uncle's service, and to take what he had, and go back to Canaan. He took up this resolution, upon a just provocation by divine direction, and with the advice and consent of his wives. 1. Upon a just provocation; for Laban and his sons were become very cress and ill-natured toward him, so that he could not stay among them with safety and satisfaction. 2. 1. Laban's sons showed it in what they said, v. 1. It should seem, they said it in Jacob's hearing, with a design to vex him. The last chapter begins with Rachel's envying Leah; this begins with Laban's son's envying Jacob. Observe, (1.) How greatly they magnify Jacob's prosperity; He hath gotten glory. (2.) What is it that made so much ado about it? It was a parcel of brown sheep, and speckled goats, and perhaps the fine colours made them seem more glorious, and some camels and asses, and such like trading; and that was all this glory. Note, Riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, while to all those that are conversant with heavenly things, they have no glow in comparison with the glory which excelleth. Men's over valuing worldly wealth, is that fundamental error which is the root of covetousness, envy,
and all evil. (2.) How basely they reflect upon Jacob's fidelity, as if what he had, he had not gotten honestly; Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. Not all, sure. What has become of those that he committed to the custody of Laban's sons, and sent three days' journey off? ch. 30. 35, 36. They mean all that was committed to him; but speaking invidiously, they express themselves thus generally. Note, [1.] Those that are ever so careful to keep a good conscience, yet cannot always be sure of a good name. [2.] This is one of the vanities and vexations which attend outward prosperity, that he who has obtained the confidence of his neighbour; (Eccl. 4. 4.) and who can stand before envy? Prov. 25. 4. Whom Heaven blesses Hell curses, and all its children on earth.

2. Laban himself said strife, but his countenance was not toward Jacob as it was used to be; and Jacob could not but take notice of it, v. 2, 5. He was but a churl at the best, but now he was more churlish than formerly. Note, Envy is a sin that often appears in the countenance; hence we read of an evil eye, Prov. 23. 6. Sour looks may do a great deal toward the ruin of peace and love in a family, and the making of those uneasy, whose comfort we ought to be tender of. Laban's angry countenance lost him the greatest blessing his family ever had, and justly.

3. He resolved it by divine direction, and under the convey of a promise; (v. 3.) The Lord said unto Jacob, Return, and I will be with thee. Though Jacob had met with very hard usage here, yet he would not quit his place, till God bid him. He came thither by orders from Heaven, and there he would stay, till he was ordered back. Note, It is our duty to set ourselves, and it will be our comfort to see ourselves, under God's guidance, both in our going out, and in our coming in. The direction he had from Heaven, is more fully related in the account he gives of it to his wives, (v. 10. 13.) where he tells them of a dream he had about his cattle, and the wonderful increase of those of his colour; and how the angel of God, in that dream, (for I suppose the dream spoken of, v. 10. and that v. 11. to be the same,) took notice of the worksings of his fancy in this matter, warned him, and put him upon another chance, nor by his own policy, that he obtained that great advantage; but,

1. By the providence of God, who had taken notice of the hardships that Laban had put upon him, and took this way to right him; For I have seen all that Laban doth unto thee, and herein I have an eye to that. Note; There is more of equity in the distributions of Divine Providence, than we are aware of, and by them the wronged are righted really, though perhaps insensibly. Nor was it only by the justice of Providence, that Jacob was thus enriched, but,

2. In performance of the promise intimated in what is said, v. 13, I am the God of Bethel. That was the very name with the covenant was renewed with him. Note, Worldly prosperity and success are then doubly sweet and comfortable, when we see them flowing not from common providence, but from covenant-love; to perform the mercy promised; when we have them from God, as the God of Bethel, from those promises of the life which now is, and that belong to godliness. But we observe that Jacob had this hopeful prospect of growing rich with Laban, and must think of returning. When the world begins to smile upon us, we must remember it is not our home. Now arise, (v. 13.) and return, (1.) To thy devotions in Canaan; the solemnities of which had perhaps been much interrupted while he was with Laban. The times of this servitude God had winked at; but now, 'Return to the place where thou wast named the pillar, and vouchsafe the vow. Now that thou beginnest to grow rich, it is time to think of an altar and sacrifices again.' (2.) To thy comforts in Canaan; to the land of the kindred. He was here among his own kind; but the cloud shall look upon his kindred in the best sense, the kindred he must live and die with, to whom pertained the covenant. Note, The heirs of Canaan must never reckon themselves at home, till they come thither, however they may seem to take root here.

3. He resolved it with the knowledge and consent of his wives. He sent for Rachel and Leah to bid them (x.) to return with him, and to keep all things as before, and course with them more privately, or because one would not come to the other's apartment, and he would willingly talk with them together, or, because he had work to do in the field, which he would not leave. Note, Husbands that love their wives, will communicate their purposes and intentions to them. Where there is a mutual affection, there will be a mutual confidence. And the prudence of the wife should engage the heart of her husband; s.fly to trust in her. Prov. 31. 1. He told his wives,

1. How faithfully he had served their father, v. 6. Note, if others do not do their duty to us, yet we shall have the comfort of having done our's to them.

2. How unfaithfully their father had dealt with him, v. 7. They would not have him to keep any bargain that he made with him, but; for the first year, still as he saw Providence favour Jacob with the colour agreed on, every half year of the remaining five, he changed it for some other colour, which made it ten times; as if he thought not only to deceive Jacob, but the Divine Providence which manifestly smiled upon him. Note, Those that deal honestly, are not always honestly dealt with.

3. How God had cleft him: not only protecting him from Laban's ill-will. (God suffered him not to hurt me.) Note, Those that keep close to God, shall be kept so by him,) but providing plentifully for him, notwithstanding Laban's design to ruin him; (v. 9.) I did hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. Thus the righteous, God paid Jacob for his hard service out of Laban's estate; afterward he paid the seed of Jacob for their serving of the Egyptians with their spoils. Note, (1.) God is not unrighteous to forget his people's work and labour of love, though men be so, Heb. 6. 10. Providence has ways of making those honest in the event, that are not so in their design. (2.) The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, Prov. 13. 22.

4. He told them of the command God had given him, in a dream to return to his own country, (v. 13.) that they might not suspect his resolution to arise from inconstancy, or any disaffection to their country or family, but might see it to proceed from a principle of obedience to his God, and dependence on him.

Lastly, His wives cheerfully consented to his resolution. They also brought forward their grievances, complaining that their father had been not only unkind, but unjust, to them, (v. 14. 16.) that he looked upon them as strangers, and was without natural affection toward them; and that whereas Jacob had looked upon the wealth which God had transferred from Laban to him as his wages, they had looked upon it as their portion; and so, both ways, God for a season deprived them of that what was their own, and to his daughters. So then it seemed, [1.] They were weary of their own people, and their father's house, and they could easily forget them. Note, This good use we should make of the unkind usage we meet with from the world, we should sit the more loose to it, and be willing to leave it, and desirous to be at home. [2.] They were willing to
go along with their husband, and to put themselves with him under the divine conduct; *Whatever God said unto their husbands, in whose eyes (it are their husbands' meet helps, will never be their hindrances in doing that which God calls them to.

17. Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels. 18. And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. 19. And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. 20. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. 21. So he fled with all that he had; and rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead. 22. And it was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob was fled. 23. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead. 24. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Here is,

1. Jacob's flight from Laban. We may suppose he had been long considering of it, and casting about in his mind respecting it; but, when now, at last, God had given him positive orders to go, he made no delay, nor was he disobedient to the heavenly vision. The first opportunity that offered itself he laid hold on, when Laban was shearing his sheep, (v. 19.) that part of his flock which was in the hands of his sons three days' journey off. Now, 1. It is certain that it was lawful for Jacob to leave his service suddenly, without giving a quarter's warning. It was not only justified by the particular instructions God gave him, but warranted by the fundamental law of self-preservation, which directs us when we are in danger, to shift for our own safety, as far as we can do it without wounding our consciences. 2. It is his prudence to steal away unawares to Laban, lest, if Laban had known, he should have hindered him, or plundered him. 3. It was honestly done to take no more than his own with him, the cattle of his getting, v. 18. He took what Providence gave him, and was content with that, and would not take the repair of his damages into his own hands. Yet Rachel was not so honest as her husband; she stole her father's images, (v. 17.) and carried them away with her. The Hebrew calls them Teraphim. Some think they were only little representations of the ancestors of the family in statues or pictures, which Rachel had a particular fondness for, and was desirous to have with her, now that she was going into another country. It should rather seem, they were images for a religious use, *Paterae, Household-Gods,* either worshipped or consulted as oracles; and we are willing to hope (with Bishop Patrick) that she did not take them away as being covetous of the rich metal they were made of, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitions fear lest Laban, by consulting his Teraphim, might know which way they were gone. Jacob, no doubt, dwelt with his wives as a man of knowledge, and they were better taught than so; but she might design hereby to convince her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods, which could not secure themselves. Isa. 46. 7.

2. Laban's pursuit of Jacob. Tidings were brought him on the third day, that Jacob was fled; he immediately raises the whole clan, takes his brethren, that is, the relations of his family, that were all in his interests, and he pursues Jacob, as Pharaoh and his Egyptians afterward pursued the seed of Jacob, to bring them back into bondage again; or with design to strip him of what he had. Seven days' journey he marched in pursuit of him, v. 23. He would not have taken half the pains to have visited his best friends. But the truth is, bad men will do more to serve their sinful passions, and are more vehement in their anger, than in their love.

Well, at length, Laban overtook him, and the very night before he came up with him, God interposed in the quarrel, rebuked Laban, and sheltered Jacob, charging Laban not to speak unto him either good or bad, (v. 24.) that is, to say nothing against his going on with his journey, for that it proceeded from the Lord. The same Hebraism we have, ch. 24. 30. Laban, during his seven days' march, had been full of rage against Jacob, and was now full of fear that his hopes had been disappointed. (Exod. 15. 9.) but God comes to him, and with one word ties his hands, though he does not turn his heart. Note, 1. In a dream, and in slumberings upon the bed, God has ways of opening the ears of men, and sealing their instruction, Job 33. 15, 16. Thus he admonishes men by their consciences, in secret whispers which the man of wisdom will hear, and heeds. 2. The safety of good men is very much owing to the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, and the access he has to them. 2. God sometimes appears wonderfully for the deliverance of his people, then when they are upon the very brink of ruin. The Jews were saved from Haman's plot, when the king's decree drew near to be put in execution, Esth. 9. 1.

25. Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount; and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. 26. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? 27. Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? 28. And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. 29. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 30. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? 31. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. 32. With whom-
sower thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. 33. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants' tents: but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. 34. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them: and Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. 35. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord, that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

We have here the reasoning, not to say the rallying, that was between Laban and Jacob at their meeting, in that mountain which was afterwards called Gilead, v. 25.

Here is, in the first place, a high charge which Laban exhibited against him. 

1. As a runagate, that had unjustly deserted his service. To represent him as a criminal, he will have it thought that he intended kindness to his daughters, (v. 27, 28.) that he would have dismissed them with all the marks of love and honour that could be, that he would have made a solemn business of it, would have kissed his little grandchildren, (and that was as well their seriousness,) and, according to the foolish custom of the country, would have sent them away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp: not as Rebekah was sent away out of the same family, about 120 years before, with prayers and blessings, (ch. 24, 66.) but with sport and merriment; which was a sign that religion was very much decayed in the family, and that they did not want the benefit of rebukes, he pretended they should have been treated with respect at parting. Note, It is common for bad men, when they are disappointed in their malicious projects, to pretend that they designed nothing but what was kind and fair. When they cannot do the mischief they intended, they are loath it should be thought that they ever did intend it. When they have not done what they should have done, they come off with this excuse, that they would have done it. Men may thus be deceived, but God cannot. He likewise suggests that Jacob had some bad design in stealing away thus, (v. 26.) that he took his wives away as captives. Note, Those that mean ill themselves, are most apt to put the worst construction upon what others do innocently. The insinuating and the aggravating of faults are the sorts of a designing mind, and those must be represented (though never so unjustly) as intending ill, against whom it is ingidged. Upon the whole matter, (1.) Hebraists of his own power, (v. 29.) It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: he supposes that he had both right on his side, a good action (as we say) against Jacob, and strength on his side, either to avenge the wrong, or to carry the right. Note, Bad people commonly value themselves much upon their power to do hurt, whereas a power to do good is much more valuable. Those that will do nothing to make themselves amiable, love to be thought formidable. And yet, (2.) He owns himself under the check and restraint of God's power; and though he redounded much to the credit and comfort of Jacob, he cannot avoid telling him the caution God had given him the night before, in a dream, Speak not to Jacob, good or bad. Note, As God was a wicked instrument in a chain, so when he pleases, he can make them sensible of it, and force them to own it to his praise, as Protector of the god; as Balaam did. Or, we may look upon this as an instance of some conscientious regard felt by Laban to God's express prohibitions. As bad as he was, he aimed to injure one whom he saw to be the particular care of God; yea, more, that mischief would be prevented, if men would but attend to the covenants which their own consciences give them in solemnities upon the bed, and regard to the voice of God in them.

2. He accuses him as a thief, v. 30. Rather than own that he had given him any colour of provocation to depart, he is willing to impute it to a foolish influence for his father's house, which made him that he would needs he gone; but then (says he) wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? Foolish man! to call those his gods, that could be stolen! Could he expect protection from them that could neither resist, nor discover, their invaders? Happy are they who have the Lord for their God, for they have a God that they cannot be robbed of. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God. Here Laban lays to the charge, this was a high thing that he knew not, the common distress of oppressed innocency.

II. Jacob's apology for himself. Those that commit their cause to God, yet are not forbidden to plead it themselves with meekness and fear. 1. As to the charge of stealing away his own wives, he clears himself by giving the true reason why he went away unknown to Laban, v. 31. He feared lest their husbands, (the only men that he had and gave them,) and, as oblige, by the respect due to his own persons, would follow his wives, to continue in his service. Note, Those that are unjust in the least, it may be suspected, will be unjust also in much, Luke 16. 10. If Laban deceived Jacob in his wages, it is likely he will make no conscience of robbing him of his wives, and putting those asunder whom God had joined together. What may not be feared from men that have no principle of honesty? 2. As to the charge of stealing Laban's gods, he pleads not guilty, v. 32. He not only did not take them himself, (he was not so fond of them,) but he did not know that they were taken. Yet perhaps he spoke too hastily and inconsiderately, when he said, "Whoever has taken them, let him not live;" upon this he might reflect with some bitterness, when, not long after, Rachel, who had taken them, died suddenly in Israel. How just sover we think ourselves to be, it is best to forbear imprecations, lest they fall heavier than we imagine.

III. The diligent search Laban made for his gods, (v. 33, 34, 35.) partly out of hatred to Jacob, whom he would gladly have an occasion to quarrel with, partly out of love to his idols, which he was loath to part with. We do not find that he searched Jacob's bedchamber for stolen goods, but he searched his furniture for stolen goods. God's way is not to us as our way. His mind, Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? Judg. 18. 24. Were the worshippers of false gods so set upon their idols, did they thus walk in the name of their gods? And shall we not be as solicitous in our inquiries after the true God? When he is justly departed from us, how carefully should we ask, Where is God our Maker? O that I knew where my Father found him! Ps. 21. 2, 3. Yet, after all his searches, missed of finding his gods, and was baffled in his inquiry with a sham; but our God will not only be found of these that seek him, but they shall find him their bountiful Rewarder.

36. And Jacob was wroth, and chide
with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass, what is my sin, that thou hast so holly pursued after me? 37. Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household-stuff? Set it here before my brethren, and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. 38. This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of the flock have I not eaten. 39. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. 40. Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. 41. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. 42. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac was with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

See n these verses, 
1. The power of provocation. Jacob's natural temper was mild and calm, and grace had improved it; he was a smooth man, and a plain man; and yet Laban's unreasonable carriage toward him put him into a heat that transported him into some vehemence, v. 36, 37. His chiding with Laban, though it may admit of some excuse, was not justifiable, nor is it written for our imitation. Grievous words stir up anger, and commonly do but make bad worse. It is a very great affront to one that bears an honest mind, to be charged with dishonesty; and yet even that we must learn to bear with patience, considering our cause to God, or cause to our own conscience.

2. The comfort of a good conscience. This was Jacob's rejoicing, that when Laban accused him, his own conscience acquitted him, and witnessed for him that he had been in all things willing, and careful to live honestly, Heb. 13. 18. Note, Those that in any employment have dealt faithfully, if they cannot obtain the credit of it with men, yet shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms.

3. The character of a good servant, and particularly of a faithful shepherd. Jacob had approved himself such a one, v. 38. 40. (1.) He was very careful, so that, through his oversight or neglect, the ewes did not cast their young. His piety also procured a blessing upon his master's effects that were under his hands. Note, Servants should take no less care of what they are intrusted with for their master's purpose, than they would have been disposed to do it for their own. (2.) He was very honest, and took none of that for his own eating, which was not allowed him. He contented himself with mean fare, and coveted not to feast upon the rams of the flock. Note, Servants must not be dainty in their food, nor covet what is forbidden them, but in that, and other instances, show all good fidelity. (3.) He was very laborious, v. 40. He stuck to his business, all weathers; bore both heat and cold without inexcusable patience. Note, Men of business, that intend to make something of it, must resolve to endure hardiness. Jacob is here an example to ministers; they also are shepherds, of whom it is required that they be true to their trust, and willing to take pains.

1. The character of a hard master. Laban had been such a one to Jacob. Those are bad masters, (1.) Who exact from their servants that which is unjust, by obliging them to make good that which is not damaged by any default of their's. This Laban did, v. 39. Nay, if there has been a neglect, yet it is unjust to punish above the proportion of the fault. That may be an incomconsiderable damage to the master, which would go near to ruin a poor servant. (2.) These also are bad masters, who deny to their servants that which is just and equal. This Laban did, v. 41. It was unreasonable for him to make Jacob serve for his daughters, when he had in reversion so great an estate secured to him by the promise of God himself; as it was also to give him his daughters without portals, when it was in the power of his hands to do well for them. Thus he robbed the poor because he was poor, as he did also by changing his wages.

5. The care of Providence for the protection of injured innocence, v. 42. God took cognizance of the wrong done to Jacob, and repaid him whom Laban would otherwise have sent empty away, and rebuked Laban who otherwise would have swallowed up his sons. Note, God is the Patron of the oppressed; and those who are wronged and yet not ruined, cast down and yet not destroyed, must acknowledge him in their preservation, and give him the glory of it. Observe, (1.) Jacob speaks of God, as the God of his father, intimating that he thought himself unworthy to be thus regarded, but was bel¬lowed for the father's sake. (2.) He calls him the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac; for Abraham was dead, and gone to that world where perfect love casts out fear; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart, as his Fear and his Dread. 43. And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest, is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? 44. Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. 45. And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. 46. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones: and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. 47. And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. 48. And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed: 49. And Miz¬pah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. 50. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us: see, God is witness betwixt me and thee. 51. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; 52. This heap
be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. 53. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. 55. And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

We have here the compromising of the matter between Laban and Jacob. Laban had nothing to say in reply to Jacob's remonstrance: he could neither justify himself nor condemn Jacob, but was convicted by his own conscience of the wrong he had done him; and therefore he desires to make peace with him. He is not willing to own himself in a fault, nor to ask Jacob forgiveness, and make him satisfaction as he ought to have done. But

1. He turns it off with a profession of kindness for Jacob's wives and children, (v. 43.) These daughters are my daughters. When he cannot excuse what he has done, he does in effect, own what he should have done; he should have treated them as his own, but he had counted them strangers, v. 15. Note, It is common for those who are without a natural affection, to pretend much to it, when it will serve a turn. Or, perhaps Laban said this in a vain-voiced way, as one that loved to talk big, and use great swelling words of vanity; All that thou scest, is mine. It was not so, it was Jacob's, and he should have done it; yet Jacob let him have his say, and even let him coming into a better humour. Note, Property lies near the hearts of worldly people. They love to boast of it, This is mine, and the other is mine, (v. 25.)

11. He proposes a covenant of friendship between them, which Jacob readily agrees to, without insisting upon Laban's submission, much less his restitution. Note, When quarrels happen, we should be willing to be friends again upon many terms; peace and love are such valuable jewels, that we can scarcely buy them too dear. Better sit down losers than go in strife. Now observe here,

1. The substance of this covenant; Jacob left it wholly to Laban to set it. The terms of it was,

(1.) That Jacob should be a good husband to his wife; that he should not afflict them, nor any other wisebeside them, v. 39. Jacob had never given him any cause to suspect that he would be any other than a kind husband: yet, as if he had, he was willing to come under this engagement. Though Laban had affli ted them themselves, yet he will bind Jacob, that he shall not affli te them. Note, Those that are injuries' themselves, are contented to be injuries. What they do the undone by, are most peremptory in demanding duty from others.

(2.) That he should never be a bad neighbour to Laban, v. 32. It was agreed that no act of hostility should ever pass between them, that Jacob should forgive and forget all the wrongs he had received, and not remember them against Laban or his family in after times. Note, We may have a strong perception of an injury, which yet we may not revenge.

2. The ceremony of this covenant; it was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the usages of those times. (1.) A pillar was erected, (v. 43.) and a heap of stones raised, (v. 46.) to perpetuate the memory of the thing; the way of recording agreements, by writing in every thing not known, or not used. (2.) A sacrifice was offered, (v. 54.) a sacrifice of peace-offerings. Note, Our peace with God is that which puts true comfort into our peace with our friends. If parties contend, the reconciliation of both to Him will facilitate their reconciliation one to another. (3.) They did eat bread together, (v. 46.) jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice, v. 54. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together. It was in the nature of a love-feast. (4.) They solemnly appealed to God concerning their sincerity herein, (1.) As a Witness, (v. 49.) The Lord watch between me and thee, that is, The Lord take cognizance of everything that shall be done on either side, in violation of this league. When we are cut of one another's sight, let this be a restraint upon us, that wherever we are, we are under God's eye. This appeal is convertible into a prayer. Friends at a distance from each other may take the comfort of this, that when they cannot know or sur cease another, God watches between them, and has his eye on them both. (2.) As a Judge, v. 55. The God of Abraham, from whom Jacob was descended, and the God of Nahor, from whom Laban was descended, the God of their father, the common ancestor, from whom they were both descended, judge betwixt us. God's relation to them is thus expressed, to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity betwixt them. Note, Those that have one God, should have one heart; those that agree in religion, should not quarrel in politics. The God of Nahor is called the God of Abraham, because he was judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously; whoever does wrong, it is at his peril. (5.) They gave a new name to the place, v. 47, 48. Laban called it in Syriac, and Jacob in Hebrew, the heap of witness. And v. 49, it was called Mizpah, a watch-tower. Perverse being included in the league, care was taken that thus the memory of the covenant should be a witness that words are applicable to the seals of the gospel-covenants, which are witnesses to us, if we be faithful, but witnesses against us, if we be false. The name Jacob gave this heap, stuck by it, Galeed, not the name Laban gave it. In all this rencontre, Laban was noisy and full of words, affecting to say much; Jacob was silent, and said little; when Laban appealed to God under many titles, Jacob only swore by the Great God; the father Isaac, v. 16, the God, his father's Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done. Two words of Jacob's were more memorable than all Laban's speeches and vain repetitions. For the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools, Ecc. 9. 17. Lastly, After all this angry part, they part friends, v. 58. Laban went away, and Jacob kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them; and then went back in peace. Note, God is often better to us than our fears, and strangely overrules the spirits of men in our favour, beyond what we could have expected; for it is not in vain to trust in him.
1. AND Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. 2. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Jacob is here got clear of Laban, and pursuing his journey homeward, toward Canaan: when God has helped us through difficulties, we should go on our way heavenward with so much the more cheerfulness and resolution.

Now,

1. Here is Jacob's convey in his journey, v. 1. The angels of God met him, in a visible appearance, whether in a vision by day, or in a dream by night, as when he saw them upon the ladder, (ch. 28. 12.) is uncertain. Note, Those that keep in a good way, have always a good guard; angels themselves are ministering spirits for their safety, Hcb. 1. 14. Where Jacob pitched his tents, they pitched their's him, v. 24. 7. They met him, to bid him welcome to Canaan again; a more honourable reception this was, than ever any prince had, that was met by the magistrates of a city in their formalities. They met him, to congratulate him on his arrival, and particularly on his escape from Laban; for they have pleasure in the prosperity of God's servants. They had invisibly attended him all along, but now they appeared to him, because he had greater dangers before him than those he had hitherto encountered. Note, When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts. We should think it had been more seasonable for these angels to have appeared to him amidst the perplexity and agitation occasioned first by Laban, and afterward by Esau, than in this calm and quiet interval, when he saw not himself in any imminent peril; but God will have us at a season, as we are in peace, to provide for trouble, and when trouble comes, to live upon former observations and experiences; for we walk by faith, not by sight. God's people, at death, are returning to Canaan, to their father's house; and then the angels of God will meet them, to congratulate them on the happy finishing of their servitude, and to carry them to their rest.

2. The comfortable notice he took of this convey, v. 2. This is God's host, and therefore, (1.) It is a powerful host; very great is he that is thus attended, and very safe that is thus guarded. (2.) God must have the praise of this protection: This I may think God for, for it is his host." A good man may with an eye of faith, see the same that Jacob saw with his bodily eyes, by believing that promise, (Ps. 91. 11.) He shall give his angels charge over thee. What need have we to dispute whether every particular saint has a guardian angel, when we are sure he has a guard of angels about him? To preserve the remembrance of this favour, Jacob gave a name to the place from it, Mahanaim, two hosts, or two camps. That is, say some of the Rabbins, one host of the guardian angels of Mesopotamia, who conducted Jacob thence, and delivered him safe to the other host of the angels of Canaan, who met him upon the borders where he now was, and when he appeared to him in two hosts, one on either side, or one in front, and the other in rear, to protect him from Laban behind, and Esau before, that they might be a complete guard. Thus he is compassed with God's favour, Perhaps, in allusion to this, the church is called Mahanaim, two armies, Cant. 6. 13. Here was Jacob's family, which was one army, representing the church militant and itinerant on earth; and the angels another army, representing the church triumphant, and at rest in heaven.

3. And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. 4. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau: Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: 5. And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. 6. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. 7. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; 8. And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

Now that Jacob was re-entering Canaan, God, by the vision of angels, reminded him of the friends he had when he left it, and hence he took occasion to remind himself of the enemies he had, particularly Esau. It is probable that Rebekah had sent him word of Esau's settlement in Seir, and of the continuance of his enmity to him. What shall poor Jacob do? He longs to see his father, and yet he dreads to see his brother. He rejoices to see Canaan again, and yet cannot but rejoice with trembling because of Esau.

1. He sends a very kind and humble message to Esau. It does not appear that his way lay through Esau's country, or that he needed to ask his leave for a passage; but his way lay near it, and he would not go by him without paying him the respect due to a brother, a twin-brother, an only brother, an elder brother, a brother offended. Note, 1. Though our relations fall in their duty to us, yet we must make conscience of doing our duty to them. 2. It is a piece of friendship and brotherly love, to acquaint our friends with our state, and inquire into their's. Acts of civility may help to slay enmities. Jacob's message to him is very obliging, v. 4. 5. (1.) He calls Esau his lord, himself his servant, to intimate that he did not insist upon the prerogatives of the birth-right and blessing he had obtained for himself, but left it to God to fulfill his own purpose in his seed. Note, Yielding justice great offends, Gen. 10. 4. We must not refuse to speak in a respectful and submissive manner, to those that are ever so unjustly exasperated against us. (2.) He gives him a short account of himself; that he was not a fugitive and vagabond, but, though long absent, had had a certain dwelling-place, with his own relations, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there till now; and that he was not a beggar, nor did he come empty-handed before his brother; in the number of several other relations, and likely to be a charge to his relations; No, I have oxen and asses. This, he knew, would (if any thing) recommend him to Esau's good opinion. And, (3.) He courts his favour; I have sent, that I might find grace in thy sight. Note, It is no disparagement to those that have the better cause, to become petitioners for reconciliation, and to sue for peace as well as right.
II. He receives a very formidable account of Esau’s warlike preparations against him, (v. 6.) not a word, but a blow; a very coarse return to his kind message, and a sorry welcome home to a poor brother; He comes to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. He is now weary of waiting for the days of mourning for his good father, and even before they come, he resolves to slay his brother. 1. He revenges the old quarrel, and will now he avenged on him for the birth-right and blessing, and if possible, defeat Jacob’s expectations from both. Note, Malice harboured, will last long, and find an occasion to break out with violence a great while after the provocations given. Angry men have good memories. 2. He invites Jacob what little estate he had, and though he himself was now possessed of a much better, yet nothing will serve him but to feed his eyes upon Jacob’s ruin, and fill his fields with Jacob’s spoils. Perhaps the account Jacob sent him of his wealth, did but provoke him the more. 3. He concludes it easy to destroy him, now that he was upon the road, a poor weary traveller, unfixed, and (as he thinks) ungarded. They that have the serpent’s poison, have commonly the serpent’s policy, to take the first and fairest opportunity to do what they intend. Note, He resolves to do it suddenly, and before Jacob was come to his father, lest he should interpose and mediate between them. Esau was one of those that hated peace; when Jacob speaks, speaks peaceably, he is for war, Ps. 126. 6, 7. Out he marches, spurred on with rage, and intent on blood and murders; four hundred men he had with him, probably, such as used to hunt with him, armed, no doubt more than a match for the six men that Jacob then had to execute the word of command though ever so barbarous, and now breathing nothing but threatenings and slaughter. The tenth part of these were enough to cut off poor Jacob, and his guiltless helpless family, root and branch. No marvel therefore that it follows, (v. 7.) That Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed, perhaps the more so, having scarcely recovered the fright Laban had put him in. Note, Many are the troubles of the righteous in this world, and sometimes the end of one is the beginning of another. The clouds return after the rain. Jacob, though a man of great faith, yet was now greatly afraid. Note, A lively apprehension of danger, and a quickening fear arising from it, may very well consist with a humble confidence in God’s power, and promise. Christ himself, in his agony, was sore amazed.

III. He puts himself into the best posture of defence that his present circumstances will admit of. It was absurd to think of making resistance, all his acquaintance to make an escape, v. 7, 8. He thinks it prudent not to venture all in one bottom, and therefore divides what he had into two companies, that if one were smitten, the other might escape. Like a tender and careful master of a family, he is more solicitous for their safety than for his own. He divided his company, not as Abraham, (ch. 14. 15.) for fight, but for flight.

9. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee; 10. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shown unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. 11. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. 12. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

Our rule is to call upon God in the time of trouble; we have here an example to that rule, and the success encourages us to follow that example. It was now a time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it; and here we have him praying for that salvation, Jer. 30. 7. In his distress he sought the Lord, and he heard him. Note, Times of fear should be times of prayer; whatever frightens us should drive us to our knees, to our God. Jacob had lately seen his guard of angels, but in this distress he applied himself to God, not to them; he knew they were his fellow-servants, (Rev. 22. 9.) nor did he consult Laban’s Topham; it was enough for him that he had a God to go to. To him he addressed himself with all possible solemnity, so, running for safety into the name of the Lord, as a strong tower, Prov. 18. 10. This prayer is the more remarkable; because it was not the name of being an Israel, a prince with God, and the father of the praying remnant, who are hence called the seed of Jacob, to whom he never said, Seek ye me in vain. Now it is worth while to inquire what there was extraordinary in this prayer, that it should gain the petition or all this honour.

I. The request itself is one, and very express, (v. 11.) Deliver me from the hand of my brother. Though there was no human probability on his side, yet he believed the power of God could rescue him as a lamb out of the bloody jaws of the lion. Note, 1. We have leave to be particular in our addresses to God, to mention the particular straits and difficulties we are in; for the God with whom we have to do, is one we may be free with; we have liberty of speech (παρακλησία) at the throne of grace. 2. When our brethren aim to be our destroyers, it is our comfort that we have a Father to whom we may apply ourselves as our Deliverer.

II. The plea is many, and very powerful; never was cause better ordered, Job 23. 4. He offers up his request with great faith, fervent, and humility. How earnestly does he beg! (v. 11.) Deliver me, I pray thee. His fear made him importunate. With what holy docility does he argue! With what divine docility does he plead! Here is a noble copy to write after.

1. He addresses himself to God as the God of his fathers, v. 9. Such was the humble self-denying sense he had of his own unworthiness, that he did not call God his own God, but a God in covenant with his ancestors, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac; and this he could the better plead, because the covenant of divine grace was bestowed upon him. Note, God’s covenant with our fathers may be a comfort to us when we are in distress. It has often been so to the Lord’s people, Ps. 22. 4, 5. Being born in God’s house, we are taken under his special protection.

2. He produces his warrant, Thou saidst unto me, Return unto thy country. He did not rashly leave his place with Laban, nor was the journey, nor the manner of the journey, or the end of it, any honour, or a foolish journey for his native country, but, in obedience to God’s command. Note, (1.) We may be in the way of our duty, and yet we may meet with trouble and distress in that way. As prosperity will not prove us in the right, so cross events will not prove us in the wrong; we may be going whither God calls us, and yet may think our way hedged up with thorns. (2.)
We may comfortably trust God with our safety, while we carefully keep to our duty. If God be our God, he is our Rock, and our strength, our bulwark, etc. 3. He humbly acknowledges his own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, (v. 10.) *I am not worthy,* it is an unusual plea. Some would think he should have pleaded that what was now in danger, was his own, against all the world, and that he had earned it dear enough; no, he pleads, Lord, I am not worthy of it. Note, Self-denial and self-abasement become the best and most acceptable manner of adoring the throne of grace. Christ never commended any of his petitioners so much as he who said, *Lord I am not worthy,* (Matt. 8. 8.) and her who said, *Truth, Lord, yet the dog's eat of the crumbs which fall from thy master's table,* Matt. 15. 27. Now observe here, (1.) How magnificently and honourably he speaks of the mercies of God to him. We have here, mercies, in the plural number, an incalculable spring, and innumerable streams; mercies and truth, that is, past mercies given according to the promise, and further mercies secured by the promise. Note, What is laid up in God's truth, as well as what is laid out in God's mercies, is the matter both of the comforts, and the praises, of active believers. Nay, observe, it is all the mercies, and not truth; he is not assured of a particular mercy, and intimates that his heart was full of God's goodness. (2.) How meanly and humbly he speaks of himself, disclaiming all thought of his own merit, *I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies,* much less am I worthy of so great a favour as this I am now suing for." Jacob was a considerable man, and, upon many accounts, very deserving, and, in treating with Laban, had justly insisted on his merits, but not before God. I am less than all thy mercies; so the word is. Note, The best and greatest of men are utterly unworthy of the least favour from God, and must be ready to own it upon all occasions. It was the excellent Mr. Herbert's motto, *Less than the least of all God's mercies.* Those are the best prepared for the greatest mercies, that see themselves unworthy of the least.

4. He thankfully owns God's goodness to him in his banishment, and how much it had out done his expectations. *With my staff I passed over this Jordan, poor and desolate like a forlorn and despised pilgrim,* he had no guides, no companions, no attendants, no conveniences for travel, but his staff only, nothing else to stay himself upon; *and now I am become two bands,* now I am surrounded with a number of servants, and comfortable returns of the desert he was in. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase. Note, (1.) The increase of our families is then comfortable indeed to us, when we see God's mercies, and his truth, in it. (2.) Those whose latter end greatly increases, ought, with humility towards God, to magnify their former calamities, though it was his distress that had now obliged him to divide his family into two bands, yet he makes use of that for the magnifying of the mercy of his increase.

5. He urges the extremity of the peril he was in, Lord, deliver me from Esau, for I fear him, v. 11. The people of God have not been shy of telling God in prayer what a danger they are in, that he may take cognizance of them, and consider it. The danger they are in, the prayer, is itself pleasurable. It was not a robber, but a murderer, that he was afraid of; nor was it his own life only that lay at stake, but the mother's and the children's, that had left their native soil to go along with him. Note, Natural affliction may furnish us with allowable acceptable pleas in prayer.

6. He insists especially upon the promise God had made him, (v. 9.) Thou saidst, I will deal well with thee, and again in the close, (v. 12.) Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good. Note, (1.) The best we can say to God in prayer, is, what he has said to us. God's promises, as they are the surest guide of our desires in prayer, and furnish us with the best petitions, so they are the fittest ground of our hopes, and furnish us with the best pleas. *"Lord, thou saidst thousand and thus; and wilt thou not be as good as thy word, the word upon which thou hast caused me to hope?* Ps. 119. 49. (2.) The most general promises are applicable to particular cases. *"Thou saidst, I will do thee good; Lord, do me good in this matter."* He pleads also a particular promise, that of *multiplying his seed.* *"Lord what will become of that promise, if they be all cut off?"* Note, [1.] There are promises to the families of good people, which are improvable in prayer for family mercies, ordinary and extraordinary, ch. 17. 7. Ps. 112. 2.—106. 28. [2.] The world's threatenings should drive us to God's promises.

13. And he lodged there that same night, and took of that which came to his hand, a present for Esau his brother; 14. Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, 15. Thirty nick camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she-asses, and ten foals. 16. And he delivered them into the hands of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove. 17. And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? And whose are these before thee? 18. Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. 19. And so commanded he the second and the third, and all that followed the drove, saying, on this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. 20. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For so said he, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; and he will accept of me. 21. So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company. 22. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women-servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. 23. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

Jacob having previously made God his Friend by a prayer, is here prudently endeavouring to make Esau his Friend by a gift. He had prayed to God to deliver him from the hands of Laban, for he feared him; but neither did his fear sink into such a despair as dissipators for the use of means, nor did his prayer make him presume upon God's mercy, without the use of means. Note, When we have prayed to God for any mercy, we must second our prayers with our endeavours; else, instead of trusting God we tempt him; we must so depend upon God's providence, as to make use of
our own prudence. "Help thyself, and God will help thee;" God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion. To pacify Esau.

1. Jacob sent him a very noble present, not of jewels or fine garments, (he had them not,) but of cattle, to the number of five hundred in all, ver. 13. 15. Now,

(1.) It was an evidence of the great increase with which God had blessed Jacob, that he could spare such a number of cattle out of his stock. (2.) It was an evidence of his wisdom, that he would willingly part with some, to and the last; some men's venality loses them more than ever it got them, and by grudging a little expense, they expose themselves to great damages; skin for skin, and all that a man has, if he be a wise man, he will give for his life.

(3.) It was a present that he thought would be acceptable to Esau, who had traded so much in hunting wild beasts, that, perhaps, he was but ill furnish'd with tame cattle with which to stock his new conquests. And we may suppose that the mix't colors of Jacob's cattle, ring-straked, speckled, and spotted, would please Esau's fancy. (4.) He promised himself that by this present he should gain Esau's favor; for a gift commonly procures, which way soever it turns, (Prov. 17, 8,) and makes room for a man; (Prov. 18, 16,) may pacify anger and strengthen the heart, (Prov. 22, 14.) Note, We should not despair of regaining ourselves even to those that have been most exasperated against us: we ought not to judge men unappeasable, till we have tried to appease them. [2.] Peace and love, though purchased, will prove a good bargain to the purchaser. Many a morose ill-natured man would have said, in Jacob's case, "Esau has vowed my death without cause, and he shall never be a farther thing the better for me; I will see him far enough before I will send him a present," but Jacob forgives and forgets.

2. He sent him a very humble message, which he ordered his servants to deliver in the best manner, ver. 17, 18. They must call Esau their lord, and Jacob his servant; they must tell him the cattle they had was a small present which Jacob had sent him, as a specimen of his acquisitions while he was abroad. The cattle he sent, were to be disposed of in several small packs, so that at least each drove, were to deliver the same message, that the present might appear the more valuable, and his submiss on, so often repeated, might be the more likely to influence Esau. They must especially take care to tell him, that Jacob was coming after, (ver. 18, 20,) that he might not suspect he was fled through fear. Note, A friendly confidence in men's goodness may help to make the chief designs upon us by their badness; if Jacob will seem not to be afraid of Esau, Esau, it may be hoped, will not be a terror to Jacob.

24. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. 25. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. 26. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 27. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. 28. And he said, Thy name shall he called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince thou hast power with God and men, and hast prevailed. 29. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. 30. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. 31. And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. 32. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, in the sinew that shrank.

We have here the remarkable story of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, and prevailing, which is referred to Hos. 12, 4. Very early in the morning, a great while before day, Jacob had helped his wife and children over the river, and he desired to be private, and was left alone, that he might again more fully spread his cares and fears before God in prayer. Note, We ought to continue in prayer, always to pray, and not to faint: frequency and importunity in prayer prepare us for strength. The great God, while Jacob was in prayer, stirred up himself to take hold on God, and angels take hold on him. Some think this was a created angel, the angel of his presence, (Isa. 63, 9,) one of those that always behold the face of our Father, and attend on the Shechinah, or the Divine Majesty, which probably Jacob had also in view. Others think it was Michael our Prince, the eternal Word, the Angel of the Covenant, who is indeed the Lord of the angels, who often appeared in a human shape, before he assumed the human nature for a perpetuity; whichever it was, we are sure God's name was in him, Exod. 33, 21. Observe, I. How Jacob and this angel engaged, ver. 24. It was a single combat, hand to hand, they had neither of them any seconds. Jacob was now full of care and fear about the interview he expected, next day, with his brother, and to aggravate the trial, God himself seemed to come forth against him as an enemy, to oppose his entrance into the land of promise, and to dispute the pass with him, not suffering him to follow his wives and children whom he had sent before. Note, Strong believers must expect divers temptations, and strong ones. We are told by the prophet, (Hos. 12, 4,) "how Jacob wrestled; he wept and made supplications; prayers and tears were his weapons. It was not only a corporal, but a spiritual wrestling, by the vigorous actions of faith and holy desire; and thus all the spiritual seed of Jacob that pray, in praying, still wrestle with God. II. What was the success of the engagement. 1. Jacob kept his ground; though the struggle continued long, the angel prevailed not against him, (ver. 19,) that is, this discouragement did not make his faith, nor invalidate his prayer. It was not in his own strength that he wrestled, nor by his own strength that he prevails, but in and by strength derived from Heaven. That of Job illustrates this, (Job 25, 6,) "Will he plead against me with his great power? No, (had the angel done so, Jacob had been crushed,) but he would put strength in me;" that is, God would add strength to his prayer. 2. The angel put out Jacob's thigh, to show him what he could do, and that it was God he was wrestling with, for no man could disjoin his thigh with a touch. Some think that Jacob felt little or no pain.
from this hurt; it is probable that he did not, for he did not so much as halt till the struggle was over; (v. 31.) and if so, that was an evidence of a divine touch indeed, which wounded and healed at the same time. Jacob prevailed, and yet had his eye put out.

Note, Wrestling believers may obtain glorious victories, and yet come off with broken bones; for when they are weak, then are they strong, weak in themselves, but strong in Christ, 2 Cor. 12. 10. Our honours and comforts in this world have their allays.

3. The angel, by an admirable condescension, gently requests Jacob to let him go, (v. 26.) as God said to Moses, (Exod. 32. 10.) Let me alone, for I know all the intents of man. He could, but thus he would put an honour upon Jacob's faith and prayer, and further try his constancy. The king is held in the galleries; ( Cant. 7.) 5. I held him, (says the spouse,) and would not let him go, Cant. 3. 4. The reason the angel gives why he would be gone, is, because the day breaks, and therefore he would not any longer detain Jacob, who had business to do, a journey to go, a family to look after, which especially in this critical juncture, called for his attendance. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season; even the business of religion, and the comforts of communion with God, must sometimes give way to the necessary affairs of this life: God will have mercy, and not sacrifice.

4. Jacob persists in his holy importunity; I will not let thee go, except thou bless me; whatever the burden of the journey, he resolves to make the best he can of this opportunity, and not to lose the advantage of his victory: he does not mean to wrestle all night for nothing, but humbly resolves he will have a blessing, and rather shall all his bones be put out of joint, than he will go away without one. The credit of a conquest will do him no good without the comfort of a blessing. In begging this blessing, he owns his inferiority, though he seemed to have the upper hand in the struggle; for the less is blessed of the better. Note, Those that would have the blessing of Christ, must be in good earnest, and be importunate for it, as those that resolve to have no denial. It is the fervent prayer, that is the effectual prayer.

5. The angel puts a perpetual mark of honour upon him, by changing his name; (v. 27, 28.) And God said, Thy name shall be called Jacob: for thou shalt be a man of Jacob, a man of heroic resolution; What is thy name? "Jacob," says he, a supplanter; so Jacob signifies; and, "Well," says the angel, he thee never so called any more; henceforth thou shalt be celebrated, not for craft and artful management, but for true valour; thou shalt be called Israel, a prince with God, a name greater than those of the great men of the earth. He is a prince indeed, that is a prince with God, and those are truly honour'd, that are mighty in prayer, Israel's, Israelites indeed. Jacob is here knighted in the field, as it were, and has a title of honour given him by him that is the Fountain of honour, which will remain, to his praise, to the end of time. Yet this was not all; having power with God, he shall have power with men too. Having prevailed for a blessing from Heaven, he shall, no doubt, have their Esau. Whatever enemies we have, if we can but make God our Friend, we are well off; they that by faith have power in Heaven, have thereby as much power on earth as they have occasion for.

6. He dismisses him with a blessing, v. 29. Jacob desired to know the angel's name, that he might according to his capacity, do him honour, Jacob desired. But that request was denied, that he might not be too proud of his conquest, nor think he had the angel at such an advantage as to oblige him to what he pleased; No, Wherefore dost thou ask after my name? What good will it do thee to know that? The discovery of that was reserved for his death-bed, upon which he was taught to call him Shiloh. But, instead of telling him his name, he gave him his blessing, which was the thing he wrestled for; he blessed him there, repeated, and ratified the blessing formerly given him. Note, Spiritual blessings which secure our felicity, are better and much more desirable than fine notions which s tisfy our curiosity. An interest in the angel's blessing is better than acquaintance with his name. The tree of life is better than the tree of knowledge. Thus Jacob carried his point; a blessing he wrestled for, and a blessing he had; nor did ever any of his praying succeed so well, but what the heavenly Father descends to countenance and crown importunate prayer: those that resolve, though God slay them, yet to trust in him, will, at length, be more than conquerors.

7. Jacob gives a new name to the place; he calls it Peniel, the face of God, (v. 30.) because there he had seen the appearance of God, and obtained the favour of God. Observe, The name he gives to the place, preserves and perpetuates, not the honour of his victory or vitories, but the honour of God's face. He does not say, "In this place, I wrestled with God, and prevailed;" but, "In this place, I saw God face to face, and my life was preserved;" not, "It was my praise that I came off a conqueror, but it was God's mercy that I escaped with my life." Note, It becomes those whom God honours, to take shame to themselves, and to admire the condescensions of his grace to them. Thus David did, after God had sent him a gracious message, (2 Sam. 7. 18.) Who am I, O Lord God? Lastly, The memorandum Jacob carried of this in his bones, He hailed on his thigh; (v. 31.) some think he continued to do so to his dying-day; and if he did, he had no reason to complain; for the honour and comfort he obtained by this struggle, were abundantly sufficient to counteract the damage, though he went limping to his grave. He had no reason to look upon it as his reproach, thus to bear in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus; (Gal. 6. 17.) yet it might serve, like St. Paul's thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of the revelations. Notice is taken of the sun's rising upon him when he passed over Peniel; for it is sun-rise with that soul that has communion with God. The inspired penman mentions a treasured custom to which Jacob had, in remembrance of this, never to eat of that sinew, or muscle in any beast by which the hip-bone is fixed in its cup; by this observance they preserved the memorial of this story, and gave occasion to their children to inquire concerning it; they also did honour to the memory of Jacob. And this use we may still make of it, to acknowledge the mercy of God, and our obligations to Jesus Christ; and so we may keep up our communion with God, in faith, hope, and love, without peril, either of life or limb.

CHAP. XXXIII.

We read in the former chapter, how Jacob had power with God, and prevailed; here we find what power he had with men too, and how his brother Esau was mollified, and, on a reconciliation, became his friend. So written, J. 16. 7. When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. Here is, 1. A very friendly meeting between Jacob and Esau, v. 1. .4. 2. Their conference at their meeting at Sechem, v. 5. .8. In which they renewed their wish and kind expressions. Their discourse is, 1. About Jacob's family, v. 5. .7. 2. About the present he had sent, v. 8. .11. 3. About the progress of their journey, v. 12. .15. 4. Jacob's settlement in Canaan, his house, garments, and altar, v. 16. .20.
AND Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

Here, I. Jacob discovers Esau's approach, v. 1. Some think that his lifting up his eyes denotes his cheerfulness and confidence, in opposition to a dejected countenance; having by prayer committed his case to God, he went on his way, and his countenance was no more sad. 2 Sam. 1. 18. Note, Those that have cast their care upon God, may look before them with satisfaction and composure of mind, cheerfully expecting the issue, whatever it may be; come what will, nothing can come amiss to him whose heart is fixed, trusting in God. Jacob sets himself upon his watch-tower, to see what answer God will give to his prayers, Hab. 2. 1.

II. He puts his family into the best order he could, to receive him, whether he should come as a friend, or as an enemy; consulting their decency if he come as a friend, and their safety if he come as an enemy, v. 1, 2. Observe what a different figure these two brothers made. Esau is attended with a guard of 400 men, and looks big; Jacob is followed by a cumbersome train of women and children that are his care, and he looks tender and solicitous for their safety; and yet Jacob had the birth-right, and was to have the dominion, and was every way the better man. Note, It is no disparagement to very great and good men, to give a personal attendance to their families, and to their family-affairs. Jacob, at the head of his household, set a better example than Esau at the head of his regiment.

III. At their meeting, the expressions of kindness were interchanged in the best manner that could be between them. I. Jacob bowed to Esau, v. 3. Though he feared Esau as an enemy, yet he did obeisance to him as an elder brother; knowing and remembering perhaps that when Abel was preferred in God's acceptance before his elder brother Cain, yet God undertook for him to Cain that he should not want in the duty and respect owing by a younger brother to an elder brother should be his desire, and thou shalt have rule over him, ch. 4. 7. Note, (1. ) The way to recover peace where it has been broken, is, to do our duty, and pay our respects, upon all occasions, as if it had never been broken. It is the remembering and repeating of matters, that separates friends, and perpetuates the separation. (2. ) A humble submissive carriage goes a great way toward the turning away of wrath. Many preserve themselves by holding themselves: the bullet flies over him that stoops. 2. Esau embraced Jacob, (v. 4.) He ran to meet him, not in passion, but in love; and as one heartily reconciled to him, he received him with all the encouragements imaginable, embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him. Some think that when Esau came out to meet Jacob, it was with no bad design, but that he brought his 400 men, only for state, that he might pay so much the greater respect to his returning brother. It is certain that Jacob understood the report of his messengers otherwise, ch. 32. 5. Jacob was a man of prudence and fortitude, and we cannot suppose him to admit of a groundless fear, to such a degree as he did this, nor that the Spirit of God would stir him up to pray such a prayer as he did, for deliverance from a mere imaginary danger; and if there was not some wonderful change wrought upon the spirit of Esau at this time, the not how wrestling Jacob could be said to obtain such power with men, as to denounce him a prince.

Note, (1.) God has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them when and how he pleases, by a secret, silent, but resistless power. He can, of a sudden, convert enemies into friends, as he did two Sauls, one by restraining grace, (1 Sam. 26. 21, 25.) the other by renewing grace, Acts 9. 22. (2. ) It is not in vain to trust in God, and to call upon him in the day of trouble; they that do so, often find the issue much better than they expected.

5. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, who are those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant. 6. Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. 7. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. 8. And he said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. 9. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. 10. And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me. 11. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took it. 12. And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee. 13. And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me; and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die. 14. Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children, be able to endure; until I come unto my lord unto Seir. 15. And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me. And he
said, What needeth it? Let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

We have here the discourse between the two brothers at their meeting, which is very free and friendly, without the least intimation of the old quarrel. It was the best way to say nothing of it. They converse,

1. About Jacob’s return, v. 5. 7. Eleven or twelve years after, when James followed Jacob close, the eldest of them not fourteen years old; Who are these? says Esau. Jacob had sent him an account of the increase of his estate, (ch. 32. 5.) but made no mention of his children; perhaps, because he would not expose them to his rage, if he should meet him as an enemy, or would please him with the unexpected sight, if he should meet him as a friend; Esau therefore had reason to ask, Who are those with thee? To which common question Jacob returns a serious answer; such as became his character, They are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant. It had been a sufficient answer to the question, and fit enough to be given to profane Esau, if he had only said, “They are my children;” but then Jacob had not spoken like himself, like a man whose eyes were ever toward the Lord, and who was in such common actions, but to speak of them, after a godly sort, 3 John 6. Jacob speaks of his children, 1. As God’s gifts; they are a heritage of the Lord, Ps. 127. 3. 113. 9. 107. 41. 2. As choice gifts; he hath graciously given them. Though they were many, and now much his care, and as yet but slenderly provided for, yet he accounts them great blessings; his wives and children hereupon come up in order, and pay their duty to Esau, as he had done before them; (v. 6. 7.) for it becomes the family to show respect to those whom the master of the family shows respect to.

II. About the present he had sent him.

1. Esau modestly refused it, because he had enough, and did not need it, v. 9. Note, Those who wish to be considered men of honour, will not seem to be mercenary in their friendship; whatever influence Jacob’s present had upon Esau to pacify him, he would not have it thought that it had any, and therefore he refused it. His reason is, I have enough, I have much; so the word is; so much, that he was not willing to take any thing that was his brother’s. Note, (1.) Many that come short of spiritual blessings, and are out of covenant, yet have more than they need; God has promised him, the fatness of the earth, and a livelihood by his sword. (2.) It is a good thing for those that have much, to know that they have enough, though they have not so much as some others have. Even Esau can say, I have enough. (3.) Those that are content with what they have, must show it by not coveting what others have. Esau is become rich; he has kept all that he had to himself, supposing he had more need of it; Esau, for his part, needs it not, either to supply him, for he was rich, or to pacify him, for he was reconciled: we should take heed, lest at any time our covetousness impose upon the courtesy of others, and meanly take advantage of their generosity.

2. Jacob affectionately urges him to accept it, and presents it, v. 10. Esau sent it through Fear (ch. 32. 20.) but, the fear being over, he now imports his acceptance of it, for love, to show that he desired his brother’s friendship, and did not merely dread his wrath; two things he urges, (1.) The satisfaction he had in his brother’s favour, which he thought himself bound to make this thankful acknowledgment of. It is a very high compliment that he passes upon him, I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, that is, “I have seen thee reconciled to me, and at peace with me, as I desire to see God reconciled.” Or, the meaning is, that Jacob saw God’s favour to him in Esau’s; it was a token for good to him, that God had accepted his prayers. Note, [1.] Creatures-comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when they are granted as answers to prayer, and are tokens of our acceptance with God. [2.] It is matter of great joy to those that are of a peaceable and cheerful disposition, to see the good that others do, and their success in their work, and to recollect that those works have been in all their relations that they have been at variance with. (2.) The competency he had of this world’s goods, God has dealt graciously with me. Note, If what we have in this world, increase under our hands, we must take notice of it with thankfulness, to the glory of God, and own that therein he has dealt graciously with us, better than we deserve; it is he that gives power to get wealth, Deut. 8. 18. He adds, And I have enough; I have all, so the word is. Esau’s enough was much, but Jacob’s enough was all. Note, A Godly man, though he have but little in the world, yet may truly say, “I have all,” [1.] Because he has the God of all, and all in him; all is yours if ye be Christ’s, 1 Cor. 3. 22. [2.] Because he has the comfort of all; I have all, 2 Cor. 12. 9. He that has all, has what he will; if he has the comfort of all, he has all, is sure he has enough. He has all in prospect; he will have all shortly, when he comes to heaven: upon this principle, Jacob urged Esau, and he took his present. Note, It is an excellent thing when men’s religion makes them generous, free-hearted, and open-hand’d, scoring to do a thing that is paltry and sneaking.

III. About the progress of their journey. In which,

1. Esau offers himself to be his guide and companion, in token of sincere reconciliation, v. 12. We never find that Jacob and Esau were so sociable with one another, and so affectionate, as they were now. Note, As for God, his work is perfect. He made Esau, not only not an enemy, but a friend. This bace that had been broken, being well set, became stronger than ever. Esau is become fond of Jacob’s company, courts him to mount Seir; let us never despair of any, nor distrust God, in whose hand all hearts are. Yet Jacob saw cause modestly to refuse this offer, (v. 13. 14.) wherein he shows a tender concern for his own family and flocks, like a good shepherd and a good father. He must consider the children and flocks with young, and not divide them the one from the other. Jacob’s prudence and tenderness of Jacob ought to be imitated by those that have the care and charge of young people in the things of God. They must not be over-driven, at first, by heavy tasks in religious services, but led as they can bear, having their work made as easy to them as possible. Christ, the good shepherd does so, Isa. 40. 11. Now Jacob tells him that he will not go up; he is at peace, nor force his family to quicken their’s; more leniently, let us, to keep company with his brother, as many would have done, that love any society better than those of their own house; but he desires Esau to march before, and promises to follow him leisurely, as he could get forward. Note, It is an unreasonable thing to tie others to our rate; we may come with composure, at last to the same journey, and, though we do not journey with them, either in the same path, or with the same pace. There may be those, with whom we cannot fall in, and yet with whom we need not fall out by the way. Jacob intimates to him, that it was his present design to come to him to mount Seir; and we may presume he did so, after he had settled his family and concerns elsewhere, though that visit is not recorded. Note, When we have happily recovered peace with our friends, we
must take care to cultivate it, and not to be behindhand with them in civilities.

2. Lastly, one of his men to be his guard and companion. v. 15. He saw Jacob but poorly attended, no servants but his husbandmen and shepherds, no pages or footmen; and therefore, thinking he was as desirous as himself (if he could afford it) to take state upon him, and look great, he would needs lend him some of his retinue, to attend upon him, that he might appear like Esau's brother; but Jacob humbly refuses his offer, only desiring that he would not take it, as if he did not accept it; What needeth it? (1.) Jacob is humble, and needs it not for state; he desires not to make a fair show in the flesh, by encumbering himself, with a needless retinue. Note, It is the vanity of pomp and grandeur, that they are attended with a great deal, of which it may be said, What needeth it? (2.) Jacob is under the divine protection, and needs it not for safety. Note, Those are sufficiently guarded, that have God for their Guard, and are under a convoy of his hosts, as Jacob was. They need not be beholden to an arm of flesh, that have God for their Arm every morning. Jacob adds, Only let me find grace in the sight of my Lord; having thy favour, I have all I need, all I desire from thee. If Jacob thus valued the good-will of a brother, much more reason have we to reckon that we have enough, if we have the good will of our God.  

16. So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. 17. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. 18. And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city. 19. And he bought a parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. 20. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-e-lohe-Israel. 

Here, 1. Jacob comes to Succoth: having in a friendly manner parted with Esau, who was gone to his own country, (v. 16.) he comes to a place where, it should seem, he rested for some time, set up booths for his cattle, and other conveniences for himself and family. The place was afterward known by the name of Succoth, a city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan; it signifies booths: that when his posterity afterward dwelt in houses of stone, they might remember that the Syrian ready to perish was their father, who was glad of booths; (Deut. 26. 3.) such was the rock whence they were hewn. 2. He comes to Shechem: we read it to Shalam, a city of Shechem; the critics generally incline to read it appellatively: he came safe, or, in peace, to the city of Shechem: after a perilous journey, in which he had met with many difficulties, he came safe at last, into Canaan. Note, Diseases and dangers should teach us how to value health and safety, and should help to enlarge our hearts in thankfulness, when our going out and coming in have been signaliy preserved. Here, (1.) He buys a field, v. 19. Though the land of Canaan was his by promise, yet the time for taking possession being not yet come, he is content to pay for his own, to prevent disputes with the present occupants. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have heaven on free-cost, must not expect to have earth so. (2.) He builds an altar, v. 20. [1.] In thankfulness to God, for the good hand of his providence over him. He did not content himself with verbal acknowledgments of God's favour to him, but made real ones. [2.] That he might keep up religion, and the worship of God, in his family. Note, Where we have a tent, God must have an altar; where we have a house, he must have a church in it. 

He dedicated this altar to the honour of El-e-lohe-Israel, God the God of Israel: though he is styled a prince among the people, God shall still be a Prince with him, his Lord and his God. Note, Our honours then become honours indeed to us, when they are consecrated to God's honour; Israel's God is Israel's glory.

CHAP. XXXIV. 

At this chapter begins the story of Jacob's afflictions in his children, which were very great, and are recorded to show, 1. The vanity of this world. That which is nearest to us, may prove our greatest vexation, and we may meet with the greatest crosses in those things of which we are proud, This some shall comfort us. 2. The common grief of good people. Jacob's children were circumcised, were well-taught, and prayed for, and had very good examples set them; yet some of them proved very untoward: The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The Grace God gave, and the help he had, and yet the interrupting of the entail of grace does not cut off the entail of profession and visible church-privileges: nay, Jacob's sons, though they were his grief in some things, yet were all taken into covenants with God. In this chapter we have, I. Dinah debauched, v. 1-5. A treaty of marriage between her and Shechem who had defiled her, v. 6-19. III. The circumcision of the Shechemites, pursuant to that treaty, v. 20-24. IV. The pernicious and bloody revenge which Simeon and Levi took upon them, v. 25-31.

1. AND Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. 2. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. 3. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel. 4. And Shechem spake unto his father Hamor, saying, Get me this damsel to wife. 5. And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter: now his sons were with his cattle in the field: and Jacob held his peace until they were come.

Dinah was, for aught that appears, Jacob's only daughter, and we may suppose her therefore the mother's fondest, and the darling of the family; and yet she took upon herself either to betray a credit to them; for these children seldom prove either the best, or the happiest, that are most indulged. She is reckoned now but fifteen or sixteen years of age, when she here occasioned so much mischief.

Observe, 1. Her vain curiosity, which expressed her; she went out, perhaps unknown to her father, but by the complinance of her mother, to see the daughters
of the land; (v. 1.) probably, it was at a ball, or on some public day. Being an only daughter, she thought herself solitary at home, having none of her own age and sex to converse with; and therefore she must needs go abroad to divert herself, to keep off melancholy; and to accomplish herself by conversation better than she could at her father's tents. Note, It is a very good thing for children to love and keep the company of young men, so bent to them, and children's duty then is to be easy in it. Her presence was, to see the daughters of the land, to see how they dressed, and how they danced, and what was fashionable among them; she went to see; yet that was not all, she went to be seen too; she went to see the daughters of the land, but, it may be, with some thoughts of the sons of the land too. I doubt she went to get acquaintance with the Canaanites, and to lead their way. Note. The pride and vanity of young people betray them into many snares.

2. The loss of her honour by this means; (v. 2.) shecheth the prince of the country, but a slave to his own lusts, took her, and lay with her, it should seem not so much by force as by surprise. Note, Great men think they may do anything; and what more mischievous than unthought of uncovered youth? See what came of Dinah's gadding; young women must learn to be chaste, keepers at home; these properties are put together, Tt. 2. 5. for those that are not keepers at home, expose their chastity. Dinah went abroad to look about her; but if she had looked about her as she ought, she had not fallen into this snare. Note, The beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water. How great a matter does a little fire kindle? We should therefore carefully avoid all occasions of sin and approach to it.

3. The court Shechem made to her, after he had defiled her; this was fair and commendable, and made the best of what was bad; he loved her, (not as Ammon, 2 Sam. 13. 15.) and he engaged his father to make a match for him with her, v. 4.

4. The tidings brought to poor Jacob, v. 5. As soon as his children grew up, they began to be a grief to him, let not guilty parents, that are lamenting the miscarriages of their children, think their case singular or unprecedented. The good man held his peace, as one astonished, that knows not what to say; or, he said nothing, for fear of saying amiss, as David; (Ps. 39. 1. 2.) he smothered his sentiments, lest, if he had suffered them to break out, they should have transported him into any indecencies. Or, it should seem, he had left the management of his affairs very much (too much I doubt) to his sons, and he would do nothing without them; or, at least, he knew they would make him uneasy, if he did, they having showed themselves, of late, upon all occasions, bold, forward, and assuming. Note, Things never go well, when the authority of a parent runs low in a family. Let every man bear rule in his own house, and have his children in subjection with all gravity.

6. And Hamor the father of Shechem went out unto Jacob to commune with him.

7. And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth; because he had wrought folly in Israel, in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done. And Hamor communed with them, saying, The soul of my son Shechem longeth for your daughter: I pray you give her him to wife. And make ye marria-

ges with us, and give your daughters unto us, and take our daughters unto you. And ye shall dwell with us: and the land shall be before you; dwell and trade ye therein, and get you possessions therein. And Shechem said unto his father and unto his brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife. And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister; And they said unto them, We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us. But in this we will consent unto you: if ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; Then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take your daughter, and we will be gone. Jacob's sons when they heard of the injury done to Dinah, showed a very great resentment of it, influenced perhaps rather by the honour of their family, than by a sense of virtue. Many are concerned at the shamefulness of sin, that never lay to heart the sinfulness of it.

It is here called folly in Israel, (v. 7.) according to the language of after-times; for Israel was not yet a people, but a family only. Note, Uncleanness is folly; for it sacrifices the favour of God, peace of conscience, and all the soul can pretend to, that is sacred and honourable, to a base and brutish lust. This folly is most shameful in Israel, in a family in Israel, where God is known and worshipped, as he was in Jacob's tents, by the name of the God of Israel. Folly in Israel is scandalous indeed. It is a very good thing to have sin stamped with a bad name; uncleanness is here proverbially called folly in Israel, 2 Sam. 13. 12. Dinah is here called Jacob's daughter, or, for warning to all the daughters of Israel, that they betray not themselves to this folly.

Haman came to treat with Jacob himself, but he turns them over to his sons; and here we have a particular account of the treaty, in which it is a shame to say, the Canaanites were more honest than the Israelites.

Haman and Shechem fairly propose this match, in order to purchase their interest in trade. Shechem is deeply in love with Dinah; he will have her upon any terms, v. 11. 12. His father not only consents, but solicits for him, and gravely insists upon the advantages that would follow from the union of the families, v. 9, 10. He shows no jealousy of Jacob, though he was a stranger, but rather an earnest desire to settle a correspondence with him and his family, making him that generous offer, The land shall be before you, trade ye therein. Jaceb's sons basely pretend to insist upon a coalition in religion, when really they designed nothing less. If Jacob had taken the management of this affair into his own hands, it is probable that he and Hamer would soon have concluded it; but Jacob's sons meditate only revenge; and a strange pro-

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ject they have for the compassing of it—the Shechemites must be circumcised; n’t to make them bays, they never intended that, but to make them sore, that they might become an easier prey to their sword.

1. The pretense was specious; “It is the honour of Jacob’s family, that they carry abut with them the token of God’s covenant with them; and it will be a reproach to them that are thus dignified and distinguished, to enter into such a strict alliance with them that have not circumcised” (v. 14). And therefore, if we will be circumcised, then we will become one people with you,” v. 15, 16. Had they been sincere, their proposals of these terms would have had in it something commendable; for, (2.) Israelites should not intermarry with Canaanites, profess with false; it is a great sin, or, at least, the coming in of a great deal, and has been of pernicious sequence. (2.) The interest we have in any persons, and the hold we have of them, should be wisely improved by us, to bring them to the love and practice of religion; (He that sinneth souls is sorer;) but then we must not like Jacob’s sons, think it enough to persuade them to submit to the external rites of religion, but must endeavour to convince them of its reasonableness, and to bring them acquainted with the evidence of it—The sequel of the story, all they aimed at was to prepare them for the day of slaughter. Note, Bloody designs have often been covered and carried on, with a pretense of religion; thus they have been accomplished most plausibly, and most securely: But this assembled pieties is, dubious double insincerity. Religion is never more injured by God’s sacred name, more profaned, than when they are thus used for a cloak of maliciousness. Nay, if Jacob’s sons had not had this bloody design, I do not see how they could justify their offering the sacred sign of circumcision, the seal of God’s covenant, to these devoted Canaanites, who had no part nor part in the matter. They had no right to the seal, that had no right to the promise; it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs; but Jacob’s sons valued not this, while they could make it serve their turn.

18. And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor’s son. 19. And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob’s daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father. 20. And Hamor and Shechem his son came unto the gate of their city, and communed with the men of their city, saying, 21. These men are peaceable with us, therefore let them dwell in the land, and trade therein; for the land, behold, it is large enough for them; let us take their daughters to us for wives, and let us give them our daughters. 22. Only herein will the men consent unto us for to dwell with us, to be one people, if every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised. 23. Shall not their cattle, and their substance, and every beast of their’s, be ours? Only let us consent unto them, and they will dwell with us. 24. And unto Hamor and unto Shechem his son hearkened all that went out of the gate of the city: and every male was circumcised, all that went out of the gate of his city.

Here, 1. Hamor and Shechem gave consent themselves to be circumcised, v. 18, 19. To this perhaps they were moved, not only by the strong desire they had to bring about this match, but by what they might have heard of the sacred and honourable intentions of this sign, in the family of Abra¬ham, which, it is probable, they had some confused notions of, and of the promises confirmed by it; which made them the more desirous to incorporate with the family of Jacob. 2. Many who know little of religion, yet know so much of it as makes them willing to join themselves with these that are religious. (3.) If a man would take upon him a firm of religion, to gain a good wife, much more should we embrace the power of it, to gain the favour of a good God; even circumcise our hearts to love him, and as Shechem, here, not to do the thing. 2. They gained the consent of the men of their city; Jacob’s sons requiring that they also should be circumcised. (3.) They themselves had great influence upon them by their conversation and example. Note, Religion would greatly prevail, if those in authority, who, like Shechem, are more honourable than their neighbours, would appear forward and zealous for it. (2.) They urged an argument, which was very weighty with it. Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? They observed that Jacob’s sons were industrious and thriving people, and promised themselves and their neighbours advantage by an alliance with them; it would improve ground and trade, and bring money into their country. Now, [1.] It was bad enough to marry upon this principle; yet we see evidences in the greatest monarchs in the world, and nothing designed so much, with many, as the laying of house to house, and field to field, without regard had to any other consideration. [2.] It was worse to be circumcised upon this principle. The Shechemites will embrace the religion of Jacob’s family, only in hopes of interesting themselves thereby in the riches of that family. Thus there are many, with whom gain is godliness, and who are more governed and influenced by their secular interest, than by any principle of their religion.

25. And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. 26. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went out. 27. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. 28. They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that, which was in the field. 29. And all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives, took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house. 30. And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me, to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. 31. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?
Here we have Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, young men not much above twenty years old, cutting the throats of the Shechemites, and thereby breaking the heart of their good father.

1. Here is the barbarous murder of the Shechemites; Jacob himself, as he was used to be strict, had his sons go abroad with his sides, as if they had been the seed of Cain, who was to live by his sword; we have them here.

2. Slaying the inhabitants of Shechem, all the males; Hamor and Shechem particularly, with whom they had been treating in a friendly manner the other day, yet with a design upon their lives.

3. One think that all Jacob's sons, when they were did not mean the Shechemites to be secured, designed to take advantage of their sorrness, and to rescue Dinah from among them; but that Simeon and Levi, by concert with that, would themselves avenge the injury which they did it with a witness. Now, (1.) It was plain to God that God was righteous in it. Had the Shechemites been used, in obedience to any command of God, their concurrence would have been their protection; but when they submitted to that sacred rite, only to serve a turn, to please their prince, and to enrich themselves, it was just with God to bring this upon them. Note, As it thing secures us better than true religion, so nothing exposes as more than religion only pretended. (2.) Simeon and Levi were not men of an upright, unrighteous. [1.] It was true that Shechem had wrongfully in Israel, in defiling Dinah; but it ought to have been considered how far Dinah herself had been necessary to it. Had Shechem abused her in her own mother's tent, it had been another matter; but she went upon this ground, and perhaps by her inadvertent carriage had struck the spark which beg for the conflagration. [2.] We see, in the case of the of the sin, it was sought to consider who was the temple. [3.] It was true that Shechem had done ill, but he was endeavouring to atone for it, and was as honest and honourable, ex post facto—after the deed, as the case would admit; it was not the case of the Levite's concubine that was abused to death, nor does he justify what he has done, but makes a reconciliation in any terms. [4.] It was true that Shechem had done ill; but what was that to all the Shechemites? Does one man sin, and will they be worse with all the town? Must the innocent fall with the guilty? This was barbarous indeed. [5.] But that which above all aggravated the cruelty, was, the most perfidious treachery that was in it. The Shechemites had submitted to their conditions, and had done that upon which they had promised to become one people with them; (v. 16.) yet they act as sworn enemies to those to whom they were lately become sworn friends, making as light of their covenant, as they did of the laws of humanity. And are these the sons of Israel? Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce. [5.] This is added to the crime that they made a holy ordinance of God subservient to their wicked design, so making that dishonoured; as if it were not enough for them to shame themselves, and their families, they would bring a reproach upon that holy badge of their religion; justly would it be called a bloody ordinance.

2. Seizing the prey of Shechem, and plundering the town; they rescued Dinah, (v. 26.) and if that was all they came for, they might have done that without blood, as appears by their own showing, (v. 17.) but they aimed at the spoil; and though Simeon and Levi only were the murdwise, yet it is intimated that the sons of Jacob did one who was slain, and spoiled the city, (v. 27.) and so became accessory to the murder; in them it was manifest injustice, yet here we may observe the righteousness of God. The Shechemites were willing to gratify the sons of Jacob by submitting to the penance of circumcision, upon this principle, Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours; (v. 25.) and see what was the issue; instead of making themselves masters of the wealth of Jacob's family, their faction was to be the executors of the judgment of God. Note, Those who unjustly grasp at that which is another's, justly lose that which is their own.

II. Here is Jacob's resentment of this bloody deed of Simeon and Levi, v. 26. Two things he bitterly complains of,

1. The reprieve they had brought upon him thereby, (v. 17.) he have troubled me, put me into a disorder; for he have made me to stink among the inhabitants of the land that is a; (v. 25.) I have rendered me and my family odious, among them. What will they say of us and our religion? We shall be looked upon as the most pernicious barbarous people in the world. Note, The gross misconduct of wicked children is the grief and shame of their godly parents. Children should be the joy of their parents; but wicked children are their trouble, sadden their hearts, break their spirits, and make them go mourning from day to day. Children should be an ornament to their parents; but wicked children are a reproach, and, as dead flies in their pot of ointment: but let such children know, that if they repent not, the grief they have caused to their parents, and the damage religion has sustained in its reputation through them, will come into the account and be reckoned for.

2. The ruin they had exposed him to; what could be expected, but that the Canaanites, who were numerous and formidable, would confederate against him, and he and his little family would become an easy prey to them? (v. 26.) Shall I be destroyed, I and my house? If all the Shechemites must be destroyed for the sin of these wicked, all the Israelites must be destroyed. But in the offence of two? Jacob knew that God had promised to preserve and perpetuate his house; but he might justly fear that these vile practices of his children would amount to a forfeiture, and cut off the entail. Note, When sin is in the house, there is reason to fear ruin at the door. The tender parents foresee these bad consequences of sin, which the wicked children have no dread of.

3. He thought this sin should have made them to relent, and they should have humbled themselves to their good father, and begged his pardon; but, instead of that they justify themselves, and give him this insolent reply, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot? No, he should not; but if he do, must they be their own avengers? Will nothing less than so many lives, and the ruin of a whole city, serve to stave for an abuse done to one woman? By their question they tacitly reflect upon their father, as if he would have been content to let them deal with his daughter as with an harlot. Note, It is common for those who run into one extreme, to reproach and censure those who keep the mean, as if they ran into the other. Those who condemn the rigour of revenge, shall be misrepresented, as if they countenanced and justified the offence.

CHAP. XXXV.

In this chapter, we have three communions, and three funerals.

1. Three communions between God and Jacob. 1. God appeared to Jacob in Shechem, in that order, he purged his house of idols, and prepared for that journey, v. 1. 2. Jacob built an altar at Bethel, to the honour of God that had appeared to him, and in presence of his family, v. 7. 3. God appeared to him again, and confirmed the change of his name, and the covenant with him, (v. 9., 13.) of which appearance Jacob made a grateful acknowledgement, v. 14. 11. Three funerals, 1. Deborah's, r. 8. 2. Rachel's, r. 16. 20. 3. Isaac's, v. 27. 29. Here is also Reuben's incest, (v. 22.) and an account of Jacob's sons, v. 28. 36.
A ND God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. 2. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: 3. And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. 4. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. 5. And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the sons that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

I. God reminds Jacob of his vow at Beth-el, and sends him thither to perform it, v. 1. Jacob had said in the day of his distress, If I come again in peace from the land of the Canaanites, then will I surely build thee an altar unto the Lord God of my father Abraham. (Gen. 28:20.) This is the same as if he had said, If I return safe and sound from this journey to Beth-el, I will build an altar to the Lord. This was a kind of solemn vow, and he was bound to perform it. He was now safe and sound, and his journey was over. Note, Time is apt to wear out the sense of merities, and the impressions made upon us by them, it should not be so, but so it is. God had excruciated Jacob with a very strong emotion in him, and he had resolved (ch. 34.) to send to Beth-el, to build a new altar there. God will have his worshipers bring his vows to his remembrance, and put him upon the performance of it, but it had not that effect; therefore God comes himself and puts him in mind of it, Arise, go to Beth-el. Note, 1. As many as God loves, he will remind of neglected duties, one way or other, by conscience or by providences. 2. When we have vowed a vow to God, it is best not to defer the payment of it, (Ecc. 5.4.) yet better late than never. God bade him go to Beth-el and dwell there, that is, not only go himself, but take his family with him, that they might join with him in his devotions. Note, 1. In Beth-el, the house of God, we should desire to dwell, Ps. 27.4. That should be our home, not our inn. God reminds him not expressly of his vow, but of the occasion of it, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau. The reminder of former affictions should bring to mind the workings of our souls under them, Ps. 66.13, 14.

II. Jacob commands his household to prepare for this solemnity; not only for the journey and remove, but for the religious services that were to be performed, v. 2, 3. Note, 1. Before solemn ordinances, there must be solemn preparation. Wash you, make you clean, and then come, and let us reason together, Isa. 1.10, 11. 2. Masters of families should use their authority for the promoting of religion in their families. Not only we, but our houses also, should serve the Lord, Josh. 24.15. Observe the commands he gives his household, like Abraham, ch. 18.19. (1.) They must put away the strange gods. Strange gods in Jacob's family! Strange things indeed! Could such a family, that was taught the good knowledge of the Lord, admit such gods? Could such a master, to whom God had appeared twice, and often, conrive at them? Doubtless, this was his infirmity. Note, Those that are good themselves, cannot have those about them so good as they should be. In those families where there is a face of religion, and an altar to God, yet many times there is much amiss, and more strange gods among them than one would suspect. In this household, God had her Terahshim, which, it is to be feared, she secretly made some superstitious use of. The captives of Shechem brought their gods along with them, and perhaps Jacob's sons took some with the plunder. However they came by them, now they must put them away. (2.) They must be clean, and change their garments; they must observe the due decorum, and make the best appearance. Dr. Lightfoot, by their being clean, or washing them, understands Jacob's admission of the proselytes of Shechem and Syria into his religion by baptism, because circumcision was become casual. (3.) They must go with him to Beth-el, v. 3. Note, Masters of families, when they go up to the house of God, should bring their families with them.

III. His family surrendered all they had, that would be their offering to the Lord; v. 4. For when Jacob had called for them sooner, they had sooner parted with them, being convicted by their own consciences of the vanity of them. Note, Sometimes attempts for reformation succeed better than one could have expected, and people are not so obstinate against them as we feared. Jacob's servants, and even the retainers of his family, gave him all the strange gods, and the ear-rings they wore, either blood, if it concerned them particularly to wash, and to put off those garments that were so stained. These were but ceremonies, signifying the purification and change of the heart. What are clean clothes, and new names, without the heart? They may serve to cover the heart. Dr. Lightfoot, by their being clean, or washing them, understands Jacob's admission of the proselytes of Shechem and Syria into his religion by baptism, because circumcision was become casual. However they come by them, now they must put them away. Note, Reformation is not sincere, if it be not universal. We hope they parted with them cheerfully, and without reluctance. As Ephraim did, when he said, What have I to do any more with idols? (Hos. 14.8.) or that people that said to their idols, Get thee hence, Isa. 30.22. Jacob took care to bury their images, we may suppose, in the place whither they went; and if they afterward find them, and return to them, Note, We must be wholly separated from our sins, as we are from those that are dead and buried out of our sight; cast them to the molest and the beasts, Isa. 2.20.

IV. He removes without molestation from Shechem to Beth-el, v. 5. The terror of God was upon the cities. Though the Canaanites were much exasperated against the sons of Jacob for their barbarous treatment of the shechemites, yet they were so restrained by a divine power that they could not take this fair opportunity which now offered itself, when they were upon their march, to avenge their neighbour's quarrel. Note, The way of duty is the way of safety. While there was sin in Jacob's house, he was afraid of his neighbours; but now that the strange gods were put away, and they were all going together for their common utility, he was not afraid of him. When we are about God's work, we are under special protection, God is with us, while we are with him; and if he be for us, who can be against us? See Exod. 34.14, 

No man shall desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before the Lord. God governs the world more by secret terrors on men's minds than we are aware of.

* In his note on ch. 31.19, our Author expresses a more favourable opinion; but the opinion expressed here seems more probable.-Es
6. So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Beth-el, he and all the people that were with him. 7. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother. 8. But Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el, under an oak; and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth. 9. And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. 10. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob; thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and he called his name Israel. 11. And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee; and kings shall come out of thy loins; 12. And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land. 13. And God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him. 14. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon:

15. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Beth-el.

Jacob and his retinue being come safe to Beth-el, we are here told what passed there.

I. There he built an altar, (v. 7.) and, no doubt, offered sacrifice upon it, perhaps the tenth of his rations, according to his vow, I will give the tenth unto thee. With these sacrifices he joined praises for former mercies, particularly that which the sight of the place brought fresh to his remembrance; and he added prayers for the continuance of God’s favour to him and his family. And he called the place, that is, the altar, El-beth-el, the God of Beth-el. As, when he made a thankful acknowledgment of the honour God had lately done him in calling him Israel, he worshipped God by the name of El-othe-Israel; so, now that he was making a grateful recognition of God’s favour to him at Beth-el, he worshipped God by the name of El-beth-el, the God of Beth-el, because there God appeared to him. Note, The comfort which the saints have in holy ordinances, is not so much from Beth-el, the house of God, as from El-beth-el, the God of the house. The ordinances are but empty things, if we do not meet with God in them.

II. There he buried Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, v. 8. We have reason to think that Jacob, after he came to Canaan, while his family dwelt near Shechem, went himself (it is likely often) to visit his father Isaac at Hebron. Rebekah, probably, would not so far go; but the old nurse (who, as we have seen, made, ch. 24. 59.) survived her, and Jacob took her to his family, to be a companion to his wives, her country-women, and an instructor to his children; while they were at Beth-el, she died, and died lamented, so much lamented, that the oak under which she was buried, was called Allon-Bachuth, the oak ofweeping. Note, 1. Old servants in a family, that have in their time been faithful and useful, ought to be respected. Honour was done to this tree, at her death, by Jacob’s family, though she was not related to them, and though she was aged. Former services, in such a case, must be remembered. 2. We do not know where death may meet us; perhaps at Beth-el, the house of God. Therefore let us be always ready. 3. Family-afflictions and troubles even then, when family-reformation and religion are on foot. Therefore, rejoice with trembling.

III. There God appeared to him, (v. 9.) to own his altar, and to answer to the name by which he had called him, The God of Beth-el, (v. 7.) and to comfort him under his affliction, v. 8. Note, God will appear to them in a way of grace, that attend on him in a way of duty.

Here, 1. He confirmed the change of his name, v. 10. It was done before by the angel that wrestled with him, (ch. 32. 28.) and here it was ratified by the Divine jesty, or Shekinah, that appeared to him. There, it was to encourage him against the fear of Esau, here, against the fear of the Canaanites. Who can be too hard for Israel, a prince with God? It is below the scale that are thus dignified, to drop p. and desp. 2. He renewed and ratified the covenant with him, by the name El-shaddad, I am God Almighty; God all-sufficient, (v. 11.) able to make good the promise in due time, and to support thee and provide for thee in the mean time. Two things are promised him, which he had been without before, namely, safety and safety; (1.) That he should be the father of a great nation; great in number, A company of nations shall be of thee; every tribe of Israel was a nation, and all the twelve a company of nations, great in honour and power, kings shall come out of thy loins. (2.) That he should be the master of a good land, (v. 12.) described by the grantees, Abraham and Isaac, to whom it was promised, by the westward nations of the Canaanites, in whose possession it now was. The land that was given to Abraham and Isaac, is here extolled on Jacob and his seed. He shall not have children without an estate, which is often the case of the poor; nor an estate without children, which is often the grief of the rich; but both. These two promises had a spiritual signification, which we may suppose to be this, that he himself, and the posterity of his seed, shall be not so clear and distinct as we now have; for, without doubt, Christ is the promised Seed, and heaven is the promised land; the former is the founder, and the latter the top-stone, of all God’s favours. He then went up from him, or from over him, in some visible display of glory, which had hovered over him while he talked with him, v. 13. Note, The sweetest communion the saints have with God in this world, are short and transient, and have an end. Our vision of God in heaven will be everlasting; there we shall be ever with the Lord; it is not so here.

IV. There Jacob erected a memorial of this, v. 14. 1. He set up a pillar. When he was going to Padan-aram, he set up that stone which he had laid his head on, for a pillar; that was agreeable enough to his low condition, and his humble flight; but now he took time to erect one more stately, more distinguishable and durable; probably, inserting that stone in it. For, observe, 1. How much he intended it for a sacred memorial of his communion with God, he poured oil and the other ingredients of a drink-offering upon it. Its vow was, This stone shall be God’s house, that is, shall be set up for his honour, as houses to the praise of their builders; and here he performs it, transferring it to God by anointing it. 2. He confirmed the name he had formerly given to the place, (v. 15.) Beth-el, the house of God. Yet this very place afterward lost the honour of its name, and he came Beth-aven, a house of iniquity; for here it was
that Jeroboam set up one of his calves. It is impossible for the best men to entangle upon a place so much as the profession and form of religion.

16. And they journeyed from Beth-el; and there was but a little way to come to Ephraim; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. 17. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. 18. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died,) that she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephraim, which is Beth-lehem. 20. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

We have here the story of the death of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob. 1. She fell in travail by the way, not able to reach to Beth-lehem the next town, though they were near it; so suddenly does pain come upon a woman in travail, which she cannot escape, or put off. We may suppose that Jacob had soon a tent up convenient for her reception. 2. Her pain was extreme. She had hard labour; harder than usual: this was the effect of sin, ch. 3.

4. Her travail was, to the life of the child, but to her own body. Note: Though the pains and pangs of child-bearing were introduced by sin, yet they have sometimes been fatal to very holy women, who, though not saved in child-bearing, were saved through it with an everlasting salvation. Rachel had passionately said, Give me children, or else I die; and now that she had children, for this was her second,) she died. Her dying is here called the departing of her soul. Note: The death of the body is but the departure of the soul to the world of spirits. Her dying lips called her new-born son Ben-oni, the son of my sorrow. And many a son, not born in such hard labour, yet proves the son of his parent's sorrow, and the heaviness of that bare him. Children are enough the sorrow of their poor mothers, in the breeding, bearing, and nursing, of them; they should therefore, when they grow up, study to be their joy, and so, if possible, to make them some amends. But Jacob, because he would not renew the sorrowful remembrance of the mother's death, every time he called his son by his name, changed his name, and called him Benjamin, The son of my right hand, that is, very dear to me; set on my right hand for a blessing; the support of my age, like the staff in my right-hand.

6. Jacob buried her near the place where she died; as she died in child-bed, it was convenient to bury her quickly; and therefore he did not bring her to the burying-place of his family. If the soul be at rest after death, it matters little where the body lies. In the place where the tree falls, there let it be. No mention is made of the mourning that was at her death, because that might easily be taken for grant that Jacob was no doubt was a true mourner. Note, Great afflications sometimes befall us immediately after great comforts. Lest Jacob should be lifted up with the visions of the Almighty which he was honoured with, this was sent as a thorn in the flesh to humble him. These that enjoy the favours peculiar to the children of God, must yet expect the troubles that are common to the children of men. Deborah, who, had she lived, would have been a comfort to Rachel in her extremity, died but a little before. Note, When death comes into a family, it often strikes double. God by it speaks once, yet twice. The Jewish writers say, "The death of Deborah and Rachel was to expiate the murder of the Shechemites, occasioned by Dinah, a daughter of the family."

Lastly, Observe Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave, so that it was known long after, to be Rachel's sepulchre, (1 Sam. 10. 2.) and Providence so ordered that this place became afterwards the burying-place of Ben-jim. Jacob set up a pillar in remembrance of his joy, (v. 14.) and here he sets up one in remembrance of his sorrows; for, as it may be of use to ourselves to keep both in mind, so it may be of use to others to transmit the memorials of both: the church, long afterward, owned that what God said to Jacob at Beth-el, both by his word and by his rod, he intended for their instruction, (Hos. 12. 4.) There he speaks with us.

21. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar. 22. And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve. 23. The sons of Leah; Reuben, Jacob's first-born, and Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Zebulun: 24. The sons of Rachel; Joseph, and Benjamin: 25. And the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid; Dan, and Naphtali: 26. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's handmaid; Gad, and Asher: these are the sons of Jacob, which were born to him in Padan-aram. 27. And Jacob came unto Isaac his father, unto Mambre, unto the city of Arbaeh, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. 28. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and fourscore years. 29. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Here is,

1. Jacob's remove, v. 21. He also, as his fathers, sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, and was not long in a place. Immediately after the story of Rachel's death, he is here called Israel, (v. 21, 22.) and not often so, afterwards; the Jews say, "The historian does him this honour here, because he bore that affliction with such admirable patience and submission to Providence." Note, These are Israelites indeed, princes with God, that support the government of their own passions. He that has this rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. Israel, a prince with God, yet dwells...
in tents; the city is reserved for him in the other world.

2. The sin of Reuben; a piece of abominable wickedness it was, that he was guilty of; (v. 22.) very sin which, the apostle says, (1 Cor. 5. 1.) is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. It is said to be when Israel dwelt in that land; for if he were then absent from his family, which might be the case when they were removed from the house of Jacob, there was no evil done. Though perhaps Bilhah was the greater criminal, and it is probable, was abandoned by Jacob for it, yet Reuben's crime was so provoking, that, for it, he lost his birth-right and blessing. ch. 49. 4. The first-born is not always the best, nor the most promising. This was Reuben's sin, but it was Jacob's affliction; and what a sore affliction it was, is intimated by a little computation, and Israel heard; v. 26. No amount is said, that is enough; he heard it with the utmost grief and shame, horror and displeasure. Reuben thought to conceal it, that his father should never hear of it; but those that promise themselves secrecy in sin, are generally disappointed; a bird of the air carries the voice.

3. A complete list of the sons of Jacob, now that Benjamin, the youngest was born. This is the first time we have the names of these heads of the twelve tribes together; afterward, we find them very often spoken of and enumerated, even to the end of the Bible, Rev. 7. 4.—21. 12.

4. The visit which Jacob made to his father Isaac at Hebron. We may suppose he had visited him before, since his return, for he sore longed after his father's house, but never, him now, brought his family to settle with him, or near him, v. 27. Probably, he did this now upon the death of Rebekah, by which Isaac was left solitary, and not disposed to marry again.

5. The age and death of Isaac are here recorded, though it appears, by computation, that he died not till many years after Joseph was sold into Egypt, and much about the time that he was preferred there. Isaac, a mild quiet man, lived the longest of all the patriarchs, for he was 180 years old; Abraham was but 175. Isaac lived about 40 years after he had made his will, ch. 27. 2. We shall not die an hour the sooner, but abundantly the better, for our timely setting of our heart and house in order. Particular notice is taken of the unblemished agreement of Esau and Jacob, in solemnizing their father's farewell to them (v. 3.) how wonderfully God had changed Esau's mind, since he vowed his brother's murder, immediately after his father's death, ch. 27. 41. Note, God has many ways of preventing bad men from doing the mischief they intended; he can either tie their hands, or turn their hearts.

CHAP. XXXVI.

In this chapter, we have an account of the posterity of Esau, who, from him, were called Edomites; that Esau, who sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, and was not loved of God as Jacob was. Here is a brief register kept of his family for some generations. 1. Because he was the father of a great people, there is put in his name. 2. Because the Edomites were neighbours to Israel, and their genealogy would be of use to give light to the following stories of what passed between them. 3. It is to show the performance of the promise of Abraham, that he should be the father of many nations, and of that answer which Rebekah had from the oracle she consulted. Two nations are in thy womb; and of the blessing of Isaac, The darter shall be more prosperous than thou. Which explains here, 1. Esau's wives, v. 1. 5. 11. His remove to Mount Seir, v. 6. 8. III. The names of his sons, v. 9. 14. IV. The dukes which descended of his sons, v. 15. 19. V. The posterity of the dukes of these, v. 30. 31. VI. The kings and dukes of Edom, v. 31. 43. Little more is recorded than their names, because of the history of those that were out of the church, (though perhaps it might have been serviceable in politics,) yet would have been but little use in divinity. It is in the church that the memorable instances are found of special grace, and special providences; for that is the enclosure, the rest is common. This chapter is abridged. 1 Chron. 1. 35, &c.

1. NOW are the generations of Esau, who is Edom. 2. Esau took his wives of the daughters of Canaan; Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Abilam the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; 3. And Bashemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth. 4. And Adah bare to Esau, Eliphaz; and Bashemath bare Reuel. 5. And Abilamah bare Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah; these are the sons of Esau, which were born unto him in the land of Canaan. 6. And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan; and went into the country, from the face of his brother Jacob. 7. For their riches were more than that they might dwell together; and the land wherein they were strangers, could not bear them, because of their cattle. 8. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir; Esau is Edom.

Observe here,

1. Concerning Esau himself, v. 1. He is called Edom, (and again, v. 8.) that name by which he perpetuated the remembrance of the foolish bargain he made, when he sold his birth-right for that red, that red patch. The very mention of that name is enough to intimate the reason why his family is turned off with such a short account. Note, If men do a wrong thing, they must thank themselves, when it is, long afterward, remembered against them to their reproach.

2. Concerning his wives, and the children they bare him in the land of Canaan. He had three wives, and, by them all, but five sons; many a one has more by one wife. God in his providence often disapproves those who take indirect courses to build up a family; yet here the promise prevailed, and Esau's family was built up.

3. Concerning his remove to mount Seir, which was the country God had given him for a possession, when he reserved Canaan for the seed of Jacob. God owns it, long afterward, I gave to Esau mount Seir, (Deut. 2. 5. Josh. 24. 4.) which was the reason why the Edomites must not be disturbed in their possession. These that have not a right by promise, such as Jacob had, to Canaan, may have a very good title by providence, to their estates, so that Esau had to mount Seir. Esau had begun to settle among his wives' relations, in Seir; before Jacob came from Padan-aram, ch. 32. 3. Isaac, it is likely, had sent him thither, (as Abraham in his lifetime had sent the sons of the concubines from Isaac his son into the east-country, ch. 25. 6.) that Jacob might have the clearer way made for him in the possession of the promised land; but probably, during the life of Isaac, Esau had still some effects remaining in Canaan. But, after his death, he wholly withdrew to mount Seir, took with him what came to his share of his father's personal estate, and left Canaan to Jacob; not only because he had the promise of it, but because he saw that if they should both continue to thrive as they had begun, there would not be room for both.
9. And these are the generations of Esau the father of the Edomites in mount Seir.

10. These are the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, Reuel the son of Bashemath the wife of Esau. 11. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, and Gatam, and Kenaz. 12. And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek; these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife. 13. And these are the sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah: these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. 14. And these were the sons of Aholibamah, the daughter of Anah the daughter of Zibeon, Esau's wife: and she bare to Esau Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 15. These were dukes of the sons of Esau: the first born son of Esau; duke Teman, duke Omar, duke Zepho, duke Kenaz, 16. Duke Korah, duke Gatam, and duke Amalek: these were the dukes that came of Eliphaz in the land of Edom; these were the sons of Adah. 17. And these are the sons of Reuel Esau's son; duke Nahath, duke Zerah, duke Shammah, duke Mizzah: these were the dukes that came of Reuel in the land of Edom; these were the sons of Bashemath Esau's wife. 18. And these are the sons of Aholibamah Esau's wife; duke Jeush, duke Jaalam, duke Korah: these were the dukes that came of Aholibamah the daughter of Anah Esau's wife. 19. These are the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these are their dukes.

Observe here, 1. That only the names of Esau's sons and grandsons are recorded; only their names, not their history; for it is the church that Moses preserves the records of, not the record of those that were without. The elders only that lived by faith, obtained a good report. It is Zion that produces the men of renown, not Seir, Ps. 87. 5. Nor does the genealogy go any farther than the third and fourth generation; the very names of all after are buried in oblivion; it is only the pedigree of the Israelites, who were to be the heirs of Canaan, and of whom were to come the promised Seed, and the holy Seed, that is, the church, that is, the word, written out to any length, as far as there was occasion for it; even of all the tribes, till Canaan was divided among them, and of the royal line, till the first came. 2. That these sons and grandsons of Esau are called dukes, v. 15, 19. Probably, they were military commanders, dukes, or captains, that had soldiers under them; for Esau and his family lived by the sword, ch. 27. 40. Note, Titles of honour have been more ancient, out of the church, than in it. Esau's sons were dukes, when Jacob's sons were but plain shepherds, ch. 47. 3. This is not a reason why such titles should not be used among Christians; but it is a reason why men should not overvalue themselves, or others, for the sake of them. There is an honour that comes from God, and a name in his house that is infinitely more valuable. Edomites may be dukes with men, but Israelites indeed are made to our God kings and priests. 3. We may suppose those dukes had numerous families of children and servants, that were all their dukedom. God promised to multiply Jacob, and to enrich him; yet Esau increases, and is enriched first. Note, It is no new thing for the men of this world to be full of children, and to have their bodies filled with hid treasure, Ps. 17. 14. God's promise to Jacob began to work late, but the effect of it remained longer, and it had its complete accomplishment in the spiritual Israel.

20. These are the sons of Seir the Horite, who inhabited the land; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah. 21. And Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan: these are the dukes of the Horites, the children of Seir in the land of Edom. 22. And the children of Lotan were Hori and Hemam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. 23. And the children of Shobal were these; Alvan, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. 24. And these are the children of Zibeon; both Ajah, and Anah; this was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness, as he fed the asses of Zibeon his father. 25. And the children of Anah were these; Dishon, and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah. 26. And these are the children of Dishon; Hemdan, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 27. The children of Ezer were these; Bilhan, and Zaavan, and Achan. 28. The children of Dishan, are these; Uz, and Haran. 29. These are the dukes that came of the Horites; duke Lotan, duke Shobal, duke Zibeon, duke Anah, 30 Duke Dishon, duke Ezer, duke Dishan: these are the dukes that came of Hor, among their dukes in the land of Seir.

In the midst of this genealogy of the Edomites, here is inserted the genealogy of the Horites, those Canaanites, or Hittites, (compare ch. 26. 31,) that were the natives of mount Seir. Mention is made of them, (ch. 14. 6.) and of their interest in mount Seir, before the Edomites took possession of it, Deut. 2. 13, 22. This comes in here, not only to give light to the story, but to be a standing reflection upon the Edomites for intermarrying with them, by which, it is probable, they learned their way, and corrupted themselves. Esau having sold his birth-right, and lost his blessing, and entered into alliance with the Hittites, his posterity and the sons of Seir are here reckoned together. Note, Those that treacherously desert God's church, are justly numbered with those that were never in it; and state Edomites stand on the same ground, as accursed Horites. Particular notice is taken of one Anah who fed the asses of Zibeon his father, (v. 24.) and yet is called duke Anah, v. 29. Note, Those that expect to rise high, should begin low. An honourable descent should not keep men from
an honest employment, or a mean employment under any man's preferment. This Anah was not only industrious in his business, but ingenuous too, and successful; for he found mutes, or, (as some read it,) waters, hot-baths, in the wilderness. Those that are diligent in their business, sometimes find more advantages than they expected.

31. And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel. 32. And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom: and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 33. And Bela died, and Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead. 34. And Jobab died, and Husham of the land of Temani reigned in his stead. 35. And Husham died, and Hadad the son of Bedad, who smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. 36. And Hadad died, and Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 37. And Samlah died, and Saul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead. 38. And Saul died, and Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his stead. 39. And Baal-hanan the son of Achbor died, and Hadar reigned in his stead; and the name of his city was Pau: and his wife's name was Mehetabal, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezalab. 40. And these are the names of the dukes that came of Esau, according to their families, after their places, by their names; duke Timnah, duke Aljah, duke Jeteth, 41. Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon, 42. Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar, 43. Duke Magdiel, duke Iram: these be the dukes of Edom, according to their habitations in the land of their possession: he is Esau the father of the Edomites.

By degrees, it seems, the Edomites wormed out the Horites, and got full possession of the country, and had a government of their own. 1. They were ruled by kings who governed the whole country, and seem to have come to the throne by election, and not by lineal descent; so Bishop Patrick observes. These kings reigned in Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel, that is, before Moses's time, for he was king in Jeshurun, v. 3. God had lately promised Jacob, that kings should come out of his loins, (ch. 35. 11.) yet Esau's blood becomes royal long before any of Jacob's did. Note, In external prosperity and honor, the children of the covenant are often cast behind, and those that are out of covenant get the start. The probable cause of this was, the land being short, soon ripe, and as soon rotten: while the productions of the promise, though they are slow, are sure and lasting; at the end it shall speak, and not lie. We may suppose it a great trial to the faith of God's Israel, to hear of the pomp and power of the kings of Edom, while they were bond-slaves in Egypt; but these that look for great things from God, must be content to wait for them; God's time is the best time. 2. They were afterward governed by dukes, again here named, who, I suppose, ruled all at the same time in several places in the country. Either they set up this form of government in conformity to the Horites, who had used it, (v. 29.) or God's providence reduced them to it, as some conjecture, to correct them for their unkindness to Jacob, in refusing him a passage through their country, Nu. 20. 18. Note, When power is abused, it is just with God to weaken it, by turning it into divers channels. For the transgression of a land, many are the princes thereof. Sin brought Edom from kings to dukes, from crowns to corners. We read of the dukes of Edom, (Exod. 15. 15.) yet, long afterward, of their kings again.

Lastly, Observe, Mount Seir is called the land of their possession, v. 43. While the Israelites dwelt in the house of bondage, and their Canaan was only the land of promise, the Edomites dwelt in their own habitations, and Seir was in their possession. Note, The children of this world have their all in hand, and nothing in hope, (Luke 16. 25.) while the children of God have all their hope, and every thing in hand. But, all things considered, it is better to have Canaan in promise, than mount Seir in possession.

CHAP. XXXVII.

At this chapter, begins the story of Joseph, who, from hence, in every chapter (but one) to the end of this book, makes the greatest figure. He was Jacob's eldest son by his beloved Rachel. v. 1. She and her father's daughter, whose name were, of a mother that had been long barren. His story is so remarkably divided between his humiliation and his exaltation, that we cannot avoid seeing something of Christ in him, who was first humbled and then exalted, and, in many instances, so as to answer the type of Joseph. It also shows the lot of Christians, who must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom. In this chapter we have, I. The birth of Joseph, v. 1. 2. The mischiefs designed against him. They hated him, 1. Because he informed his father of their wickedness, v. 2. 2. Because his father loved him, v. 3. 3. Because he dreamed of his dominion over them, v. 5. 4. The mischiefs his brethren designed and did to him. 1. The kind visit he made them, gave an opportunity, v. 12. 2. They designed to slay him, but determined to starve him, v. 18. 3. They changed their purpose, and sold him for a slave, v. 24. 4. They made their father believe that he was torn in pieces, v. 29. 5. He was sold into Egypt to Potiphar, v. 56. And all this was working together for good.

1. And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. 2. These are the generations of Jacob, Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. 3. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. 4. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

Moses has no more to say of the Edomites, unless as they happen to fall in Israel's way; but now applies himself closely to the story of Jacob's family. These are the generations of Jacob. His is not a bare barren genealogy as that of Esau, (ch. 36. 1.) but a memorable and useful history. Here is, 1. Jacob a sojourner with his father Isaac, who was yet living, v. 1. We shall never be at home, till we come to heaven. 2. Joseph, a shepherd, feeding the flock with his brethren, v. 2. Though he was his
father's darling, yet he was not bred up in idleness or delicacy. Those do not truly love their children, that do not inure them to business, and labour and mortification. The tending of children is with good reason commonly called the spoiling of them. Those that are trained up to do nothing, are likely to be good for nothing. 3. Joseph beloved by his father, partly for his dear mother's sake that was dead, and partly for his own sake, because he was the greatest comfort of his old age; probably, he waited on him, and was more observant of him than the rest of his sons; he was the son of the ancient, so some; that is, when he was a child, he was as grave and discreet as if he had been an old man: a child, but not childish. Jacob proclaimed his affection to him by dressing him finer than the rest of his children; he made him a coat of divers colours, which, probably, was significant of further honours intended him. Note, Though those children are happy, that have in them which justly recommends them to their parents' particular love; yet it is the prudence of parents not to make a difference between one child and another; unless there be a great and manifest cause, as, his excellency for his merit, or his usefulness or subtility; paternal government must be impartial, and managed with a steady hand. 4. Joseph hated by his brethren, (1.) Because his father loved him; when parents make a difference, children soon take notice of it, and it often occasions feuds and quarrels in families. (2.) Because he brought to his father their evil report. Jacob's sons did that, when they were iron under his eye, which they durst not have done, if they had been at home with him; but Joseph gave his father an account of their hasty, that he might reprove and restrain them; not as a malicious tale bearer, to sow discord, but as a faithful brother, who, when he durst not admonish them himself, represented their faults to one that had authority to admonish them. Note, [1.] It is common for the friendly monitor to be looked upon as enemies. They that hate to be reformed, hate those that would reform them, Prov. 9, 8. [2.] It is common for those that are beloved of God, to be hated by the world; whom heaven blesses, hell curses; those whom God speaks comfortably to, wicked men will not speak peaceably to. It is said here of Joseph, the lad was with the sons of Bilhah; some read it, and he was servant to them, they made him their drudge. 5. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. 6. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: 7. For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. 8. And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. 9. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more: and, behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars, made obeisance to me. 10. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shalt I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? 11. And his brethren covet him; but his father observed the saying. Here, 1. Joseph relates the prophetic dreams he had, v. 7, 8, 10. Though he was now a young man, (about seventeen years old,) yet he was pious and devout, and well-inclined, and this fitted him for God's gracious discoveries of himself to him. Joseph had a great deal of trouble before him, and therefore God gave him betimes this prospect of his advancement, to support and comfort him under the long and grievous troubles with which he was to be exercised. Thus Christ had a joy set before him, and was exalted to the right hand of the Father, that he might go forward, when the event answered to the prediction. 2. His brethren take it very ill, and are more and more enraged against him, (v. 8.) Shalt thou indeed reign over us? See here, (1.) How truly they interpreted his dream, that he should reign over them. They were the expositors of his dream, who were enemies to the accomplishment of it, as in Gideon's story: (Judg. 7, 13, 14.) they perceived that he spake of them, Matt. 21, 45. The event exactly answered to this interpretation, ch. 42, 6, 7c. (2.) How scornfully they resented it; Shall thou, that art but one, reign over us, that art a man? Then, that art the youngest, over as that are older. Note, The reign and dominion of Jesus Christ, our Joseph, have been, and are, striven against, by a carnal and unbelieving world, who cannot endure to think that this man should reign over them. The dominion also of the upright, in the morning of the resurrection, is thought of with the utmost disdain. 3. His father gives him a gentle rebuke for it, yet observes his sayings, v. 10, 11. Probably, he checked him for it, to lessen the offence which his brethren would be apt to take at it, yet he took notice of it more than he seemed to do; he insinuated that it was but an idle dream, because his mother was brought in, who had been dead some time since; whereas the sun, moon, and eleven stars, signify no more than the whole family that should have a peculiar honour paid them, and be made subject to him. Note, The faith of God's people in God's promises is often sorely shaken by their misunderstanding of the promises, and then suggesting the impossibilities that attend the performance. But God is doing his own work, and will do it, whether we understand him aright or no. Jacob, like Mary, (Luke 2, 51.) kept these sayings in his heart, and, to doubt, remembered them long afterward, when the event answered to the prediction.
12. And his brethren went to feed their
father's flock in Shechem. 13. And Israel
said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed
the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will
send thee unto them. And he said to him,
Here am I. 14. And he said to him, Go, I
pray thee, see whether it be well with thy
brethren, and well with the flocks; and
bring me word again. So he sent him out
of the vale of Hebron, and he came to She-
chem. 15. And a certain man found him,
and, behold, he was wandering in the field:
and the man asked him, saying, What seek
est thou? 16. And he said, I seek my bre-
thren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed
their flocks. 17. And the man said, They
are departed hence; for I heard them say,
Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went
after his brethren, and found them in Do-
than. 18. And when they saw him afar
off, even before he came near unto them,
they conspired against him to slay him. 19.
And they said one to another, Behold, this
dreamer cometh. 20. Come now therefore,
and let us slay him, and cast him into this pit;
and we will say, Some evil beast hath
devoured him; and we shall see what
will become of his dreams. 21. And Reu-
ben heard it, and he delivered him out of
their hands; and said, Let us not kill him.
22. And Reuben said unto them, Shed no
blood, but cast him into this pit that is in
the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that
he might rid him out of their hands, to de-
lever him to his father again.

Here is,
I. The kind visit which Joseph, in obedience to
his father's command, made to his brethren, who
were feeding the flock at Shechem. 20. It
seems to be their design that they went thither on purpose,
expecting that Joseph would be sent to see them,
and that then they should have an opportunity to
do him a mischief. However, Joseph and his father
had both of them more of the innocence of the dove
than of the wisdom of the serpent; else he had never
come thus into the hands of those that hated him:
but God designed it all for good. See in Jo-
seph's case, 1. Of dutifulness to his father;
though he was his father's darling, yet he was
made, and was willing to be, his father's servant. How
readily does he wait his father's orders! Here am I,
v. 13. Note, Those children that are best
loved by their parents, should be most obedient to
their parents; and then their love is well-bestowed,
and well-retumed. 2. Of kindness to his brethren,
though he knew they hated him, and envied him,
yet he made no objections against his father's com-
mands, either from the distance of the place, or
the danger of the journey, but cheerfully embraced
the opportunity of showing his respect to his bre-
thren. Note, It is a very good lesson, though it is
hardly learnt, and rarely practised, to love those that
hate us: if our relations do not their duty to us, yet
we must not be wanting in our duty to them. This
is thank-worthy, Joseph was sent by his father to
Shechem, to see whether his brethren were well
there, and whether the country had not risen upon
them, and destroyed them, in revenge of their bar-
barous murder of the Shechemites, some years be-
fore. But Joseph, not finding them there, went to
Dothan, which showed that he undertook this jour-
ney, not only in obedience to his father, (for then
he might have returned, when he missed them at
Shechem,) but also doing what his father bid him,) but out of love to his brethren, and that he would
sought diligently, till he found them. Thus let
brotherly love continue, and let us give proofs of it.
II. The bloody and malicious plot of his brethren ag-
inst him, who rendered good for evil, and, for
his love, were his adversaries. Observe, 1. How
deliberate they were in the contrivance of this mis-
chief; when they saw him afar off, they conspired
against his life. 2. They were fully resolved to
have a sudden provocation, that they thought to slay him,
but from malice prepossession, and in cold blood. Note,
Whosoever hath his brother, is a murderer; for
he will be one, if he have an opportunity, 1 John,
3. 15. Malice is a most mischiefous thing, and is
in danger of making bloody work where it is bar-
coard and indulged. The more there is of a pro-
oculty, and a sudden determination, the more
likely it is to do evil, but worse to devise it. 2. How
cruel they were in their design; nothing less than
his blood would satisfy them, Come, and let us slay
him, v. 20. Note, The old enmity hunts for the
precious life. They are the blood-thirsty, that
hate the upright, (Prov. 29. 10,) and it is the blood
of the saints that the harlot is thine with. 3. How
secretly they reproached him for his dreams; (v. 19.) This dreamer cometh, and (v. 20.) He will
see what will become of his dreams. This shows
what it was that fretted and enraged them; they
could not endure to think of doing obedience to him,
that was it which they were plotting to prevent by
the murder of him. Note, Men that fret and rage
at God's counsels, are impiously aiming to defeat
them; but they imagine a vain thing, Ps. 2. 1. 3.
God's counsels will stand. 4. How they agreed to
keep one another's counsel, and to cover the mur-
der with a lie; We will say some evil beast hath de-
verted him; whereas they were worse than the
most evil beasts, being now engaged in consultation
to devour him; for evil beasts prey not on those
of their own kind, but these were tearing a piece of
themselves.
III. Reuben's project to deliver him, v. 21, 22.
Note, God can raise up friends for his people, even
among their enemies; for he has all hearts in his
hands. Reuben, of all the brothers, had most rea-
son to be jealous of Joseph, for he was the first-
born, and so, entitled to those distinguishing favours
which Jacob was conferring on Joseph; yet he
proves his best friend. Reuben's temper seems to
have been more soft andlenient, which had be-
trayed him to the sin of meekness, to indulge the
temper of the two next brothers, Simeon and Levi,
which betrayed them to the sin of murder,
a sin which Reuben startled at the thought of.
Note, Our natural constitution should be guarded
against these sins to which it is most incamable,
and improved (as Reuben's here) against those sins to
have been made soft and lenient, which had been
made a proposal which they thought would effectually
put an end to their intention of destroying Joseph, and yet which
he designed should answer his intention of rescuing Jo-
seph out of their hands, and restoring him to his
father, probably, hoping thereby to recover his
father's favour, which he had lately lost; but God
overruled all to serve his own purpose of making
Joseph an instrument to save much people alive.
Joseph was here a type of Christ; though he was
the beloved Son of his Father, and hated by a
wicked world, yet the Father sent him out of his
23. And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they strife Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; 2. And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 2. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. 2. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? 2. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him: for he is our brother, and our flesh. And his brethren were content. 2. Then there passed by Midianites merchants; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt. 2. And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. 2. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go? We have here the execution of their plot against Joseph.

1. They strip him: each strivings to seize the envied coat of many colours, v. 23. Thus, in imagination, they degraded him from the birth-right, which perhaps this was the badge of his brood, affronting their father, and making themselves sport, while they insulted over him, "Now, Joseph, where is the fine coat?" Thus our Lord Jesus was stript of his seamless coat, and thus his suffering saints have first been industriously divested of their privileges and honours, and then made the off-scouring of all things.

II. They went about to starve him; throwing him into a dry pit, to perish there with hunger and cold, so cruel were their tender mercies, v. 24. Note, When envy reigns, pity is banished, and humanity itself is forgotten, Prov. 27. 4. So full of deadly poison is malice, that the more barbarous any thing is, the more grateful it is. Now Joseph beggad for his life, in the anguish of his soul, (ch. 42. 15.) contrived by all unimaginable endeavours, that they would be content with his coat, and spare his life: he pleads innocence, relation, affection, submission; he weeps, and makes supplication, but all in vain: Reuben only relents and intercedes for him, ch. 42. 22. But he cannot prevail to save Joseph from the horrible pit, in which they resolve he shall die by degrees, and he buried alive. Is this he to whom his brethren must do obeisance? Note, God's providences often seem to contradict his purposes, even then when they are serving them, and working at a distance toward the accomplishment of them.

11. They slighted him when he was in distress, and were not grieved for the afflicion of Joseph; for when he was pinning away in the pit, bemoaning his own misery, and with a languishing cry calling to them, they thought, let him fall down to eat bread, v. 23. They felt no remorse of conscience for the sin; if they had, it would have spoiled their appetite for their meat, and the relish of it. Note, A great force put upon conscience, commonly stupifies it, and, for the time, deprives it both of sense and speech. Darings are secure ones: but the consciences of Joseph's brethren, though asleep, yet perceived enough to lead them to murder, and not to care for Joseph, Gen. 37. 20. They were now pleased to think how they were freed from the fear of their brother's dominion over them, and that on the contrary, they had turned the wheel upon him. They made merry over him, as the persecutors over the two witnesses that had tormented them, Rev. 11. 10. Note Those that oppose God's counsels, may possibly prevail so far as to think they have gained their point and yet be deceived.

IV. They sold him: a caravan of merchants very opportunist passed by; (Providence so ordering it;) and Judah made the motion, that they should sell Joseph to them, to be carried far enough off into Egypt, where in all probability, he would be lost and never heard of more. 1. Judah moved it in compassion to Joseph, (v. 26.) "what profit is it, if we slay our brother? It will be less guilt if we will sell him." Note, When we are tempted to sin we should consider the impenitentness of it. It is what there is nothing to be got by. 2. They acquiesced in it, because they thought that if he were sold for a slave, he would never be a lord, if sold into Egypt would never be their lord; yet all this was working towards it. Note, The wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath will rest in, Ps. 76. 10. Joseph's brethren were wonderfully restrained from murdering him, and their selling him as wonderfully turned to God's praise: Joseph was sold by the contrivance of Judah, for twenty pieces of silver, so was our Lord Jesus for thirty, and by one of the same name too, Judas.

Reuben (it seems) was gone away from his brethren, when they sold Joseph, intending to come to him, and rescue him from the hazard of the pit, and return him safe to his father; this was a kind project, but if it had taken effect, what had become of God's purpose concerning his preferment in Egypt? Note, There are many devices in man's heart, many devices of the enemies of God's people to destroy them, and of their friends to help them, which perhaps are both disappointed, as these here, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand. Reuben thought himself undone, because the child was sold; I, whither shall I go? v. 30. He being the eldest; his father would expect from him an account of him; but it proved that they had all been undone, if he had not been sold.

31. And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood: 32. And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no. 33. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat: an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. 34. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. 35. And all his son
and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him. 36. And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.

Joseph would soon be missed, great inquiry would be made for him, and therefore his brethren have a further design, to make the world believe that Joseph was torn in pieces by a wild beast; and this they did.

I. To cleave themselves, that they might not be suspected to have done him any mischief. Note, We have all learned of Adam to cover our transgressions, Job. 31. 33. When the Devil has taught men to commit one sin, he then teaches them to conceal it with another; theft and murder, with lying and perjury; but he that covers his sin, shall not prosper long. Joseph's brethren kept their own and another's counsel for some time, but their villainy came to light at last, and it is here published to the world, and the remembrance of it transmitted to every age.

II. To cleave the good father; it seems designed by them on purpose to be avenged upon him for his distinguishing love of Joseph: it was contrived on purpose to create the utmost vexation to him; they sent him Joseph's coat of many colours, with one colour more than it had had, a bloody colour, v. 32. They pretend they had found it in the fields, and Jacob himself must be sorrowfully asked, Is this thy son's coat? Now the badge of his honour is the discovery of his fate; and it is rashly inferred from the bloody coat, that Joseph, without doubt, is rent in pieces. Love is always apt to fear the worst concerning the person loved; there is a love that casteth out fear, but that is a perfect love. Now let those who know the heart of a parent, suppose the agonies of poor Jacob, and put their souls into his soul's stead. How strongly does he represent to himself the dreadful idea of Joseph's misery! Sleep ing or waking, he imagines he sees the wild beasts setting upon Joseph; thinks he hears his piteous shrieks, when the lion roared against him; makes himself tremble and grow chill, many a time, when he fancies how the beasts sucked his blood, tore him limb from limb, and left no remains of him, but the coat of many colours, to carry the tidings. And, no doubt, it added no little to the grief of his heart, to know his Joseph had vanished, and sending him all alone, on this dangerous journey, which proved so fatal to him. This cuts him to the heart, and he is ready to look upon himself as an accessory to the death of his son.

Now, 1. Endeavours were used to comfort him; his sons belyingly pretended to do it, (v. 35.) but miserable hypocritical comforters were they all. Had they loved him, and desired to comfort him, they might easily have done it, by telling him the truth, "Joseph is alive, he is indeed sold into Egypt, but it will be an easy thing to send thither and ransom him." This would have loosed his sackcloth, and girded him with gladness presently. I wonder their countenances did not betray their guilt, and with what face they could pretend to condole with Jacob in his distress; Joseph, when they knew he was alive! Note, To blind the heart is strangely harden ed by the deceitfulness of sin.

But, 2. It was all in vain; Jacob refused to be comforted, v. 35. He was an obstinate mourner, resolved to go down to the grave mourning: it was not a sudden transport of passion, like that of David, Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son! But, like Job, he hardened himself in sorrow.

Note, 1. Great affection to any creature does but prepare for so much the greater affliction, when it is either impaired, lost, or taken away. 2. Ordnate love commonly ends in immoderate grief; as much as the sway of the pendulum throws one way, so much it will throw the other way. (2.) Those consult neither the comfort of their souls, nor the credit of their religion, that are determined to sorrow, upon any occasion whatever; we must ever aim to have our hearts in such a condition as that we may say, we will not be startled into grief, because we know not what good Providence may yet reserve for us, and it is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to Providence. (3.) We often perplex ourselves with imaginary troubles; we fancy things worse than they are, and then afflict ourselves more than we need; sometimes there is no cause to cry, but we cry, and yet, to undo us, it is good to hope the best.

Lastly, The Ishmaelites and Midianites having bought Joseph, only to make their markets of him, here we have him sold again. (with gain enough to the merchants, no doubt,) to Potiphar, v. 36. Jacob was lamenting the loss of his life; had he known all, he would have lamented, though not so passionately, the loss of his prosperity. Shall Jacob's freedom be sold for what? Shall the livery of an Egyptian lord, and all the marks of servitude? How soon was the land of Egypt made a house of bondage to the seed of Jacob! Note, It is the wisdom of parents not to bring up their children too delicately, because they know not what hardships and mortifications Providence may reduce them to before they die. Jacob little thought that this happened, but Joseph should be thus bought and sold for a servant.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter gives us an account of Judah and his family, and such an account it is, that one would wonder that, of all Jacob's sons, our Lord should spring out of Judah, Heb. 7. 4. If we were to form a character of him by this story here, we should not say, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise, ch. 48. 8. But God will show that his choice is of grace, and not of merit, and that Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief; and is not ashamed, upon their repentance, to be allied to them. Also, that the worth and worthiness of Jesus Christ are personal, of himself, and not derived from his ancestors; humbling himself to be made in the likeness of his brethren, he made himself of no reputation, taking nothing, and sent himself from among men to provide for the present state of mankind, and to suffer, and be rewarded, and to lay down his life for the sins of his people, and be raised from the dead, and to rise again for the justification of his people, and to perfect that which Jehovah had purposed concerning the seed of Abraham, Heb. 10. 5-10. But God's care of his people is such as is suited to this happy issue, and the untimely death of his two eldest sons, v. 1-11. II. Judah's incest with his daughter-in-law Tamar, without his knowing it, v. 12-23. III. His condition, when it was discovered, v. 24-26. IV. The birth of his twin sons, in whom his family was built up, v. 27-30.

1. AND it came to pass at that time, that Judah went down from his brethren, and turned in to a certain Canaanite, whose name was Hirah. 2. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shua; and he took her, and went in unto her. And she conceived, and bare a son; and he called his name Er. 4. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she called his name Onan. 5. And she yet again conceived, and bare a son; and called his name Sheelah; and he was at Chezib, when she bare him. 6. And Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, whose name was Tamar. 7. And
Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord slew him. 3. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother's wife, and marry her; and raise up seed to thy brother. 9. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. 10. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore he slew him also. 11. Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter-in-law, remain a widow at thy father's house, till Sheelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, and Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

Here is,

I. Judah's foolish friendship with a Canaanite-man; he went down from his brethren, and withdrew for a time from their society, and his father's family, and got to be intimately acquainted with one Hirah, an Adullamite, ver. 1. It is computed that he was not much above fifteen or sixteen years of age, an easy prey to the tempter. Note, When young people that have been well educated, begin to change their company, they will soon change their manners and methods of education. He goes that go down from their brethren, that despise and forsake the society of the seed of Israel, and pick up Canaanites for their companions, are going down the hill slope. It is of great consequence to young people to choose proper associates; for these they will imitate, study to recommend themselves to, and by their opinion of them, value themselves: an error in this choice's often fatal.

II. His foolish marriage with a Canaanite-woman: a match made, not by his father, who, it should seem was not consulted, but by his new friend Hirah, ver. 2. Many have been drawn into marriages, scandals, and pernicious to themselves and their families, by keeping bad company, and growing familiar with bad people: one wicked league entangles men in another. Let young people be admonished by this, to take their good part, and separate from bad company, and to be advised by them, and not by flatterers, who wheedle them to make a prey of them.

III. His children by this Canaanite, and his disposal of them. Three sons he had by her, Er, Onan, and Sheelah. It is probable that she embraced the worship of the God of Israel, at least in profession, but, for want that appears, there was little of the fear of God in the family. Judah married twice, one young, and very rashly; he also married his sons too young, when they had neither wit nor grace to govern themselves, and the consequences were very bad.

1. His first-born, Er, was notoriously wicked, he was so in the sight of the Lord, in defiance of God and his law; if he perhaps was not wicked in the sight of the world, he was so in the sight of God, and his children's. What became of him? Why God cut him off presently? (ver. 7.) The Lord slew him. Note, Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners, and takes them away in his wrath, when they are just setting out in a wicked course of life.

2. The next son, Onan, was according to the ancient usage, married to the widow, to preserve the name of his deceased brother that died childless. Though God had taken away his life for his wickedness, yet they were solicitous to preserve his memory, and their disappointment therein, through Onan's sin, was a further punishment of his wickedness. The custom of marrying the brother's widow was afterward made one of the laws of Moses, Deut. 25. 5. Onan, though he consented to marry the widow, yet, to the great abuse of his own soul, of his father's, of that brother's memory, and of the memory of his brother that was gone, he was unwilling to raise up seed unto his brother, as he was in duty bound. This was so much the worse, because the Messiah was to descend from Judah, and had he not been guilty of this wickedness, he might have had the honour of being one of his ancestors. Note, Those who first dishonour the body and defile it, are very displeasing to God, and evidence of vile affections.

3. Sheelah, the third son, was reserved for the widow, (ver. 11.) yet with a design that he should not marry so young as his brothers had done, lest he die also. Some think that Judah never intended to marry Sheelah to Tamar, but unjustly suspected her to have been the death of her two former husbands, (whereas it was their own wickedness that slew them,) and then sent her to her father's house, with a charge to remain a widow. If so, it was an inexculcable piece of prevarication that he was guilty of; however, Tamar acquiesced for the present, and waited the issue.

12. And in process of time the daughter of Shua Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up into his sheeprunners to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. 13. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold, thy father-in-law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. 14. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Sheelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. 15. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot, because she had covered her face. 16. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter-in-law.) And she said, What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me? 17. And he said, I will send thee a kid from the flock. And she said, Well thou give me a pledge, till thou send it? 18. And he said, What pledge shall I give thee? And she said, Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that is in thine hand. And he gave it her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. 19. And she arose, and went away, and laid by her vail from her, and put on the ornaments of her widowhood. 20. And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he found her not. 21. Then he asked the men of that place, saying, Where is the harlot, that was openly by the way-side? And they said, There
was no harlot in this place. 22. And he returned to Judah, and said, I cannot find her; and also the men of the place said, that there was no harlot in this place. 23. And Judah said, Let her take it to her, lest we be shamed: behold, I sent this kid, and thou hast not found her.

It is a very ill-favoured story that is here told concerning Judah; one would not have suspected such folly in Israel. Judah had buried his wife; and widowers have need to stand upon their guard with the utmost caution and resolution against all fleshly lusts. He was unjust to his daughter-in-law, either through negligence or design, in not giving her his surviving son, and this exposed her to temptation.

I. Tamar wickedly prostituted herself as a harlot to Judah, that if the sea might not, the father might, raise up seed to the deceased. Some excuse this, by suggesting that though she was a Canaanite, yet she had embraced the true religion, and believed the promise made to Abraham and his seed, particularly that of the Messiah, who was to descend from the loins of Judah, and that she was therefore thus enabled to desire to have a child by one of that family. Therefore, she purposed to stand firm for the honour, of being the mother of the Messiah. And if this was indeed her desire, it had its success; she is one of the four women particularly named in the genealogy of Christ, Matt. 1. 3. Her sinful practice was pardoned, and her good intention was accepted; which magnifies the grace of God, but will by no means be admitted to justify or encourage the like. Bishop Patrick thinks it probable that she hoped Shelah, who was by right her husband, might have come along with his father, and that he might have been allured to her embraces. There was a great deal of plot and contrivance in Tamar's sin. 1. She took an opportunity for it, when Judah had a time of mirth and feasting with his sheep-shearers. Note, Times of jollity often prove times of temptation, particularly to the sin of uncleanness; when men are fed to the full, the reins are apt to be let loose. 2. She expressed herself as a harlot in an open place, v. 14. Those that are, and would be clausè, must be keepers at home, Tit. 2. 5. It should seem, it was the custom of harlots, in those times, to cover their faces, that though they were not ashamed, yet they might seem to be so. The sin of uncleanness did not then go so bare-faced at the town.

II. Judah was taken in the snare, and though it was ignobly that he was guilty of incest with his daughter-in-law, (not knowing who she was,) yet he was wilfully guilty of fornication; whoever she was, he knew she was not his wife, and therefore not to be touched: nor was she sin capable, in the least, of such a charitable excuse as some make for Tamar's incest. Any perverted action on the part of the perverser person is so odious that the confession might possibly be good. Observe, 1. Judah's sin began in the eye; (v. 15.) he saw her. Note, Those have eyes and hearts full of adultery, (as it is 2 Pet. 2. 14.) that catch at every bate that presents itself to them, and are as tinder to every spark. We have need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to turn them from beholding vanity, lest the eye in lusts be the snare thereof. It should be noted, that the hire of a harlot (which nothing is more infamous) was demanded, offered, and accepted; a kid from the flock, a greatly price at which her chastity and honour were valued! Nay, had the consideration been thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil, it had not been a valuable consideration. The favour of God, the purity of the soul, the peace of conscience, and the hope of heaven, are too precious to be exposed to sale at any such rate. the topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them what are those prized, that lose their souls to gain the world? 3. It turned to the reproach of Judah, that he left his jewels in pawn for a kid. Note, Fleshly lusts are not only brutish, but scurilous, and ruining to men's secular interests. It is plain, that whoredom, as well as wine, and new wine, takes away the heart first, else it would never take away the signet and the bracelets.

III. He lost his jewels by the bargain; he sent the kid, according to his promise, to redeem his pawn, but the supposed harlot could not be found. He sent it by his friend, (who was indeed his back friend, because he was aiding and abetting in his evil deeds,) the Addahminite, who came back without the pledge. It is a good account (if it be but true) of any place, which they here gave, that there is no harlot in this place; for such sinners are the scandals and plagues of any place. Judah sits down content to lose his signet and his bracelets, and forbids his friend to make any further inquiry after them, giving this reason, lest we be ashamed, v. 23. Either, 1. Let his sin should come to be known publicly, and be talked of. Fornication and all uncleanness are full of such scandalous things, and the reproach and shame of those that are convicted of them. Nothing will make those blush, that are not ashamed of these. Or, 2. Let he should be laughed at as a fool, for trusting a strumpet with his signet and his bracelets. He expresses no concern about the sin, to get that pardoned, only about the shame, to prevent that. Note, There are many who are more solicitous to preserve the reputation with men, than to secure the favour of God and a good conscience; lest we be ashamed, goes further with them, than lest we be damned.

24. And it came to pass about three months after, that it was told Judah, saying, Tamar thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot: and also, behold, she is with child by whoredom: and Judah said, Bring her forth, and let her be burnt. 25. When she was brought forth, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, By the man, whose these are, and I with child: and she said, Discern I pray thee, whose these are, the signet, and bracelets, and staff. 26. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.' 27. And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. 28. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. 29. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? This breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. 30. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.

Here is,

1. Judah's rigour against Tamar, when he heard she was an adulteress; she was, in the eye of the
law, Shelah's wife, and therefore, he, being with child by another, was looked upon as an injury and reproach to Judah's family; Brong her forth therefore, says Judah, the eldest son of the father, and let her be burnt to death, but burnt in the cheek or forehead, stigmatized for a harlot. This seems probable, v. 24. Note, It is a common thing for men to be severe against those very sins in others, yet they allow themselves in; and so in judging others, they condemn themselves, Rom. 2. 1.-14. 22. If he designed that she should be burnt to death, perhaps, under pretence of zeal against the sin, in order to bring her to repent and let her daughter-in-law, being loath to marry Shelah to her. Note, It is a common thing, but a very bad thing, to cover malice against men's persons with a show of zeal against their vices.

II. Judah's shame, when it was made to appear that he was the adulterer; she produced the ring and the bracelets in court, which justified the fathering of the child upon Judah, v. 25, 26. Note, The wickedness that has been most secretly committed, and most indifferently concealed, yet sometimes is strangely brought to light, to the shame and confusion of those who have said, No eye sees. A bird of the air may carry the voice; however, there is a discovering day coming, when all will be laid open. Some of the Jewish writers observe, that as Judah had said to his father, See, is this thy son's coat? (ch. 37. 32.) so it was now shown to him, See, are these thy signet and bracelets? Judah being convicted by his own conscience, 1. Confesses his sin, She has been more righteous than I. He owns that a perpetual mark of infamy should be fastened rather upon him, who had been so much accessory to it. Note, Those offenders ought to be treated with the greatest tenderness to whom we have any way given occasion of offending. If servants purloin, and their masters, by withholding from them, what is due, tempt them to it, they ought to forgive them. 2. He never returned to it again; he knew her again no more. Note, Those do not truly repent of their sins, that do not forsake them.

III. The building up of Judah's family hereby, notwithstanding, in the birth of Pharez and Zarah, from whom descended the most considerable families of the illustrious tribe of Judah. It should seem, the birth was hard to the mother, by which her strength was exhausted; and, perhaps, also, like Jacob and Esau, struggled for the birth-right, and Pharez got it, who is ever named first, and from him Christ descended. He had his name from his breaking forth before his brother; This breach be upon thee, which is applicable to those that sow discord, and create distance between brethren. The Jews, as Zarah, bad fair for the birth-right, and were marked with a scarlet thread, as those others were cast out first; but the Gentiles, like Pharez, as a son of violence, got the start of them, by that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers, and attained to the righteousness which the Jews came short of. Yet, when the fulness of time is come, all Israel shall be saved. Both these sons are named, in the genealogy of our Saviour, (Matt. 1. 3.) to perpetuate the story, as an instance of the humiliation of our first Jesus. Some observe, that the four eldest sons of Jacob fell under very foul guilt. Reuben and Judah under the guilt of incest, Simeon and Levi under the guilt of murder; yet they were patriarchs; of Levi came the priests, of Judah the kings and Messiah; thus they became examples of repentance, and monuments of pardoning mercy.

CHAP. XXXIX.

At this chapter, we return to the story of Joseph. We have him here, 1. A servant, a slave in Potiphar's house, (v. 1.) and yet there greatly honoured and favoured, 1. By the providence of God, which made him, in effect, a master, v. 2. b. By the grace of God, which made him more than a master, and to him the favor and love of Pharaoh was given, in his house, v. 3. 2. And the Egyptian, and the master of his house, made him a vessel of his pleasure; and it went prosperously with him, v. 4. 3. Joseph's integrity is his excellency; he was a cunning and knowing man, and there was no such one found among the Egyptians, v. 5. 4. He was related to the chief of the house, v. 6. 5. The famine was so great in all the land, there was none better in the land than he, v. 7. 6. He was sent to the governor of the land, v. 8. He was received with marks of respect and kindness, v. 9. 7. He was made a household servant, v. 10. He was set over the household, v. 11. 8. He was set over all the house, v. 12. He was put into the place of the master, v. 13. 9. He was sent to all the land, v. 14. 10. He was trusted with all the store houses of Egypt, v. 15. 11. He was the governor of Egypt, v. 16. 12. He was the steadying hand, the liberating hand, the rejoicing hand, v. 17. 13. He was a leader of the multitude, a leader of the people, v. 19. 14. He was a close follower of and to Pharaoh, v. 20. 15. He was made overseer of the land, v. 21. 16. He was chief of the household, v. 22. 17. He was laid in prison, and there he was set over all the prison, v. 23. 18. He was set over the house of Pharaoh, v. 24. 2. This is the course of Joseph, from the time that he was sold to Potiphar, until he became Pharaoh's chief minister, and was set over all the land of Egypt.

1. AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. 2. And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. 5. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. 6. And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

Here is

1. Joseph bought; (v. 1.) he that bought him, whatever he gave for him, had a good bargain of him; it was better than the merchandise of silver. The Jews, from this story, say, 'When a person did not know the worth of good men, they would hedge them about with pearls.' He was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, with whom he might get acquainted with public persons and public business, and so be fitted for the preferment he was designed for afterward. Note, 1. What God intends men for, he will be sure some way or other, to qualify them for. 2. Providence is to be acknowledged in the disposal even of poor servants, and in their settlements, and therein may perhaps be working toward something great and considerable.

II. Joseph blessed, wonderfully blessed, even in the house of his servitude. 1. God prospered him, v. 2, 3. Perhaps the affairs of Potiphar's family had remarkably gone backward before, but, upon Joseph's coming into it, a discernible turn was given to them, and he was made lord and master over them above what the family expected. Joseph's brethren had stripped him of his coat of many colours, but they could not strip him of his virtue and prudence. (2.) Those that can separate
us from all our friends, yet cannot deprive us of the gracious presence of our God. When Joseph had none of all his relations with him, he had his God with him, even in the house of the Egyptian. Joseph was separated from his brethren, but not from his God; banished from his father's house, but he and Lord was with him, and that comforted him. (3.) It is God's presence with us that makes all we do prosperous. Those that would prosper, must therefore make God their friend; and those that do prosper must therefore give God the praise. 2. His master preferred him; by degrees made him steward of his household, v. 4. Note, (1.) Industry and honesty are the surest and safest ways both of rising and the way. Seest thou a man prudent, and faithful, and diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings at length, and not always before mean men. (2.) It is the wisdom of these that are in any sort of authority, to commenence and employ those with whom it appears that the presence of God is, Ps. 101. 6. Potiphar knew what he did, when he put all into the hand of Joseph; for he knew it would prosper better there than in his own hand. (3.) He that is faithful in a few things, stands fair for being made ruler over many things, Matt. 25. 21. Christ goes by this rule with his servants. (4.) It is a great ease to a master to have those employed under him, that are trusty; Potiphar was so well satisfied with Joseph's conduct, that he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat, v. 6. The servant had all the care and trouble of the estate, and yet the master of the house, which was the chiefest of the places where they live; even good servants may be so, though mean and lightly esteemed. (2.) The prosperity of the wicked is, one way or other, for the sake of the godly. Here was a wicked family blessed for the sake of one good servant in it. 7. And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. 8. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9. There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? 10. And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her. 11. And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. 12. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me; and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. Here is, 1. A most shameful instance of impudence and immodesty in Joseph's mistress, the shame and scandal of her sex, perfectly lost to all virtue and honour, and not to be mentioned or thought of, without the utmost indignation. It was well that she was an Egyptian; for we must have shared in the confusion, if such folly had been found in Israel. Observe, 1. Her sin began in the eye; she spake to Joseph's master's wife, such as was the person, and well-favoured, v. 6. Note, (1.) Remarkable beauty, either of men or women, often proves a dangerous snare both to themselves and others; which forbids pride in it, and commands constant watchfulness against temptation that attends it; favour is deceitful, that is deceiving. (2.) We have great need to make a covenant with our eyes. Job 31. 10. Joseph's mistress had a husband that ought to have been to her for a covering of the eyes from all others, ch. 20. 16. 2. She was daring and shameless in the sin; with an impudent face, and a harlot's forehead, she said, Lie with me; having already, by her wanton looks and unchaste desires, committed adultery with him in her heart. Note, Where the unclean spirit gets possession and dominion in a soul, it is as with the possessed of the devils, (Luke 8. 27, 29.) the clothes of modesty are thrown off, and the hands and fingers of shame are broken in pieces. When lust has got head, it will stick at nothing, blush at nothing; decency, and reputation, and conscience, are all sacrificed to that Baal-peer. 3. She was urgent and violent in the temptation; often and always had been before, with the strongest reasons, and yet as often renewed her vile solicitation, she spake to him day by day, v. 10. Now this was, (1.) Great wickedness in her, and showed her heart fully set to do evil. (2.) A great temptation to Joseph. The hand of Satan, no doubt, was in it, who, when he found he could not overcome him with troubles and the frowns of the world, (for in them he still held fast his integrity,) assaulted him with soft and enluring pleasures, which have ruined more than the former, and have slain their ten thousands. 11. Here is a most illustrious instance of virtue and resolved chastity in Joseph, who, by the grace of God, was enabled to resist and overcome this temptation; and all things considered, his escape was, for ought I know, as great an instance of the divine power over the delusive of the three children out of the fiery furnace. 1. The temptation he was assaulted with, was very strong; never was a more violent onseet made upon the fort of chastity than this recorded here. (1.) The sin he was tempted to was uncleanness, which, considering his youth, his beauty, his single state, and his plentiful living at the table of a ruler, was a sin, which, one would think, might most easily beset him, and betray him. (2.) The tempter was his mistress, a person of quality, whom it was his place to obey, and his interest to oblige, whose favour would contribute more than any thing to his preferment, and by whose means he might arrive at the highest honours of the court. On the other hand, it was at his utmost peril, if he slighted her, and made her his enemy. (3.) Opportunity makes a thief, makes an adulterer, and that favours goodly the temptation. The tempter was in the house with him; his business led him to be, without any suspicion, where she was: none of the family were within, (v. 11.) there appeared no danger of its being ever discovered, or, if it should be suspected, his mistress would protect him. (4.) To all this was added impatience, frequent constant impertinency, to such a degree, that, at last she had violent hands on him. 2. His resistance of the temptation was very brave, and the victory truly honourable. The almighty grace of God enabled him to overcome this assault of the enemy. VOL. I.—2 B
(1.) By strength of reason; and wherever right reason may be heard, religion, no doubt, will carry the day. He argues from the respect he owed both to God and his master, v. 8, 9. [1.] He would not wrong his master, nor do such an irreparable injury to his honour. He considers, and urges it, how kind his master had been to him; what a confidence he had reposed in him, in how many instances he had been lending him; for which he had incurred the thought of making such an ungrateful return. Note, We are bound in honour, as well as justice and gratitude, not in any thing to injure those that have a good opinion of us, and place a trust in us, how secretly soever it may be done. See how he argues (v. 5.) "There is none greater in this house than I, therefore I will not do it." Note, Those that are great, instead of being proud of their greatness, should use it as an argument against sin; "Is there none greater than I? Then I will scorn to do a wicked thing; it is below me to serve a base last; I will not disparage myself so much." [2.] He would not offend his God. This is the chief argument with which he strengthens his aversion to the sin. How can I do this? not only, How shall I? or How dare I? but How can I? Had possumus, quod juris possumus—We can do that which we can do lawfully. Not good to shut one self with the strongest bar, even that of an impossibility. He that is born of God cannot sin, 1 John 3. 9.

Three arguments Joseph urges upon himself. First, he considers, who he was, that was tempted. "I; others may perhaps take their liberty, but I cannot. I that am an Israelite in covenant with God, that profess religion, and relation to him; it is next to impossible for me to do so." Secondly, What the sin was to which he was tempted; the great wickedness. Others might look upon it as a small matter, a peccadillo, a trick of youth; but Joseph had another idea of it. In general, when at any time we are tempted to sin, we must consider the great wickedness there is in it; let sin appear sin, (Rom. 7. 13.) call it by its own name and never go about to lessen it. Particularly, let the sin of uncleanness always be looked upon as great wickedness. There is something in the sin of uncleanness, that wars against the soul as much as any other. Thirdly, Against whom he was tempted to sin, against God; "Not only how shall I do it, and sin against my master, my mistress, myself, my own body and soul; but against God?" Note, Gracious souls look upon this as the worst thing in sin, that it is against God, against his nature and his dominion, against his love and his design. They that love God, by this reason hate sin.

(2.) By steadfastness of resolution. The grace of God enabled him to overcome the temptation, by avoiding the tempter. [1.] He heartened not to her; so much as to be with her, v. 10. Note, Those that would be kept from harm, must keep themselves out of harm's way: Avoid it, pass not by it. Nay, [2.] When she laid hold on him, he left his garment and fled, v. 12. He would not put himself so much as to parley with the temptation, but flew out from it with the utmost abhorrence; he left his garment, as one escaping for his life. Note, It is better to lose a good coat than a good conscience.

13. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, 14. That she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: 15. And it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. 16. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. 17. And she spoke unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: 18. And it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

Joseph's mistress, having tried in vain to make him a criminal, now endeavours to represent him as one; so to be avenged on him for his vice. Now was her love turned into the utmost rage and malice, and she pretends she cannot endure the sight of him, whom a while ago she could not endure out of her sight. Chaste and holy love will continue, though slighted; but sinful love, like Amnon's to Tamar, is easily changed into sinful hatred.

She accused him to his fellow servants, (v. 13. 15.) and gave him a bad name among them. Probably, they envied him his interest in their master's favour, and his authority in the house; and perhaps found themselves aggrieved, sometimes by his fidelity, which prevented their purloining; and therefore they were glad to hear any thing that might tend to his disgrace, and, if there was room for it, to add their mistress yet more against him. Observe, When she speaks of her husband, she does not call him her husband, nor her lord, but only he; for she had not forgotten the covenant of her God, that was between them. Thus the adulteress (Prov. 7. 19.) calls her husband the good man. Note, Innocence itself cannot secure a man's reputation. Not every one that keeps a good conscience, can keep a good name.

2. She accused him to his master, who had power in his hand to punish him, which his fellow servants had not, v. 17, 18. Observe, 1. What an improbable story she tells; producing his garments as an evidence that he had offered violence to her, which was a plain indication that she had offered violence to him. Note, Those that have broken the bonds of modesty, will never be held by the bonds of truth. No marvel that she who had impudence enough to say, Lie with me, had front enough to say, "He would have lain with me." Had the lie been told to conceal her own crime, it had been bad enough, yet in some degree, excusable; but it was told, to be avenged upon his virtue; a most malicious lie. And yet, 2. She manages it so as to incense her husband against him; reflecting upon him for bringing this Hebrew servant among them, perhaps, at first against her mind, because he was a Hebrew or a stranger. Note, It is no new thing for the best of men to be falsely accused of the worst of crimes by those who themselves are the worst of criminals. As this matter here was represented, one would have thought chaste Joseph a very bad man, and his wanton mistress a virtuous woman; it is well that there is a day of discovery coming, in which all shall appear in their true characters. This was the first time that Joseph's coat was made use of as a false witness concerning him; his father had been deceived by it before, now his master.

19. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, after this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was
kindled. 20. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison. 21. But the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. 23. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper.

Here is,
1. Joseph warranted by his master. He believed the accusation, and either Joseph durst not make his defence by telling the truth, as it would reflect too much upon his mistress, or, his master would not hear it, or would not believe it, and there is no remedy, he is condemned to perpetual imprisonment, v. 19, 20. God restrained his wrath, else he had put him to death; and that wrath which imprisoned him, God made to turn to his praise; in order to which, Providence so disposed, that he should be shut up amongst the king's prisoners, the state-prisoners. Potiphar, it is likely, chose that prison, because it was the worst; for there the irons entered into the soul, (Ps. 105. 18.) but God designed to pave the way to his enlargement. He was committed to the king's prison, that from thence he might be preferred to the king's person.

Note, Many an action of false imprisonment will, in the great day, be found to lie against the enemies and persecutors of God's people. Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, was bound, and numbered with the transgressors.

2. Joseph owned and righted by his God, who is, and will be, the just and powerful Patron of oppressed innocence. Joseph was at a distance from all his friends and relations, had not them with him to comfort him, or to minister to him, or to mediate for him; but the Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, v. 21. Note, (1.) God despises not his prisoners, Ps. 69. 33. No gates or bars can shut out his gracious presence from his people; for he has promised that he will never leave them. (2.) Those that have a good conscience in a prison, have a good God there. Integrity and uprightness qualify us for the divine favour, wherever we are. Joseph is not long a prisoner, before he becomes a little ruler even in the prison; which is to be attributed, under God, [1.] To the keeper's favour. God gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Note, God can raise up friends for his people, even there where they little expect to find them, and can make them to be pitied even of those that carry them captive, Ps. 106. 46. [2.] To Joseph's fitness for business. The keeper was with him, and that every thing prospered under his hand; and therefore intrusted him with the management of the affairs of the prison, v. 22, 23. Note, Wisdom and virtue will shine in the narrowest spheres. A good man will do good wherever he is, and will be a blessing even in bonds and banishments; for the Spirit of the Lord is not bound or banished, witness St. Paul, Phil. 1. 12, 13.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, things are working, though slowly, toward Joseph's advancement. 1. Two of Pharaoh's servants are committed to prison, and there to Joseph's care, and so become witnesses of his extraordinary conduct, v. 1.-4. II. They dreamed each of them a dream, which Joseph interpreted, (v. 5.-19.) and the event verified the interpretation, (v. 20.-22.) and so they became witnesses of his extraordinary skill. III. Joseph recommends his case to one of them, whose preferment he foresees, (v. 14, 15.) but in vain, v. 23.

1. And it came to pass after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt and his baker had offended their lord the king of Egypt. 2. And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. 3. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound. 4. And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them: and they continued a season in ward.

We should not have had this story of Pharaoh's butler and baker recorded in Scripture, if it had not been serviceable to Joseph's preferment. The world stands for the sake of the church, and is governed for its good. Observe, 1. Two of the great officers of Pharaoh's court having offended the king, were committed to prison. Note, High places are slippery places; nothing more certain than the favour of princes. Those that make God's favour their happiness, and his service their business, will find him a better master than Pharaoh was, and not so extreme to mark what they do amiss. Many conjectures there are concerning the offence of these servants of Pharaoh; some make it no less than an attempt to take away his life; others that they fell in with the great lighting of a flint into his cup, and a little sand into his bread. Whatever it was, Providence by this means brought them into the prison where Joseph was. 2. The captain of the guard himself, who was Potiphar, charged Joseph with them, (v. 4.) which intimates that he began now to be reckoned to him, and perhaps to be convinced of his innocence, though he durst not accuse him, for fear of disabling his wife. John Baptist must lose his head, to please Herodias.

5. And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison. 6. And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and beheld, they were sad. 7. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? 8. And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them, I pray you. 9. And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, in my dream, behold, a vine was before me: 10. And in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: 11. And Pharaoh's cup was
in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand. 12. And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days: 13. Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

Observe,
I. The special providence of God, which filled the heads of these two prisoners with unusual dreams, such as made extraordinary impressions upon them, and carried with them evidences of a divine original, both in one night. Note, God has immediate access to the spirits of men, which he can make serviceable to his own purposes whenever he pleases, quite beyond the intention of those concerned. To him all hearts are open, and secretly he spake not only to his own people, but to others, in dreams, Job 33. 13. Things to come were thus foretold, but very obscurely.

Observe,
II. The impression which was made upon these prisoners by their dreams; (v. 6.) they were sad. It was not the prison that made them sad, (they were pretty well used to that, and perhaps lived joyfully there,) but the dream. Note, God has more ways than one to sadden the spirits of those that are to be made sad. Those sinners that are hardly enough under outward troubles, and will not view them, yet God can find out a way to punish them, can take off their wheels, by wounding their spirits, and laying loads upon them.

Observe,
Joseph's great tenderness and compassion toward them. He inquired with concern, Wherefore look ye sadly to day? v. 7. Joseph was their keeper, and in that office he was mild. Note, It becomes us to take cognizance of the sorrows even of those that are under our care. Joseph was their companion in tribulation, he was now a prisoner with them, and had been a dreamer too. Note, Communion in sufferings helps to work compassion toward those that do suffer. Let us learn hence, 1. To concern ourselves in the sorrows and troubles of others, and to inquire into the reason of the sadness of our brethren's countenances; we should often consider the tears of the oppressed, Gen. 42. 24. There is some relief to these that are in trouble, to be taken notice of. 2. To inquire into the causes of our own sorrow. "Wherefore do I look so sadly?" Is there a reason? Is it a good reason? Is there not a reason for comfort sufficient to balance it, whatever it is? Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

Observe,
IV. The dreams themselves, and the interpretation of them. That which troubled these prisoners, was, that being confined, they could not have recourse to the diviners of Egypt who pretended to interpret dreams; there is no interpreter here in the prison, v. 8. Note, There are interpreters, which these that are in prison and sorrow, should wish to have with them, to instruct them in the meaning and design of Providence; (Elisha alludes to such, 2 Kings 4.) interpreters to guide their consciences, not to satisfy their curiosity. Joseph, hereupon, directed them which way to look, Do not interpretations belong to God? He means the God whom he worshipped, to the knowledge of whom he endeavoured hereby to lead them. Note, 1. It is God's prerogative to foretell things to come, Is. 29. 19. 2. It is the glory and praise of God, the gifts of foresight which men have ordinary or extraordinary. Joseph premises a caveat against his own praise, and is careful to transmit the glory to God, as Daniel, ch. 2. 39. Joseph suggests, "If interpretations belong to God, he is a free Agent, and may communicate the power to whom he pleases, and therefore tell me your dreams." He meant (1.) the chief butler's dream was a happy presage of his advancement, and re-advancement, within three days; and so Joseph explained it to him, v. 12, 13. Probably it had been usual with him to press the full ripe grapes immediately into Pharaoh's cup, the simplicity of that age not being acquainted with the modern arts of making the wine fine. Observe, Joseph foretold the chief butler's deliverance, but he did not foresee his own. He had long before dreamt of his own honour, and the obsequies which his brethren should do to him, with the remembrance of which he must now support himself, without any new or fresh discoveries. The visions that are for the comfort of God's saints, are for a great while to come, and relate to things that are very far off, while the foresights of others, like this recorded here, look but three days before them.

Observe,
IV. The chief butler's dream portended his ignominious death, v. 18, 19. The happy interpretation of the other's dream encouraged him to relate his. Thus hypocrites, when they hear good things promised to good Christians, would put in for a share, though they have no part or lot in the matter. It was not Joseph's fault that he brought him no better tidings; ministers are but interpreters, whose precepts must be foretold; but think on our case, when it shall be well with thee. Though the respect paid to Joseph, made the prison as easy to him as a prison could be, yet none can blame him for being desirous of liberty. See here, 1. What a modest representation he makes of his own case, v. 15. He does not reflect upon his brethren that sold 196 GENESIS, XL.
him, he only says, I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, that is, unjustly sent away thence, no matter where the fault was. Nor does he reflect on the wrong done him in this imprisonment by his mistress that was his prosecutor, and his master that was his judge; but mildly aves his own innocence: Here have I done nothing, that they should put me into the dungeon. Note, When we are called to vindicate ourselves, we should carefully avoid, as much as may be, speaking ill of others. Let us be content to prove ourselves innocent, and not be fond of upbraiding others with their guilt.

2. What a modest request he makes to the chief butler: Only, think on me. Pray, do me a kindness: it lies in your power. And thus his humble petition is, Bring me out of this house. He does not say, “Bring me into Pharaoh’s house, get me a place at court.” No, he begs for enlargement, not preferment. Note, Providence sometimes designs the greatest honours for those that least covet or expect them.

20. And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants: and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. 21. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand: 22. But he hanged the chief baker; as Joseph had interpreted to them. 23. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

Here is, 1. The verifying of Joseph’s interpretation of the dreams, on the very day prefixed. The chief butler and baker were both advanced, one to his office, the other to the galloves, and both at the three days’ end. Note, Very great changes, both for the better, and for the worse, often happen in a very little time; so sudden are the revolutions of the wheel of nature. The occasion of giving judgment severally upon their case, was, the solemnizing of Pharaoh’s birth day, on which, all his servants being obliged by custom to attend him, these two came to be inquired after, and the cause of their commitment laid open. The solemnizing of the ancients’ Princes has been an ancient piece of respect done them, and if it be not abused, as Job 7. 5. (Hos. 7. 5.) and Herod’s, (Mark 6. 21.) is a usage innenough: and we may all profitably take notice of our birth-days, with thankfulness for the mercies of our birth, sorrow for the sinfulness of it, and an expectation of the day of our death as better than the day of our birth. In Pharaoh’s birth-day, he lifted up the head of these two prisoners, that is, arraigned and tried them, (when Naboth was tried) he was set on high among the people, 1 Kings 21. 9. and he restored the chief butler, and hanged the chief baker. If the butler were innocent, and the baker guilty, we must own the equity of Providence in clearing up the innocence of the innocent, and marking the sin of the guilty to find him out. If either the butler or the baker were innocent, it is an instance of the arrows Exactness of such great princes as pride themselves in that power which Nebuchadnezzar set up for, (Dan. 5. 19.) whom he would, he slew, and whom he would, he kept alive,) forgetting that there is a higher than they, to whom they are accountable.

2. The disappointing of Joseph’s expectation from the chief butler; he remembered not Joseph, but forgot him, v. 23. (1.) See here an instance of base ingratitude; Joseph had deserved well at his hands, had ministered unto him, sympathized with him, helped him to a favourable interpretation of his dream, had recommended himself to him as an extraordinary person upon all accounts; and yet he forgot him. We must not think it strange, if in this world we have not suffered our love, and shews of our respect. (2.) See how apt those that are themselves at ease, are to forget other men in distress. Perhaps it is in allusion to this story, that the prophet speaks of those that drink wine in bowls, and are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Amos 6. 6. Let us learn hence to cease from man. Joseph perhaps depended too much upon his interest in the chief butler, and promised himself too much from him; he learned by his disappointment to trust in God only. We can expect too little too soon, and not too much from God.

Some observe the resemblance between Joseph and Christ in this story. Joseph’s fellow-sufferers were like the two thieves that were crucified with Christ; the one saved, the other condemned. (It is Dr. Lightfoot’s remark, from Mr. Broughton.) One of these, when Joseph said to him, Remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom, was not forgotten. We justly blame the chief butler’s ingratitude to Joseph, yet we conduct ourselves much more disingenuously toward the Lord Jesus. Joseph had but foretold the chief butler’s enlargement, but Christ wrought out our’s, mediated with the King of kings for us; yet we forget him, though often reminded of his; though we have promised never to forget him: thus ill do we requite him, like foolish people and unwise.

CHAP. XLII.

Two things Providence is here bringing about. 1. The advancement of Joseph. 2. The maintenance of Jacob and his family in a time of famine; for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, and direct the affairs of the children of men for the benefit of those few whose hearts are upright with him. In order to these, here is, 1. Pharaoh’s dreams, v. 1. 8. 2. The recommendation of Joseph to him for an interpreter, v. 9. 13. 3. The interpretation of the dreams, and the prediction of seven years plenty, and seven years’ famine in Egypt, with the prudent advice given to Pharaoh thereupon, v. 14. 38. 4. Theertainment of Joseph in the highest places of power and trust in Egypt, v. 37. 45. 5. The accomplishment of Joseph’s prediction, and his fidelity to his trust, v. 46. 57.

1. And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed, and beheld, he stood by the river. 2. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well-favoured kine, and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow. 3. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. 4. And the ill-favoured and lean-fleshed kine did eat up the seven well-favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. 5. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. 6. And, behold, seven thin ears came up after them the east wind sprung up after them. 7. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. 8. And it came to pass in the morning, that his spirit was trou-
bled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof; and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Observe,
1. The delay of Joseph's enlargement; it was not till the end of two full years, (v. 1.) so long he waited, after he had intrusted the chief butler with his case, and began to have some prospect of relief. Note, We have need of patience, not only bearing, but waiting, patience. Joseph lay in prison until the time that his word came, Ps. 105. 15. There is a time set for the deliverance of God's people; that time will come, though it seem to tarry; and when it comes, it will appear to have been the best time, and therefore we ought to wait for it, (Hab. 2. 3.) and not think two full years too long to continue waiting.

2. The means of Joseph's enlargement, which were Pharaoh's dreams, here related. If we were to look upon them as ordinary dreams, we might observe from them the follies and absurdities of a roving, working, fancy; how it represents to itself tame cows as beasts of prey, from the lack of common sense, eating up those of their own kind; and ears of corn devouring one another. Surely in the multitude of dreams men have, even in none dream, there are divers vanities, Eccl. 5. 7. Now that God no longer speaks, to us in that way, I think it is no matter how little we either heed them or tell them. * Foolish dreams related can make no better than foolish talk. But these dreams which Pharaoh dreamed, carried their own evidence with them, that they were sent of God; and therefore when he awoke, his spirit was troubled, v. 8. It cannot but put us into a concern, to receive or to give them credit. It is not that we are conscious to ourselves that we have no reason to expect any good tidings from thence. His magicians were puzzled, the rules of their art failed them; these dreams of Pharaoh it seems, did not fall within the compass of them, so that they could not offer at the interpretation of them. This was to make Joseph's performance by the spirit of God the more admirable. Human reason, prudence, and foresight, must be non-plussed, that divine revelation may appear the more glorious in the contrivance of our redemption, 1. Cor. 2. 13, 14. Compare with this story, Dan. 2. 27.—4. 7.—5. 8. Joseph's own dreams were the occasion of his troubles, and now Pharaoh's dreams were the occasion of his enlargement.

9. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day. 10. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker. 11. And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. 12. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man accord-

13. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. 14. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. 15. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. 16. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

Here is,
1. The recommending of Joseph to Pharaoh for an interpreter. The chief butler did it more in compliment to Pharaoh, to oblige him, than in gratitude to Joseph, or in compassion for his case. He makes a fair confession, (v. 9.) "I remember my faults this day, in forgetting Joseph." Note, It is best to remember our duty, and to do it in its time; but if we have neglected that, it is next best to remember our faults, and repent of them, and do our duty at last, a better day than ever, and to confide our faults against Pharaoh, for which he was imprisoned; and then he would insinuate that though Pharaoh had forgiven him, he had not forgiven himself. The story he had to tell, was, in short, That there was an obscure young man in the king's prison, who had very properly interpreted his dream, and the chief baker's (the event corresponding in each with the interpretation,) and that he would recommend him to the king his master for an interpreter. Note, God's time for the enlargement of his people will appear at last to be the fittest time. If the chief butler had at first used his interest for Joseph's enlargement, and had obtained it, it is probable that, upon his release, he would have gone back to the land of the Hebrews again, which he spoke of so feelingly, (ch. 40.) and then he had neither been so blessed himself, nor such a blessing to his family, as afterwards he proved. But staying two years longer, and coming out now upon this occasion, at last, to interpret the king's dreams, way was made for his very great preeminent. Those that patiently wait for God, shall be paid for their waiting, not only principal but interest, Lam. 3. 26.

2. The introducing of Joseph to Pharaoh. The king's business required haste; Joseph is sent for out of the dungeon with all speed; Pharaoh's order discharged him, both from his imprisonment, and from his servitude, and made him a candidate for some of the highest trusts at court. The king can scarcely allow him time, but that decency required it, to shave himself, and to change his raiment, v. 14. It is done with all possible expedition, and Joseph is brought in, perhaps almost as much surprised as Pharaoh was, Acts 12. 9. So suddenly is his captivity brought back, that he is as one that dreams, Ps. 126. 1. Pharaoh immediately, without inquiring who or whence he was, tells him his business, that he expected he should interpret his dream, v. 15. To which Joseph makes him a very modest decent reply, (v. 16.) in which, (1.) He gives him leave to God; "It is not in me; it is not in me to give it." Note, Great gifts then appear most grateful and illustrious, when these that have them, use them humbly, and take not the praise of them to themselves, but give it to God. To such God gives more grace. (2.) He shows respect to Pharaoh, and hearty good will to
he and his government, in supposing that the interpretation would be an answer of peace. Note, That
tis what God's oracles, may expect an answer of peace. If Joseph be made the interpreter hope the
best.

17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In
my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the
river. 18. And, behold, there came up out
of the river seven kine, fat-fleshed and
well-favoured; and they fed in a meadow.
19. And, behold, seven other kine came up
after them, poor, and very ill-favoured,
and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the
land of Egypt for badness. 20. And the
lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the
first seven fat kine. 21. And when they had
eaten them up, it could not be known that
they had eaten them; but they were still ill-
favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

22. And I saw in my dream, and, behold,
seven ears came up in one stalk, full and
good. 23. And, behold, seven ears, wither-
ed, thin, and blasted with the east wind,
sprung up after them. 24. And the thin
ears devoured the seven good ears: and I
told this unto the magicians; but there was
none that could declare it to me. 25. And
Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of
Pharaoh is one: God hath showed Pharaoh
what he is about to do. 26. The seven
good kine are seven years; and the seven
good ears are seven years: the dream is one.
27. And the seven thin and ill-favoured
kine that came up after them, are seven years;
and the seven empty ears blasted with the
east wind, shall be seven years of famine.
28. This is the thing which I have spoken
unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do,
he shoveth unto Pharaoh. 29. Behold,
there come seven years of great plenty
throughout all the land of Egypt. 30. And
there shall arise after them seven years of
famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten
in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall
consume the land. 31. And the plenty
shall not be known in the land by reason of
that famine following; for it shall be very
grievous. 32. And for that the dream was
doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because
the thing is established by God, and God
will shortly bring it to pass.

Here,

1. Pharaoh relates his dream. He dreamt that
he stood upon the bank of the river Nile, and saw
the kine, both the fat ones, and the lean ones, come
out of the river. For the kingdom of Egypt had no
rain, as appears, Zech. 14. 18, but the plenty of the
year depended upon the overflowing of the river,
and it was about one certain time of the year that
it overflowed. If it rose to fifteen or sixteen cubits,
there was plenty; if to twelve or thirteen only, or
under, there was scarcity. See how many ways
Providence has of dispensing its gifts; yet what

ever the second causes are, our dependence is
still the same upon the First Cause, who makes
every creature that to us, that it is, be it rain or
rice.

11. Joseph interprets his dream, and tells him
that it signified seven years of plenty now
immediately to cause, which should be succeeded by as
many years of famine.

1. The two dreams signify the same thing, but
the repetition was to denote the certainty, the
earness, and the importance, of the event, v. 32.
This has the same object as the herald's going about
his counsel by two immaterial things, Heb. 6. 17, 18.
The covenant is sealed with two sacraments; and
the in one of them there are both bread and wine,
wherein the dream is one, and yet it is doubled, for
the thing is certain.

2. Yet the two dreams had a distinct reference
to the two things wherein we most experience plenty
and scarcity, namely, grass and corn. The
plenty and scarcity of grass for the cattle were sig-
nified by the fat kine and the lean ones; the plenty
and scarcity of herb for the service of man, by the
full ears and the thin ones.

3. See what changes the comforts of this life are
subject to. After great plenty, may come great
scarcity; how strong soever we may think our
maintainance for ever. If God speak the word, it will
soon be moved. We cannot be sure that to-mor-
row shall be as this day, next year as this, and much
more abundant, Is. 30. 12. We must learn how to
want, as well as how to abound.

4. See the goodness of God, in sending the seven
years of plenty before those of famine, that provi-
sion might be made accordingly. This he sets the
one over against the other, Ex. 7. 14. With what
wonderful providence has Providence, that great
House-keeper, ordered the affairs of this numerous
family from the beginning hitherto! Great variety of
seasons there have been, and the produce of the
earth is sometimes more and sometimes less; yet,
take one time with another, what was miraculous
concerning the manna, is ordinarily verified in the
common course of Providence, He that gathers
much, has nothing over, and he that gathers little,
has no lack, Exod. 16. 18.

5. See the perishing nature of our worldly enjoy-
ments. The great increase of the years of plenty
were quite lost and swallowed up in the years of fa-
nience; and the overplus of it, which seemed very
much, yet did but just serve to keep men alive, v.
29. . 31. Meals for the belly, and the belly for
meats, but God has showed by both it and them, 1 Cor. 6.
13. There is bread which endures to everlasting
life, which shall not be forgotten, and which is
worth while to labour for, John 6. 27. They that
make the things of this world their good things,
will find but little pleasure in remembering that
they have received them, Luke 16. 25.

6. Observe, God revealed this beforehand
to Pharaoh, who, as king of Egypt, was to be the
father of his country, and must provide for provision
for them. Magistrates are called shepherds, whose
care it must be, not only to rule, but to feed.

33. Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a
man discreet and wise, and set him over the
land of Egypt. 34. Let Pharaoh do this,
and let him appoint officers over the land,
and take up the fifth part of the land of
Egypt in the seven plenteous years. 35.
And let them gather all the food of those
good years that come, and lay up corn under the
hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food
in the cities. 36. And that food shall be for
store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine. 37. And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. 38. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? 39. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this; there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. 40. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. 41. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. 42. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; 43. And he made him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. 44. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt. 45. And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt. Here is, 1. The good advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh, which was, 1/2 That in the years of plenty he should lay up for the years of famine; buy up corn when it was cheap, that he might both enrich himself, and supply the country, when it would be dear and scarce. Note, (1.) Fair warning should always be followed with good counsel. (2.) The prudent man foresees the evil, that he may hide himself. God has in his word told us of a day of trial and exigence before us, when we shall need all the grace we can get, and all little enough. “Now, therefore, provide accordingly.” (2.) Times of gathering must be diligently improved, because there will come a time of spending. Let us go to the ant, and learn of her this wisdom, Prov. 6. 6...8. 2. Because that which is every body’s work, commonly proves nobody’s work; he advises Pharaoh to appoint officers who should make it their business, and to pitch upon some one person to preside in the affair, v. 33. Probably, if Joseph had not advised this, it had not been done; Pharaoh’s counsellors could no more improve the dream, than his magicians interpret it; therefore, it is said of him, (Ps. 105. 22.) that he taught the senators wisdom. Hence, we may justly infer, with Solomon, (Eccl. 4. 13.) Better is a poor and a wise child, than an old and foolish king. 11. The great honour that Pharaoh did to Joseph. 1. He gave him an honourable testimony; He is a man in whom the Spirit of God is; and that puts a great excellency upon any man; such men ought to be valued, v. 58. He is a nuisance for prudence, There is none so discreet and wise as thou art, v. 39. Now he is abundantly recompensed for the disgrace that had been done him; and his righteousness is as the morning-light, Ps. 37. 6. 2. He puts him into an honourable office; not only employed him to buy up corn, but made him prime-minister of state, comptroller of the household, Thou shalt be over my house, Chief Justice of the kingdom, according to thy word shall all my people be ruled or governed; therefore, as soon as Joseph is made, and let it be he speaks him General of the forces. His commission was very ample, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt; (v. 41.) without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot; (v. 44.) all the affairs of the kingdom must pass through his hand. Nay, (v. 40.) only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer those, who have shown themselves useful to the people; and to place them to places of power and trust, in whom the Spirit of God is. It is probable, that there were those about the court who opposed Joseph’s preferment, which occasioned Pharaoh so often to repeat the grant, and with that solemn sanction, (v. 44.) I am Pharaoh. When the proposal was made that there should be a corn-master-general nominated, it is said, (v. 37.) Pharaoh’s servants were all pleased with the motion, each hoping for the place; but when Pharaoh said to them, “Joseph shall be the man,” we do not read that they made him any answer, being uneasy at it, and acquiescing, only because they could not help it. Joseph had enemies, no doubt, archers that shot at him, and hated him, ch. 49. 23. as Daniel, ch. 6. 4. 3. He put upon him all the marks of honour imaginable, to remunerate him to the esteem and respect of the people, as the king’s favourite, and one whom he delighted to honouer. (1.) He gave him his own ring, as a ratification of his commission, and in token of peculiar favour; or it was like delivering him the great seal. (2.) He put fine clothes upon him, instead of his prison-garments. For they that are in king’s palaces must wear soft clothing: he that, in the morning, was dragging the fetters of iron, before midnight, was adorned with a chain of gold. (3.) He made him ride in the second chariot, next his own, and ordered all to do obeisance to him: “Bow the knee, as to Pharaoh himself.” (4.) He gave him a new name, to show his authority over him, and yet such a name as bespeake the value he had for him, Zaphnath-paaneah—A re¬corder of time. (5.) He married him honourably to a prince’s damsel. We should be very thankful for divine regard in giving wisdom and other merits, Pharaoh was not sparing in conferring honours. Now this preferment of Joseph was, [1.] An abundant re¬compense for his innocent and patient suffering, a lasting instance of the equity and goodness of Providence, and an encouragement to all good people to trust in a good God. [2.] It was typical of the ex¬altation of Christ, that great Reviver of secrets, (John 1. 18,) or, as some translate Joseph’s new name, the favour of the world. The brightest glories of the upper world are put upon him, the highest trust lodged in his hand, and all power given him both in heaven and earth. He is Gatherer, Keeper, and Disposer, of all the stores of divine grace, and Chief Ruler of the kingdom of God among men. The work of ministers is to cry before him, “Bow the knee; kiss the Son.” 46. And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt: and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. 47. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. 43. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the
cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, he laid up in the same. 49. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number. 50. And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 51. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh; For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house. 52. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction. 53. And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended. 54. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. 55. And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. 56. And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. 57. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

Observe here,

I. The building of Joseph’s family in the birth of two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, v. 50. 52. In the names he gave them he owned the Divine providence giving this happy turn to his affairs. 1. He was made to forget his misery, Job 11. 16. We should bear our afflictions when they are present, as those that now not but Providence may so out¬weigh them by after-comforts, as that we may even forget them when they are past. But could he be so unnatural as to forget all his father’s house? He means the unkindness he received from his brethren, or perhaps the wealth and honour he expected from his father, with the birth-right. The robes which he now wore, made him forget the coat of divers colours which he wore in his father’s house. 2. He was made fruitful in the land of his affliction; it had been the land of his affliction, and in some sense it was still so, for it was not Canaan, the land of promise. His distance from his father was still his affliction. Note, Light is sometimes sown for the righteous in a barren and unlikely soil; and yet if God sow it, and water it, it will come up again. The afflictions of the saints promote their fruitfulness. Ephraim signifies Fruitfulness, and Manasseh, Forgetfulness, for these two often go together; when Jehoshua waxed fat, he forgot God his Maker.

II. The accomplishment of Joseph’s predictions; Pharaoh had great confidence in the truth of them, perhaps finding in his own mind, beyond what an¬other person could, an exact correspondence between them and his dreams as between the key and the lock; and the event showed that he was not deceived. The seven plenteous years came, (v. 47.) and at length, they were ended, v. 53. Note, we ought to foresee the approaching period of the days both of our prosperity and of our opportunity; and there¬fore must not be secure in the enjoyment of our prosperity, nor slothful in the improvement of our opportunity; years of plenty will end, therefore. What thy hand finds to do, do it; and gather in gath¬ering-time, lest the reap; also, store up the plenty of the night, (Isa. 21. 12.) the plenty, and also the famine. The seven years of dearth began to come, v. 54. See what changes of conditions we are liable to in this world, and what need we have to be joyful in a day of prosperity, and in a day of adversity to con¬sider, Excl. 7. 14. This famine, it seems, was not only in Egypt, but in other lands. In all lands, that is, all the neighbouring countries; fruitful lands are soon turned into barrenness, for the hungry get the first morsel. It is here said, that in the land of Egypt there was bread; meaning, probably, not that only which Joseph had bought up for the king, but that which private persons, by his example, and upon the public notice of this prediction, as well as by the rules of common prudence, had laid up.

IV. The performance of Joseph’s trust; he was found faithful to it, as a steward ought to be. 1. He was diligent in laying up, while the plenty lasted, v. 48. 49. He that thus gathers, is a wise son. 2. He was prudent and careful in giving out, when the famine came, and kept the markets low by furnishing them at reasonable rates out of his stores. The people in distress cried to Pharaoh, as that woman to the King of Israel, (2 Kings 6. 26.) Help, my lord, O king, he sent them to his treasurer, Go to Joseph. Thus God in the gospel directs those that apply themselves to him for mercy and grace, to go to the Lord Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells; and, What he saith to you, do. Joseph, no doubt, with wisdom and justice fixed the price of the corn he sold, so that Pharaoh, whose money had bought it up, might have a reasonable profit, and yet the country might not be oppressed, nor advantage taken of their prevailing necessity; while he that sold all corn, when it is dear, in hopes it will yet grow dearer, though people perish for want of it, has many a curse for so doing, and (it is not a curse baseless,) blessings shall be upon the head of him that thus sell¬eth it, Prov. 11. 29. And let the price be determined by that golden rule of justice, to do as we would be done by.

CHAP. XLII.

We had in the foregoing chapter, the fulfilling of the dreams which Joseph had interpreted; in this and the fol¬lowing chapters, we have the fulfilling of the dreams which Joseph himself had dreamt, that his father’s family should do obsequies to him. The story is very largely and particularly related of what passed between Joseph and his brethren, not only because it is an entertaining story, and, probably, was much talked of, both among the Israelites and among the Egyptians, but because it is very instructive, and it shows the treatment of Jacob’s family into Egypt, on which so many great events afterward depended. We have, in this chapter, I. The humble application of Jacob’s sons to Joseph, to buy corn, v. 1. II. The appointment of Joseph to be their judge, v. 2. III. The FontAwesome of his sons to Joseph, v. 7. 10. IV. The conviction they were now under of their sin concerning Joseph long before, v. 21. 24. Their return to Canaan with corn, and the great abundance which God poured upon them upon hearing the account of their expedition, v. 25. 58.

1. Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? 2. And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may
lve, and not die. 3. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. 
4. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him. 5. And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan. 6. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth.

Though Jacob's sons were all married, and had families of their own, yet, it should seem, they were still incorporated in one society, under the conduct and presidency of their father Jacob.

We have here,
1. The orders he gave to them to go and buy corn in Egypt, v. 1. 2. Observe, The famine was gone, and the land returned to that fertile condition which it had been in. It is the duty of all the three Patriarchs, to whom Canaan was the land of promise, met with famine in that land; which was not only to try their faith, whether they could trust God, though he should slay them, though he should starve them, but to teach them to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly. Heb. 11. 14. 16. We have need of something to weaken us from this world, and make us long for a better.

2. Still when there was famine in Canaan they did not sell him into Egypt, but respected him according to his merits, who knew but he might have done the same thing for Jacob's family, which now he had done for Pharaoh, and the Egyptians might then have come to them to buy corn; but those who drive away from among them wise and good men, know not what they do. 3. Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt; he saw the corn that his neighbours had brought the year before, and was a year to come, to see where supplies are to be had, and to see other's supplied. Shall others get food for their souls, and shall we starve while it is to be had? 4. He reproved his sons for delaying to provide corn for their families, Why do ye look one upon another? Note, When we are in trouble and want, it is folly for us to stand looking upon one another, that is, to stand desponding and despairing, as if we were so хоро to let the corn stand, or despising either which shall have the honour of going first, or which shall have the safety of coming last; to stand deliberating and debating what we shall do, and doing nothing; to stand dreaming under a spirit of sloth, as if we had nothing to do, and to stand delaying, as if we had time to command. Let it never be said, We left that to be done to-morrow, as we could well have done it to-day. He quickened them to go to Egypt. Get not down thither. Masters of families must not only pray for daily bread for their families, and food convenient, but must lay out themselves with care and industry to provide it.

II. Their obedience to these orders, v. 3. They went down to buy corn; they did not send their servants, but very providently went themselves to lay out their own money. Let none think themselves great or too good to take pains. Masters of families should see with their own eyes, and take heed of leaving too much to servants. Only Benjamin went not with them, for he was his father's darling. To Egypt they came, among others, and having a considerable cargo of corn to buy, they were bought before Joseph himself; and, probably, expected they would come; and according to the laws of courtesy, they bowed down themselves before him, v. 6. Now their empty sheaves did oblige to his full ones. Compare this with Isa. 60. 14. and Rev. 3. 9.

7. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food. 3. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. 9. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 10. And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. 11. We are all one man's sons; we are true men; thy servants are no spies. 12. And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come. 13. And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not. 14. And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies. 15. Hereby ye shall be proved; by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. 16. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye are spies. 17. And he put them altogether into ward three days. 18. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live; for I fear God. 19. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: 20. But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

We may well wonder that Joseph during the 20 years that he had now been in Egypt, especially during the last 7 years that he had been in power there, never sent to his father to acquaint him with his circumstances; and it is strange that he who so often went through all the land of Egypt, (ch. 41. 45, 46.) never made an excursion to Canaan, to visit his aged father, when he was in the borders of Egypt, that lay next to Canaan; perhaps it would not have been above three or four days journey for him in his chariot. It is a probable conjecture, that his whole management of himself in this affair was by special direction from Heaven, that the purpose of God concerning Jacob and his family might be accomplished. When Joseph's brethren came, he
knew them by many a satisfactory token, but they knew not him; little thinking to find him there, v. 8. He remembered the dreams, (v. 9.) but they had forgotten them. The laying up of God's oracles in our hearts, will be of excellent use to us in all our conduct. Joseph had an eye to his dreams which he knew to be divine, in his carriage toward his brethren, and aimed at the accomplishment of them, and the bringing of his brethren to repentance for their former sins; and both those points were gained.

1. He showed himself very rigorous and harsh with them; the very manner of his speaking, considering the post he was in, was enough to frighten them; for he spake roughly to them, v. 7. He charged them with bad designs against the government, (v. 9.) treated them as dangerous persons, Ye are spies, protesting by the life of Pharaoh that they were so, v. 16. Some make that an oath, others make it no more than a vehement assurance; like that, as thy soul liveth; however, it was more than yea, yea, and nay, nay, and therefore came of evil. Note, Bad words are soon learned by converse with those that use them, but not so soon unlearned. Joseph, by being much at court, got the courtier's oath, By the life of Pharaoh; perhaps designed hereby to confirm his brethren in their belief that he was an Egyptian, and not an Israelite; though this was a small thing, yet that which he was, as Abraham; when Peter would prove himself no disciple of Christ, he cursed and swore. Now, why was Joseph thus hard upon his brethren? We may be sure it was not from a spirit of revenge, that he might trample upon them now, who had formerly trampled upon him; he was not a man of that temper. But, (1.) It was to enrich his own dreams, and complete the accomplishment of them. (2.) It was to shew them the instability of human instances; God will often be more exact to get out of them an account of the state of their family, which he knew they had to know; they would have discovered him, if he had asked as a friend, therefore he asks as a judge. Not seeing his brother Benjamin with them, perhaps he began to suspect that they had made away with him too, and therefore gives them occasion to speak of their father and brother. Note, God in his providence sometimes has harsh with those he loves, and speaks roughly to those whom he has yet great mercy in store for. There, henceupon, were very submissive; they spake to him with all the respect imaginable, Nay, my lord; (v. 10.) a great change since they said, Behold, this dreamer comes. They very modestly deny the change, We are not spies; they tell him their business, that they came to buy food, a justifiable errand, and the same that many strangers came to Egypt upon this time; they undertake to give a particular account of themselves and their family; (v. 13.) that was what he wanted.

3. He clapped them all up in prison for three days, v. 17. Thus God deals with the scorners he designs for special comfort and honour; he first humbles them, and terrifies them, and brings them under a spirit of bondage, and then binds up their wounds by the spirit of adoption.

4. He concluded with them, at last, that one of them should be left as hostage, and the rest should go home and fech Benjamin. It was a very encouraging word he said to them, (v. 18.) I fear God; as if he had said, You may assure yourselves I will do you no wrong; I dare not, for I know that, high as I am, there is one higher than I. Note, With the fear of God, we have reason to expect fair dealing. The fear of God will be a check upon those that are in power, to restrain them from abusing their power to oppression and tyranny; those that have no one else to stand in awe of, ought to stand in awe of their own consciences. See Neh. 5. 15. So did not I, because of the fear of God.

21. And they said one to another, We are very guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. 22. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also, his blood is required. 23. And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter. 24. And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. 25. Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them. 26. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed hence. 27. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. 28. And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and, lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

Here is, 1. The penitent reflection Joseph's brethren made upon the wrong they had formerly done to him, v. 21. They talked the matter over in the Hebrew tongue, not suspecting that Joseph, whom they took for a native of Egypt, understood them, much less that he was the person they spake of. 1. They remembered with regret the barbarous cruelty wherewith they persecuted him, We are very guilty concerning our brother: we do not read that they said this, during their three days' imprisonment; but now when the matter was come to some issue, and they saw themselves still embarrased, now they began to relent. Perhaps Joseph's mention of the fear of God, (v. 18.) put them upon consideration, and extended this reflection. Now see here, (1.) The office of conscience; it is a remembrancer, to bring to mind things long since said and done, to show us wherein we have erred, though it was long ago, as this reflection above was above twenty years after the sin was committed. As time will not wear out the guilt of sin, so it will not blot out the records of conscience; when the guilt of this sin of Joseph's brethren was fresh, they made light of it, and sat down to eat bread; but now, long afterward, their consciences reminded them of it. (2.) The benefit of afflictions; they often prove the happy and effectual means of awakening conscience, and bringing sin to our remembrance, Job 13. 26. (3.) The evil of guilt concerning our brethren; of all their sins, that was it that conscience now reproached them for; whenever we think we have wrong done to us, we ought to remember the wrong we have done to others. Ecc. 7. 21. 22. Reuben only remained with comfort, that he had been an advocate for his brother, and had done what he could to prevent the mischief they did him, (v. 22.) Spake
not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child? 

Note, (1.) It is an aggravation of the sin, that it was committed against admonitions. (2.) When we come to share with others in their calamities, it will be a comfort to us, if we have the testimony of our consciences for us, that we did not share with them in their inqui¬ties, but, in our places, witnessed against them. This shall be our rejoicing in the day of evil, and take out the sting.

II. Joseph's tenderness toward them upon this occasion. He retired from them to weep, v. 24. Though his reason directed that he should still carry himself as a stranger to them, because they were not as yet humble enough for that action could not but work, for he was a man of a tender spirit. This represents the tender mercies of our God toward repenting sinners. See Jer. 31. 20. Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still. See Judg. 10. 16.

III. The imprisonment of Simeon, v. 24. He chose him for the hostage, probably, because he remembered him to have been his most bitter enemy, or because he observed him now to be least humble and concerned; he bound him before their eyes, to affect them all; or perhaps it is intimated that though he bound him with some severity before them, yet afterward, when they were gone, he took off his hands.

IV. The dismissal of the rest of them. They came for corn, and even they had; and not only so, but every man had his money restored in his sack; nor could that mercy our Joseph, gives but supplies without money and without price. Therefore the poor are invited to buy, Rev. 3. 17, 18. This put them into great consternation, v. 28. Their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done to us? 1. It was really a merciful event: for I hope it will be allowed they had no wrong done them, (and if they had their money given them back.) but a kindness; yet they were thus terrified by it. Note, (1.) Guilty consciences are apt to take good providences in a bad sense, and to put wrong constructions even upon those things that make for them. They flee when none pursues. (2.) Wealth sometimes brings as much care along with it as want does, and more too. If they had been robbed of their money, they could not have been so frightened as when they were now, when they found their money in their sacks. Thus he whose ground brought forth plentifully, said, What shall I do? Luke 12. 17. 2. Yet, in their circumstances, it was very amazing. They knew that the Egyptians abhorred a Hebrew, (ch. 43. 32.) and therefore, since they could not expect to receive any kindness from them, they concluded that this was done with a design to pick a quarrel with them; the rather, because the man, the elder of the land, had charged them as spies. Their own consciences also were awake, and their sins set in order before them; and this puts them into confusion.

Note, (1.) When men's spirits are sinking, every thing helps to sink them. (2.) When the events of Providence concerning us are surprising, it is good to inquire what it is that God has done, and do being with us, and to consider the operation of his hands.

29. And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them, saying, 30. The man who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies: 32. We be twelve brethren, sons of our father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. 33. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone: 34. And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men: so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land. 35. And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that, behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid. 36. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me. 27. And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again. 38. And he said, My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Here is, 1. The report which Jacob's sons made to their father, of the great distress they had been in Egypt; how they had been suspected, and threatened, and obliged to leave Simeon a prisoner there, till they should bring Benjamin with them thither. Who would have thought of this, when they left home? When we go abroad, we should consider how many sad accidents, that we little think of, may befall us before we return home. 2. We know not what a day may bring forth, we ought therefore to be always ready for the worst.

The impression this made upon the good man. The very bundles of money which Joseph returned, in kindness, to his father, frightened him; (v. 35.) for he concluded it was done with some mischievous design, or perhaps suspected his own sons to have committed some offence, and so to have run themselves into a premunire—a penalty; which is intimated in what he says, (v. 36.) Me have ye bereaved. He seems to lay the fault upon them; knowing their characters, he feared they had provoked the Egyptians, and perhaps forcibly or fraudulently, brought home their money. Jacob is here much out of temper. (1.) He has very melancholy apprehensions concerning the present state of his family; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; whereas Joseph was in honour, and Simeon in the way to it. Note, We often perplex ourselves with our own thoughts, in matters of fact. True griefs arise from false intelligence and suppositions, 2 Sam. 13. 31. Joseph gives up Joseph for gone, and Simeon and Benjamin as being in danger; and concludes, All these things are against me. It proved otherwise, that all these were for him, were working together for his good, and the good of his family; yet here he thinks them all against him. Note, Through our ignorance or mistake, and the weakness of our faith, we often apprehend that to be against us, which is really for us. We are afflicted in body,
estate, name, and relations; and we think all these things are against us, whereas these are really working for us the weight of glory. (2.) He is at present resolved that Benjamin shall not go down. Reuben will undertake to bring him back in safety; (v. 57.) not that he will not; and the common disasters of travellers; but he foolishly bids Jacob slay his two sons, (which it is likely he was very proud of,) if he brought him not back; as if the death of two grandsons could satisfy Jacob for the death of a son. No, Jacob's present thoughts are, My son shall not go down with you. He plainly intimates a distrust of them, remembering that he never saw Joseph since he had been with them; therefore, "Benjamin shall not go with you, by the way in which you go; for ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Note, It is bad with a family, when children conduct themselves so ill, that their parents know not how to trust them.

CHAP. XLIII.

Here the story of Joseph's brethren is carried on, and very particularly related. 1. Their melancholy parting with their father Jacob in Canaan, v. 1-19. Their pleasant meeting with Joseph in Egypt, v. 15-34. For, in this chapter, nothing occurs there, but what was agreeable and pleasant.

1. And the famine was sore in the land. 2. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. 3. And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. 4. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food: 5. But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you. 6. And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother? 7. And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? Have ye another brother? And we told him according to the tenor of these words: could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down? 8. And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live, and not die, both we and thou, and also our little ones. 9. I will be surety for him: of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: 10. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

Here, 1. Jacob urges his sons to go and buy corn in Egypt, v. 1, 2. The famine continued; the corn they had bought, was all spent, for it was meat that perisheth. Jacob, as a good master of a family, is in care to provide for those of his own house, food convenient; and shall not God provide for his children, for the household of faith? Jacob bids them go buy a little food; now, in time of scarcity, a little must suffice, for nature is content with a little. 2. Judah urges him to consent that Benjamin should go down with them, how much soever it went against his feelings and previous determination. Note, it is not at all inconsistent with the honour and duty which children owe their parents, humbly and modestly to advise them, and, as occasion is, to reason with them; Plead with your mother, plead, Hos. 2. 2. (1.) He insists upon the absolute necessity they were under of bringing Benjamin with them; which he, who was a witness to all that had passed in Egypt, was a more competent judge of than Jacob could be. Joseph's protestation (v. 3.) may be alluded to, to show upon what terms we must draw nigh to God; unless we bring Christ along with us, with the arm of faith, we must not see the face of God with comfort. (2.) He engages to take all possible care of him, and to do his utmost for his safety, v. 8, 9. Jacob's conscience had lately smitten him for what he had done a great while ago against Joseph; (ch. 42. 21.) and as an evidence of the truth of his repentance, he is ready to undertake, as far as a man could do it, for Benjamin's security. He will not only not wrong him, but will be the custodian and guardian, even as the case will admit; when he knew not how he could retrieve Joseph, he would make some amends for the irreparable injury he had done him, by doubling his care concerning Benjamin.

11. And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds: 12. And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; and venture it was an oversight: 13. Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: 14. And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

Observe here, 1. Jacob's persuadableness. He would be ruled by reason, though they were his inferiors that urged it. He saw the necessity of the case; and, since there was no remedy, he consented to yield to the necessity, (v. 11.) "If it must be so now, take your brother. If no corn can be had, but upon these terms, we may as well expose him to the perils of the journey, as suffer ourselves and families, and Benjamin among the rest, to perish for want of bread." So he answered him, This is restitution, as the case will admit; when he knew not how he could retrieve Joseph, he would make some amends for the irreparable injury he had done him, by doubling his care concerning Benjamin.

II. Jacob's prudence and justice, which appeared in three things. 1. He sent back the money which they had found in the sack's mouth, with this discreet construction of it, Peradventure it was an oversight. Note, Honesty obliges us to make restitution, not only of that which comes to us by our own fault, but of that which comes to us by the mistakes of others. Though we get it by oversight, if we keep it, when the oversight is discovered, it
is kept by deceit. In the stating of accounts, errors must be excepted, even those that make for us, as well as those that make against us. Jacob's words furnish us with a favourable construction to put upon that which we are tempted to regard as an injury and an affront; pass it by, and say, Peradventure it was an oversight. 2. He sent double money, as much again as they took the time before, upon supposition that the price of corn might be risen; or, that if it should be insisted upon, they might pay a ransom for Simeon, or his pris n-fees; or, to show a generous spirit, that they might be the more likely to find generous treatment with the man, the lord of the land. 3. He sent a present of such things as the land afforded, and as were scarce in Egypt, balm and honey, &c. (v. 11.) the commodities that Canaan exported, ch. 37. 25. Note, (1.) Providence dispenses its gifts variously. Some countries produce one commodity, others another, that commerce may be preserved. (2.) Honey and spice will never make up the want of bread-corn. The famine was sore in Canaan, and yet they had balm and myrrth, &c. We may live well enough up a plain food without dainties; but we cannot live upon dainties without plain food. Let us thank God, that that which is most needful and useful, is generally most cheap and common. (3.) A gift in secret faceth wrath, Prov. 21. 14. Jacob's sons were unjustly accused as spies, yet Jacob is willing to be at the expense of a present, to pacify the accuser. Solomon did not think much to buy peace, even there where we may justly demand it, and insist upon it as our right.

III. Jacob's piety appearing in his prayer, v. 14. God Almighty give you mercy before the man! Jacob had formerly turned an angry brother into a kind one with a present and a prayer; and here he betakes himself to the same tried method, and it sped well. Note, Those that would find mercy with men, must seek it of God, who has all hearts in his hands, and turns them as he pleases.

IV. Jacob's patience; he concludes all with this, "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved; If I must part with them thus one after another, I must acquiesce, and say, The will of the Lord be done." Note, It is our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to the sorest afflictions, and make the best of them; for there is a thing got by striving with our Maker, 2 Sam. 13. 25, 26.

15. And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph. 16. And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready; for these men shall dine with me at noon. 17. And the man did as Joseph bade; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house. 18. And the men were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. 19. And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house. 20. And said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food:

21. And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. 22. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. 23. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them. 24. And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. 25. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

Jacob's sons, having got leave to take Benjamin with them, were observant of the orders their father had given them, and went down the second time into Egypt to buy corn. If we should ever know what a famine of the word means, let us not think it much to travel as far for spiritual food, as they did here for corn; for here we have an account of what passed between their steward, who, some conjecture was in the secret, and knew them to be Joseph's brethren, and helped to humour the thing; I rather think not, because no man must be present when Joseph afterward made himself known to them, ch. 45. 1.

I. Joseph's steward has orders from his master, (who was busy selling corn, and receiving money,) to take them to his house, and make ready for entertainment. Though Joseph, saw Benjamin there, he would not leave his work at working-time, nor trust another with it. Note, Business must take place of civility in its season. Our needful employments must not be neglected, no, not to pay respects to our friends.

II. Even this frightened them; (v. 18.) They were afraid, because they were brought into Joseph's house. The just challenges of their own consciences, and Joseph's violent suspicions of them, forbade them to expect any favour, and suggested to them, that this was done with a bad design upon them. Note, These that are guilty and timorous, are apt to make the worst of everything. Now they thought they should be reckoned with about the money in the sacks' mouths, and should be charged as cheats, and men not fit to be dealt with, who had taken advantage of the hurry of the market, to carry off their corn unpaid for. They therefore laid the case before the steward, that he, being apprised of it, might stand between them and danger. Herein they gave substantial proof of their honesty, that, before they were charged with taking back their money, they produced it. Note, Injustice and cheats, and men not fit to be dealt with, will clear themselves as the light of the morning.

III. The steward encouraged them: (v. 23.) Peace be to you, fear not; though he knew not what his master drove at, yet, he was aware, these were men whom he meant no harm to, while he thus assuaged them; and therefore he directs them to look at the Divine Providence in the return of their money: Your God, and the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks. Observe, 1. Hereby he shows that he had no suspicion at all of dishonesty in them: for, of what we get by deceit, we cannot, say, "God gives it us."
2. Hereby he silences their further inquiry about it; "Ask not how it came thisheth, Providence brought it, and let that satisfy you." 3. It appears by what he said, that, by his good master's instructions, he was brought to the knowledge of the true God, the God of the Hebrews. It may justly be expected that those who are servants in religious families, should take all fit occasions to speak of God and his providence with reverence and seriousness.

4. He directs them to look up to God, and acknowledge his providence in the good bargain; they must own themselves indebted to God, as our God, and the God of our fathers, (a God in covenant with us and them,) for all our successes and advantages, and the kindesses of our friends; for every creature is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. The steward encouraged them, not only in words but in deeds; for he made very much of them till his master came, v. 24.

26. And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. 27. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? 28. And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance. 29. And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son. 30. And Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. 31. And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread. 32. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians, which did eat with him, by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. 33. And they sat before him, the first-born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another. 34. And he took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

Here is,

I. The great respect that Joseph's brethren paid to him; when they brought him the present, they bowed themselves before him; (v. 25.) and again, when they gave him an account of their father's health, they made obeisance, and called him, Thy servant our father, v. 28. Thus were Joseph's dreams fulfilled more and more: and even the father, by the sons, bowed before him, according to the dream, ch. 37. 16. Probably, Jacob had directed them, if they had occasion to speak of him to the man, the lord of the land, to call him his servant.

II. The great kindness that Joseph showed to them, while they little thought it was a brotherly kindness. He said,

1. His kind inquiry concerning Jacob, Is he yet alive? A very fit question to be asked concerning any, especially concerning old people; for we are dying daily; it is strange, that we are yet alive. Jacob had said, many years ago, I will go to the grave to my son; but he is yet alive; we must not cease when we should.

2. The kindness; since he took Benjamin, his own brother. (1.) He put up a prayer for him, (v. 29.) God be gracious unto thee, my son. Joseph's favour, though he was the lord of the land, would do him little good, unless God were gracious to him. Many seek the ruler's favour, but he directs him to seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers. (2.) He shed some tears for him, v. 30. His natural affection to his brethren, his joy to see him, his concern to see him and the rest of them in distress for bread, and the remembrance of his own griefs since he last saw him, produced a great agitation in him, which perhaps was the more uneasy, because he endeavoured to stifle and suppress it; but he was forced to retire into his closet, there to give vent to his feelings by tears. Note, [1.] Tears of tenderness and affection are no disqualifications at all, even to the greatest and wisest men. [2.] Graciously and tenderly, we should not repress our tears. My soul shall weep in secret, says the prophet, Jer. 13. 17. Peter went out and wept bitterly. See Matt. 26. 75.

3. His kind entertainment of them all; when his weeping had subsided so that he could refrain himself, he sat down to dinner with them, treated them nobly, and yet contrived every thing to amuse them. (1.) He ordered three tables to be spread, one for his brethren, another for the Egyptians that dined with him, (for so different were their customs, that they did not care to eat together,) another for himself, who durst not own himself a Hebrew, and yet would not sit with the Egyptians. See here an instance, [1.] Of hospitality and good house-keeping, which is a very commendable thing, according as the ability is. [2.] Of compliance with people's humours, even whimsical ones, as Bishop Patrick calls this of the Egyptians not eating with the Hebrews. Though Joseph was the lord of the land, and orders were given that all people should obey him; yet he would not force the Egyptians to eat with the Hebrews, against their minds, but let them enjoy their humours; spirits being greatly generated to impatience at the early distance between Jews and Gentiles; one table would not hold them. (2.) He placed his brethren according to their seniority, (v. 33.) as if he could certainly divine. Some think they placed themselves so, according to their custom; but if so, I see not why such particular notice is taken of it, especially as a thing they marvelled at. (3.) He gave them a very plentiful entertainment, sent messes to the others, and himself: his bread was the more generous in him, and the more obligeing to them, because of the present scarcity of provisions. In a day of famine, it is enough to be fed; but they here were feasted. Perhaps they had not such a good dinner for many months. It is said, They drank and were merry; their cares and fears were now over, and they ate their bread with joy; concluding they were now appareled in good taste, with the man, the lord of the land. If God accept our works, our present, we have reason to be cheerful. Yet when we sit, as they here did, to eat with a ruler, we should consider what is before us, and not indulge our appetite, or he desirous of dainties. Prov. 23. 1-3. Joseph gave them to understand that Benjamin was his favourite; for his mess was five times as much as any of theirs, not as if he
would have him eat so much more than the rest; for then he must eat more than would do him good; (and it is no act of friendship, but an injury and unkindness rather, to press any either to eat or drink to excess;) but thus he would testify his particular respect for him, that he might try whether his brethren would envy Benjamin his larger messes, as formerly they had envied him his finer coat. And it must be our rule, in such cases, to be content with what we have, and not to grudge at what others have.

CHAP. XLIV.

Joseph having entertained his brethren, dismissed them; but here we have them brought back in a greater fright than any they had been in yet. Observe, I. What method he took, both to humble them further, and also to try their affection to his brother Benjamin, by which he would be able to judge of the sincerity of their repentance for what they had done against him, which he was desirous to be satisfied of, before he manifested his reconciliation to them. This he contrived to do by bringing Benjamin into distress, r. 1-11. II. The success of the experiment; he found them all heartfeltly concerned, and Judah particularly, both for the safety of Benjamin and for the comfort of their aged father, v. 18-34.

1. AND he commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man’s money in his sack’s mouth. 2. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack’s mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken. 3. As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. 4. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? 5. Is not this it in which my lord dranketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing. 6. And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. 7. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing: 8. Behold, the money which we found in our sacks’ mouths we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord’s house silver or gold? 9. With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord’s bondmen. 10. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless.

11. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. 12. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. 13. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. 14. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph’s house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground. 15. And Joseph said unto them, what deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? 16. And Judah said, What shall we say unto our lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord’s servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found. 17. And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Here, Joseph heaps further kindnesses upon his brethren, fills their sacks, returns their money, and sends them away full of gladness. But,

II. He exercises them with further trials. Our God thus humbles those whom he loves, and loads them with benefits. Joseph ordered his steward to put a fine silver cup which he had, (and which it is likely, was used at his table when they dined with him,) into Benjamin’s sack’s mouth, that it might seem as if he had stolen it from the table, and put it there himself, after his corn was delivered. If Benjamin had stolen it, it had been the basest piece of dishonesty and ingratitude that could be; and if Joseph, by ordering it to be put there, had designed really to take advantage against him, it had been in him most horrid cruelty and oppression; but it proved in the issue, that there was no harm done, nor any designed on either side. Observe

1. How the pretended criminals were pursu’d and arrested, on suspicion of having stolen a silver cup. The steward charged them with ingratitude, rewarding evil for good; with folly, in taking away a cup of daily use, and which therefore would soon be missed, and diligent search made for it; for so it may be read, (v. 5.) Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, (in having a particular fondness for it,) and for which he would search thoroughly? Or, “by which, leaving it carelessly at your table, he would make trial whether you were honest men or no?”

2. How they pleaded for themselves; they solemnly protested their innocence, and detestation of so base a thing; (v. 7.) urged it as an instance of their honesty, that they had brought their money back; (v. 8.) and offered to submit to the severest punishment, if they should be found guilty, v. 9, 10.

3. How the theft was fastened upon Benjamin; in his sack the cup was found, to whom Joseph had been particularly kind. Benjamin, no doubt, was ready to deny upon oath, the taking of the cup, and we may suppose him as little liable to suspicion as any of them; but it is in vain to confront such notions, even if the cup be found in the person of him they dare not arraign Joseph’s justice, nor so much as suggest that perhaps he that had put their money in their sacks’ mouths, had put the cup there; but they throw themselves upon Joseph’s mercy. And,

4. Here is their humble submission, v. 16. (1.) They acknowledge the righteousness of God, God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; perhaps referring to the injury they had formerly done to Joseph, for which they thought God was now rec
koning with them. Note, Even in those afflictions wherein we apprehend ourselves wronged by men, yet we must own that God is righteous, and finds out our iniquity. (2.) They surrender themselves prisoners to Joseph, We are my lord's servants. Now Joseph's dreams were accomplished to the utmost; their bowing so often, and doing obeisance, might be looked upon as a compliment, and no more than what other strangers did: but the construction they themselves in their dreams had put upon his dreams, was, Shall thou have dominion over us? ch. 37. 8. And in that sense it is now at length fulfilled, they own themselves his vassals; since they did invidiously so understand it, so it shall be fulfilled in them.

5. Joseph with an air of justice, gives sentence, that Benjamin only should be kept in bondage, and the rest should be dismissed; for why should any suffer but the guilty? Perhaps Joseph intended hereby to try Benjamin's temper, whether he could bear such a hardship as this, with the calmness and composure of mind that became a wise and good man; in short, whether he was indeed his own brother, in spirit, as well as blood; for Joseph himself had been falsely accused, and had suffered hard things in consequence, and yet kept possession of his own soul: however, it is plain, he intended hereby to try the affection of his brethren to him, and to their father. If they had gone away contentedly, and left Benjamin in bonds, no doubt Joseph would soon have released and promoted him, and sent notice to Jacob, and would have left the rest of his brethren justly to suffer for their hard-heartedness; but they proved to be better affected to Benjamin than he feared. Note, We cannot judge what men are, by what they have been formerly; nor what they will do, by what they have done heretofore; it is very like to be wiser and better. They that had sold Joseph, yet would not now abandon Benjamin: the worst may mend in time.

18. Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. 19. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? 20. And we said unto our lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. 21. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. 22. And we said unto our lord, The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die. 23. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. 24. And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord. 25. And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. 26. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. 27. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: 28. And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since: 29. And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. 30. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life: 31. It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. 32. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. 33. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. 34. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me! Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

We have here a most ingenious and pathetic speech, which Judah made to Joseph on Benjamin's behalf, to obtain his discharge from the sentence passed upon him: either Judah was a better friend to Benjamin than the rest were, and more solicitous to bring him off; or, he thought himself under greater obligations to endeavour it than the rest, because he had passed his word to his father for his safe return; or, the rest chose him for their spokesman, because he was a man of better sense, and better spirit, and had a greater command of language than any of them. Judah's address, as it is here, is so very natural, and so expressive of his present feelings, that we cannot but suppose Moses, who wrote it so long after, to have written it under the special direction of him that made man's mouth. A great deal of unaffected art, and unstudied unforced rhetoric, there is in this speech.

I. He addresses himself to Joseph with a great deal of respect and deference; calls him his lord, himself and his brethren his servants, begs his patient hearing, and ascribes sovereign authority to him, "Thou art even as Pharaoh; whose favour we desire, and whose wrath we dread, as we do Pharaoh's." Religion does not destroy good manners, and it is prudence to speak obligingly to those at whose mercy we live: titles of honour to those that are entitled to them, are not flattering titles.

II. He represented Benjamin as one well worthy of his compassionate consideration: (v. 20.) he was a little one, compared with the rest of them; the youngest, not acquainted with the world, nor ever inured to hardship, having always been brought up tenderly with his father, it made the case more pitiful, that he alone was left of his mother, and his brother was dead, namely, Joseph; little did Judah think, what a tender point he touched on now. Judah knew that Joseph was sold, and therefore had reason enough to think that he was alive; however, he could not be sure that he was dead, but they had made their father believe he was dead: and now they had told that lie so long, that
they had forgotten the truth, and began to believe the lie themselves.

III. He urged it very closely, that Joseph had himself constrained them to bring Benjamin with them, and had expressed a desire to see him, (v. 21.) and had forbidden them his presence, unless they brought Benjamin with them, (v. 23, 26.) all which intimated that he designed him some kindness, and must he be brought with so much difficulty to the preferment of a perpetual slavery? Was he not brought to Egypt, in obedience, purely in obedience, to the command of Joseph? and could he not show some regard to the distress of his father and family? 4. Some observe, that Jacob's sons, in reasoning with their father, had said, "We will not go down, unless Benjamin go with us," (ch. 43. 5.) but that when Judah comes here to relate the story, he expresses it more directly, "We cannot go down, with any expectation to speed well." Indecent words spoken in haste to our superiors, should be recalled and amended.

IV. The great argument he insists upon, was, the insupportable grief it would be to his aged father, if Benjamin should be left behind in servitude; "His father loved him," v. 20. This they had pleaded against Joseph's insisting on his coming down, (v. 22.) "If he should leave his father, his father would die; much more if now he be left behind, never more to return to him." This the old man, of whom they spoke, had heard the death of his grand-son, (v. 29.) If any mischief befell him, he shall bring down my gray hairs, that crown of glory, with sorrow to the grave. This therefore Judah presses with a great deal of earnestness, "His life is bound up in the lad's life;" (v. 30.) when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will faint away, and die immediately, (v. 31.) or will abandon himself to such a degree of sorrow, as will, in a few days, make an end of him. Judge, now, how Judah pleads, that, for his part, he could not bear to see this, (v. 34.) "Let me not see the evil that shall come on my father." Note, It is the duty of children to be very tender of their parents' comfort, and to be afraid of every thing that may be an occasion of grief to them. Thus the love that descended first, must ascend again, and something must be done towards a recompense for their expectations in the fore-going sentence, and to show his sincerity in this plea, offers himself to become a bondman instead of Benjamin, v. 33. Thus the law would be satisfied; Joseph would be no loser; (for we may suppose Judah a more able-bodied man than Benjamin, and fitter for service;) and Jacob would better bear the loss of him than of Benjamin. Now, so far was he from grieving at his father's particular fondness for Benjamin, that he is himself willing to be a bondman, to indulge it.

Now, had Joseph been as Judah supposed him, an utter stranger to the family, yet even common humanity would not but be wrought upon by such powerful reasons as these: for nothing could be said more moving, more tender; it was enough to move it he was no longer, but to Joseph, and that to his face. Hence for Benjamin, that he is himself willing to be a bondman, to indulge it.

Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. 2. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. 3. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; Doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. 4. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. 5. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. 6. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. 7. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house
and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. 9. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: 10. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast. 11. And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. 12. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. 13. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. 14. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. 15. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

Judah and his brethren were waiting for an answer, and could not but be amazed to discover instead of the gravity of a judge, the natural affection of a father or brother.

I. Joseph ordered all his attendants to withdraw, v. 1. The private conversations of friends are the most free: when Joseph would put on love, he put off state; which it was not fit his servants should be witnesses of. Thus Christ graciously manifests himself and his loving kindness to his people, out of the sight and hearing of the world.

II. Tears were the preface or introduction to his discourse, v. 2. He had damped up this stream a great while, and with much ado; but now it swelled so high that Joseph could not control it, but burst it asunder, left the flood to run away, and wept aloud, so that those whom he had forbidden to see him, could not but hear him. These were tears of tenderness and strong affection, and with these he threw off that austerity with which he had hitherto carried himself toward his brethren; for he could bear it no longer. This represents the divine compassion toward returning penitents, as much as that of the father of the prodigal, Luke 15. 20. Hos. 11. 8, 9.

III. He very abruptly (as one uneasy till it was out) tells them who he was, I am Joseph. They knew him only by his Egyptian name, Zaphnath-paanach, his Hebrew name being lost and forgotten in Egypt; but now he teaches them to call him by that, I am Joseph: may, that they might not suspect it was another of the same name, he explains himself (v. 4.) I am Joseph, your brother. This would both humble them yet more for their sin in selling him, and would encourage them to hope for kind treatment. Thus when Christ would convince Paul, he said, I am Jesus; and when he would comfort his disciples, he said, It is I, be not afraid. This word, at first, startled Joseph's brethren; they start-

ed back through fear, or, at least, stood still astonished, but Joseph called kindly and familiarly to them. Come near, I pray you. Thus when Christ manifests himself to his people, he encourages them to draw near to him with a true heart. Perhaps being about to speak of their selling of him, he would not speak aloud, lest the Egyptians should overhear, and it should make the Hebrews to be yet more an abomination to them; therewith he would have them come near, that he might whisper with them, which, now that the tide of his passion was a little over, he was able to do; whereas, at first, he could not but cry out.

IV. He endeavours to soften their grief for the injuries they had done him, by showing them, that whatever they designed, God meant it for good, and had brought much good out of it, (v. 5.) Be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves. Sinners must groan and be angry with themselves, for their sins; but, though none of those who have done the evil to you, or to others, for that is no thanks to the sinner, but true penitents should be greatly affected with it, when they see God bringing good out of evil, meat out of theater. Though we must not with this consideration extenuate our own sins, and so take off the edge of our repentance; yet it may do well thus to extenuate the sins of others, and so take off the edge of our angry resentments. Thus Joseph does here; his brethren needed not to fear that he would avenge upon them an injury which God's providence had made to turn so much to his advantage, and that of his family. Now he tells them how long the famine was likely to last, five years; yet, (v. 6,) what a capacity he was in of being kind to his relations and friends, which is the greatest satisfaction that wealth and power can give to a good man, v. 8. So he adds a favourable colour he puts upon the injury they had done him, God sent me before you, v. 5, 7. Note, 1. God's Israel is the particular care of God's providence. Joseph reckoned that his advancement was designed, not so much to save a whole kingdom of Egyptians, as to preserve a small family of Israelites for the Lord's portion is his people; whatever goes with others, they shall be secure.

2. Providence looks a great way forward, and has a long reach; even long before the years of plenty, Providence was preparing for the supply of Jacob's house in the years of famine. The Psalmist praiseth God for this, (Ps. 105. 17.) He sent a man before them, even Joseph. God sees his work from the beginning to the end, but we do not. Eccl. 3. 11. How admirable are the projects of Providence! How provident are the ways of God to all that are therein wheels, and yet all directed by the eyes in the wheels, and the spirit of the living creature! Let us therefore judge nothing before the time.

3. God often works by contraries; the envy and contention of brethren threaten the ruin of families, yet, in this instance, they prove the occasion of preserving Jacob's family. Joseph had never been the shepherd and stone of Israel, if his brethren had not shot at him, and hated him; even those that had wickedly sold Joseph into Egypt, yet themselves reaped the benefit of the good God brought out of it; as those that put Christ to death, were many of them saved by his death.

4. God must have all the glory of the seasonable preservation of those in perils, by what way soever they are effected, (v. 8.) It was not you that sent me hither, but God. As, on the one hand, they must not fret at it, because it ended so well; so, on the other hand, they must not be proud of it, because it was God's doing, and not theirs. They designed, by selling him into Egypt, to defeat his dreams, but God thereby designed to accomplish them. Isa. 19. 6. 7. Which he wrought, not they.

5. He promises to take care of his father and all the family during the rest of the years of famine.

1. He desires that his father may speedily be made glad with the tidings of his life and dignity. His brethren must hasten to Canaan, and must acquaint Jacob that his son Joseph was lord of all.
Egypt; (v. 9.) they must tell him of all his glory there, v. 13. He knew it would be a refreshing oil to his hoary head, and a sovereign cordial to his spirits. If any thing would make him young again, this would. He desires them to give themselves, and take with them to their father, all possible satisfaction of the truth of these surprising tidings, (v. 12.) Your eyes see that it is my mouth. If they would not recollect themselves, they might remember something of his features, speech, &c. and be satisfied. 2. He is very earnest that his father and all his family should come to him to Egypt; Come down unto me, tarry not, v. 9. He alludes his dwelling in Goshen, that part of Egypt which lay toward Canaan, that they might be mindful of the country from which they were to come out, v. 10. He promises to provide for him, (v. 11.) I will nourish. Note. It is the duty of children, if the necessity of their parents do at any time require it, to support and supply them to the utmost of their ability; and Corban will never excuse them, Mark 7. 11. This is showing piety at home, 1 Tim. 5. 4. Our Lord Jesus being, like Joseph, exalted to the highest honours and powers of the upper world, it is his will that all that are his, should be with him where he is, John 17. 2. This is his commandment, that we be with him now in faith and hope, and a heavenly conversation; and this is his promise, that we shall be for ever with him. VI. Endeavours were interchanged between him and his brethren. He began with the youngest, his own brother Benjamin, who was but about a yearold when he was separated from his brethren; they went upon each other's neck, (v. 14.) perhaps to think of their mother Rachel, who died in travail of Benjamin. Rachel in her husband and Jacob, had been lately weeping for her children, because, in his apprehension, they were not, Joseph gone, and Benjamin going; and now they are weeping for her, because she was not. After he had embraced Benjamin, he, in like manner, caressed them all; (v. 15.) and then, his brethren talked with him freely and familiarly of all the affairs of his father's house. After the tokens of true reconciliation, follow the instances of a sweet communion. 16. And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. 17. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; 18. And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. 19. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you waggons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. 20. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours'. 21. And the children of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them waggons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. 22. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. 23. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way. 24. So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. Here is, I. The kindness of Pharaoh to Joseph, and to his relations, for his sake; he bade his brethren welcome, (v. 16.) though it was a time of scarcity, and he was ready to be made use of. Nay, because it pleased Pharaoh, it surprised them too, at least they pretended to be pleased, because Pharaoh was. He engaged Joseph to send for his father down to Egypt, and promised to furnish them with all conveniences both for his removal thither, and his settlement there. If the good of all the land of Egypt (as it was now better stocked than any other land, thanks to Joseph, under God,) was shown them, he would charge them, as his own, even the fat of the land, (v. 18.) so that they need not regard their stuff, v. 20. What they had in Canaan he reckoned but stuff, in comparison with what he had for them in Egypt; and therefore if they should leave some of that behind them, let them not be discontented; Egypt would afford them enough to make up the losses of their journey. Thus these five for whom Christ intends shares in his heavenly glory, ought not to regard the stuff of this world; the best of its enjoyments are but stuff, but lumber; we cannot make sure of it while we are here, much less can we carry it away with us; let us not therefore be solicitous about it, nor set our eyes or hearts upon it; there are better things reserved for us in that blessed land, whither our Joseph is gone to prepare a place. II. The kindness of Joseph to his father and brethren. Joseph was respectful to Joseph, in gratitude, because he had been an instrument of much good to him and his kingdom, not only preserving it from the common calamity, but helping to make it considerable among the nations; for all their neighbours would say, 'Surely the Egyptians are a wise and understanding people, that are so well stocked in a time of scarcity.' For this reason, Pharaoh gave the right things for his coming to Joseph. Note. There is a gratitude owing even to inferiors; and when any have showed us kindness, we should study to requite it, not only to them, but to their relations. And Joseph likewise was respectful to his father and brethren in duty, because they were his near relations, though his brethren had been his enemies, and his father long a stranger. 1. He furnished them with necessaries, v. 21. He gave them water vessels and provisions for the way, both going and coming; for we never find that Jacob was very rich, and at this time, when the famine prevailed, we may suppose that he was rather poor. 2. He furnished them for ornament and delight. To his brethren he gave two suits a piece of good clothes, to Benjamin five suits, and money besides in his pocket, v. 22. To his father he gave a very handsome present of the varieties of Egypt, v. 23. Note. Those that are wealthy, should be generous, and devise liberal things; what is an abundance good for but to do good with it? 3. He dismissed them with a seasonable caution, (v. 24.) See that ye fall not out by the way. He knew they were but too apt to quarrelsome, and he had too often passed, which revealed the immorality of what they had done formerly against their brother, might give them occasion to quarrel. Joseph had observed them contend about it, ch. 42. 22.
To one they would say, "It was you that first upbraided him with his dreams," to another, "It was you that said, Let him go out to and forth!" It was you that stript him of his fine coat," to another, "It was you that threw him into the pit." &c. Now Joseph having forgiven them all, lays this obligation upon them, not to upbraid one another. This charge our Lord Jesus has given us, that we love one another, that we live in peace, that, whatever occurs, or whatever former occurrences are remembered, we forbear out to and forth. We have been the worse, every one of us, in some respect, to our Father. 

(2.) We are his brethren, and we shun our relation to him who is our Peace, if we fall out. (3.) We are guilty, verily guilty, and, instead of quarrelling with one another, have a great deal of reason to fall out with ourselves. (4.) We are, or hope to be, forgiven of God whom we have all offended, and therefore should be ready to forgive one another. (5.) We accept the way, a way that lies through the land of Egypt, where we have many eyes upon us, that seek occasion and advantage against us; a way that leads to Canaan, where we hope to be for ever in perfect peace.

25. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, 26. And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. 27. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: 28. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.

We have here the good news brought to Jacob.

1. The relation of it, at first, sunk his spirits: when, without any provoking, his sons came in, crying, Joseph is yet alive, every striving which should first proclaim it, perhaps he thought they bantered him, and the afflicted one; or, the very mention of Joseph's name revived his sorrow, so that his heart fainted; (v. 26.) it was a good while before he came to himself. He was in such care and fear about the rest of them, that, at this time, it would have been joy enough to him to hear that Simeon is released, and Benjamin is come side house; (for he had not yet a ready to despair concerning both these;) but to hear that Joseph is yet alive, is too good news to be true; he faints, for he believes it not. Note, We faint, because we do not believe; David himself had fainting, if he had not believed, Ps. 27. 13.

2. The confirmation of it, by degrees, revived his spirits: Jacob had easily believed his sons formerly, when they told him, Joseph is dead; but he can hardly believe: them now that they tell him, Joseph is alive. Weak and tender spirits are influenced more by fear than hope, and are more apt to receive impressions that are discouraging than those that are encouraging. But, at length, Jacob is convinced of the truth of the story, especially when he sees the wagons which were sent to carry him; for seeing is believing; then his spirit revived. Death is as the wagons that are sent to fetch us to Christ: the very sight of it approaching should revive us. Now Jacob is called Israel, (v. 28.) for he begins to recover his wonted vigour. (1.) It pleases him to think that Joseph is alive. He says nothing of Joseph's glory, which they told him of; it was enough to him that Joseph was alive. Note, Those that would be content with lesser degrees of comfort, are best prepared for greater. (2.) It pleases him to think of going to see him. Though he was old, and the journey long, yet he would go to see Joseph, because Joseph's business would not permit him to come to see him. Observe, He says, "I will go and see him," not, "I will go and live with him." Jacob was old, and did not expect to live long: "But I will go and see him before I die, and then let me depart in peace; let my eyes be refreshed with this sight before I go out; and then it is enough, I need no more to make me happy in this world." Note, It is good for us all to make death familiar to us, and to speak of it as near, that we may think how little we have to do before we die, that we may do it with all our might, and may enjoy our comforts as those that must quickly die, and leave them.

CHAP. XLVI.

Jacob is here removing to Egypt in his old age, forced thither by a famine, and invited thither by a son. Here, 1. God sends his son to him only a journey, but a return to where he was before, to settle in another country, was very surprising to him, (for he never had any other thoughts than to live and die in Canaan,) and which would be of great consequence to his family for a long time to come; now here we are told, 1. How he acknowledged God in this way. He came to Beer-sheba, from Hebron, where he now dwelt, and there he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac, (v. 1.) He chose that place, in remembrance of the communion which his father and grandfather had with God in that place. Abraham called on God there, (ch. 21. 33.) so did Isaac; (ch. 26. 25.) and therefore Jacob made it the place of his devotion, the rather because it lay in his way. In his devotion, 1. He had an eye to God as the God of his father Isaac, that is, a God in covenant with him; for by Isaac the covenant was entailed upon him. God had forbidden Isaac to go down to Egypt, when there was a famine in Canaan, (ch. 26. 2.) which perhaps Jacob calls to mind, when he consults God as the God of his father Isaac, with this thought, "Lord, though I am very desirous to see Joseph, yet if thou forbid me to go down to Egypt, I will not; thou didst my father Isaac, I will submit, and very contentedly stay where I am." 2. He offered sacrifices, extraordinary sacrifices, beside those at his stated times; these sacrifices were offered, (1.) By way of thanksgiving for the late blessed change of the face of his family, for the good news he had received concerning Joseph, and for the hopes he had of seeing him. Note, We should give God thanks for the beginnings of mercy,
though they are not yet perfected; and this is a decent way of begging further mercies. (2.) By way of petition for the presence of God with him in his intended journey; he desired by these sacrifices to make his peace with God, to obtain the forgiveness of sin, that he might take no guilt along with him, and to have his journeyet, — an end of the Soterian sacrifices. (3.) By Christ, the great Sacrifice, we must reconcile ourselves to God, and offer up our requests to him. (5.) By way of consultation, the Heavens consulted their oracles by sacrifice. Jacob would not go till he had asked God’s leave; “Shall I go down to Egypt, or back to Hebron?” Such must be our inquiries in doubtful cases; and though we cannot expect immediate answers from heaven, yet if we diligently and accurately consider the word, conscience, and providence, we shall find it is not in vain to ask counsel of God.

II. How God did direct his paths. In the visions of the night, (probably, the very next night after he had offered his sacrifices, as 2 Chron. 1. 7.) God spoke unto him, 2. 2. Note, Those who desire to keep up communion with God, shall find that it never fails on his side. If we speak to him as we ought, he will always fail to speak to us. God called him by name, by his old name, Jacob, Jacob, to remind him of his low estate; his present fears did scarcely become an Israel. Jacob, like one well acquainted with the visions of the Almighty, and ready to obey them, answers, “Here am I, ready to receive orders:” and what has God to say to him? 1. He renews the covenant with him; “I am God, the God of thy father, (v. 3.)” that is, I am what thou owtest me to be: thou shalt find me a God, a divine wisdom and power engaged for thee; and thou shalt find me the God of thy father, true to the covenant made with him. 2. He encourages him to make this remove of his family; “Fear not to go down into Egypt.” It seems, though Jacob, upon the first intelligence of Joseph’s life and glory in Egypt, resolved, without any hesitation, I will go and see him; yet, upon second thoughts, he saw some difficulties in it, by which he knew not well how to get over. Note, Even those changes which seem to have in them the greatest joys and hopes, yet have an alay of cares and fears, Nulla est sincera voluptas — There is no unmingled pleasure. We must always rejoice with trembling. Jacob had many careful thoughts about this journey, which God took notice of. (1.) He was old, 130 years of age; 130 years were reckoned as the infancy of old people, that they are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way, Eccl. 12. 5. It was a long journey, and Jacob was unfit for travel, and perhaps remembered that his beloved Rachel died in a journey. (2.) He feared lest his sons should be tainted with the dolttery of Egypt, and forget the God of their fathers, or enamoured with the pleasures of Egypt, and forget the land of promise. (3.) He fears that he should lose sight of what God had said to Abraham concerning the bondage and affliction of his seed, (ch. 15, 13,) and was apprehensive that his removal to Egypt would issue in that. Present satisfactions should not take us off from the consideration and prospect of future inconveniences, which possibly may arise from that which now appears most promising. (4.) He could not think of laying his bones in Egypt. But whatever his discouragements were, he was overruled to answer them all, Fear not to go down into Egypt. 3. He promises him comfort in the.rem ve. (1.) That he should multiply in Egypt; “I will be there, where thou fearest that thy family will sink, and be lost, make it a great nation.” That is the place Infinite Wisdom has chosen for the accomplishment of that promise. (2.) That he should have God’s presence with him; “I will go down with thee into Egypt.” Note, Those that go whither God sends them, shall certainly have God with them; and that is enough to secure them wherever they are, and to sustain their fears; we may safely venture into Egypt, if God go down with us. (3.) That neither he nor his should be lost in Egypt; I will surely bring thee up again. Though Jacob died in Egypt, yet this promise was fulfilled. (1.) In the bringing up his body, to be buried in Canaan, about which it appears he was very solicitous, ch. 49. 29. 32. (2.) In the bringing up of his seed to be settled in Canaan. Whatever low or darksome valley we are called into at any time, we may be confident, if God go down with us into it, that he will surely bring us up again. If he go with us even to hell, he will surely bring us again out of glory. (4.) That, being and dying, his beloved Joseph should be a comfort to him; Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. This is a promise that Joseph should live as long as he lived, that he should be with him at his death, close his eyes with all possible tenderness and respect, as the dearest relations used to do. Probably Jacob, in the multitude of his thoughts within him, had been wishing that Joseph might do this last office of love for him; He mea acuas cominrat — Let him close my eyes; and God thus answered him in the letter of his desire. Thus God sometimes gratifies the innocent wishes of his people, and makes not only their death happy, but the very circumstances of it agreeable.

5. And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6. And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt Jacob, and all his seed with him. 7. His sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt. 8. And these are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons: Reuben, Jacob’s first-born. 9. And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch, and Phallu, and Hezron, and Carmi. 10. And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel, and Jamin, and Ohad, and Jachin, and Zohar, and Shaul the son of a Canaanitish woman. 11. And the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari. 12. And the sons of Judah: Er, and Onan, and Shelah, and Pharez, and Zarah: but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Pharez were Hezron and Hamul. 13. And the sons of Issachar: Tola, and Phuva, and Job, and Shimron. 14. And the sons of Zebulun: Sered, and Elon, and Japhlel. 15. These be the sons of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob in Padan-aram, with his daughter Dinah: all the souls of his sons and his daughters, were thirty and three. 16. And the sons of Gad: Ziphion, and Haggai, Shuni, and Ezbon, Eri, and Arodi, and Arcli. 17. And the sons of Asher: Jimnah, and Ishuah, and Isu, and Beriah, and Serah their sister: and the sons
of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel. 13. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bare unto Jacob, even sixteen souls. 19. The sons of Rachel Jacob's wife; Joseph, and Benjamin. 20. And unto Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him. 21. And the sons of Benjamin were Belah, and Becher, and Ashbel, Gera, and Naaman, Ehi, and Rosh, Muppim, and Huppim, and Ard. 22. These are the sons of Rachel, which were born to Jacob: all the souls were fourteen. 23. And the sons of Dan; Hushim. 24. And the sons of Naphtali; Jahzeel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shillem. 25. These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. 26. All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were three-score and six; 27. And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three-score and ten. 

Old Jacob is here flitting: little did he think of ever leaving Canaan; he expected, no doubt, to die in his nest, and to leave his seed in actual possession of the promised land: but Providence orders it otherwise. Note, Those that think themselves well-settled, may yet be unsettled in a little time; even old people, who think of no other remove than that to the grave, (which Jacob had much upon his heart, ch. 57. 35.—42. 38.) sometimes live to see great changes in their family. It is good to be ready for the grave, but for whatever may happen betwixt us and the grave, observe,

I. How Jacob was conveyed; not in a chariot, though chariots were then used, but in a wagon, v. 5. Jacob had the character of a plain man, who did not affect any thing stately or magnificient; his son rode in a chariot, (ch. 41. 43.) but a wagon would serve him.

II. The removal of what he had with him; 1. His effects, (v. 6.) cattle and goods; these he took with him, that he might not wholly be beholden to Pharaoh for a livelihood, and that it might not afterwards be said of them, that they came beggars to Egypt. 2. His family, all his seed, v. 7. It is probable that they had continued to live together in common with their father; and therefore when they went, they all went; which perhaps they were the more willing to do, because, though they had heard that the land of Canaan was promised them, yet, to this day, they had none of it in possession. We have here a particular account of the names of Jacob's family; his sons' sons, most of whom are afterward mentioned as heads of houses in the several tribes. See Numb. 26. 58. &c. Bishop Patrick observes, that Issachar called his eldest son Tola, which signifies a worm, probably, because, when he was born, he was a very little weak child, a worm, and no man, not likely to live; and yet there sprang from him a very numerous offspring. 1 Chron. 7. 2. Note, Living and dying do not go by probability. The whole number that went down into Egypt were sixty-six, (v. 26.) to which add Joseph and his two sons, who were there before, and Jacob himself, the head of the family, and you have the number of seventy, v. 27. The LXX. makes them seventy-five, and Stephen follows it, Acts 7. 14. The reason of which we leave to the conjecture of the critics;* but let us observe, (1.) That masters of families ought to take care of all under their charge, both the living and the dead, and see that they live comfortable; and see that theirrelation be comfortable both for body and soul; when Jacob himself removed to a land of plenty, he would not leave any of his children behind him to starve in a barren land. 2. Though the accomplishment of promises is always sure, yet it is often slow. It was now 215 years since God had promised Abraham to make of him a great nation; (ch. 12. 2.) and yet that branch of his seed on which the promise was entailed, was as yet increased but to seventy, of which this particular account is kept, that the power of God in multiplying these seventy to so vast a multitude, even in Egypt, may appear the more illustrious; when he pleases, a little one shall become a thousand, Isa. 60. 22. 28. And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. 29. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him; and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. 30. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. 31. And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and show Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren, and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me; 32. And the men are shepherds, for their trade hath been to feed cattle; and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have. 33. And it shall come to pass, when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation? 34. That ye shall say, Thy servant's trade hath been about cattle from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers; that ye may dwell in every sheath of land under Goshen; for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

I. We have here the joyful meeting between Ja¬cob and his son Joseph; in which observe,

1. Jacob's prudence in sending Judah before him to Joseph, to give him notice of his arrival in Go¬shen. This was a piece of respect owing to the government, under the protection of which these strangers were come to purchase land, v. 28. We should be very careful not to give offence to any, especially not to the higher powers.

2. Joseph's filial respect to him. He went in his chariot to meet him, and, in the interview showed,

* Dr. Doddridge's solution is this—** Stephen speaks of all that great dress with him, (Jacob) and so excludes Jacob himself; and thus after him, (Joseph) and his two sons, and yet does not sufficiently remove the children, which reduces the number thus: The eleven brethren, with Dinah their sister, and fifty-two that had descended from them, amount to sixty-four; to which adding eleven wives, some of the patriarsche having, probably, buried theirs, and but few of their children being yet married, they amount in all to seventy-five.**
(1.) How much he honoured him; he presented himself unto him. Note, It is the duty of children to reverence their parents, yea, though Providence, as to outward condition, has advanced them above their parents. (2.) How much he loved him; time did not wear out the sense of his obligations, but his tenderness to him he showed abundantly upon his father's neck, for joy to see him, were real indications of the sincere and strong affection he had for him. See how near sorrow and joy are to each other in this world, when tears serve for the expressions of both: in the other world, weeping will be restrained to sorrow only; in heaven there is perfect joy, but no tears of joy; all tears, even those, shall there be wiped away. These joys here are, without any alloy. It was observed, when Joseph embraced Benjamin, that he wept upon his neck, but when he embraced his father, he wept upon his neck a good while; his brother Benjamin was dear, but his father Jacob must be dearer.

3. Jacob's great satisfaction in this meeting; (v. 30.) Now let me die. Not but that it was further desirable to live with Joseph, and to see his honour and usefulness; but he had so much pleasure and satisfaction in this first meeting, that he thought it too much to desire or expect any more in this world, where our comforts must always be imperfect. Joseph wished to die immediately, and yet lived seventeen years longer, which, as our lives go now, is a considerable part of a man's age. Note, Death will not always come just when we call for it, whether in a passion of sorrow, or in a passion of joy. Our times are in God's hand, and not in our own; we must die just when God pleases, and not either just when we are surfeited with the pleasures of life, or just when we are overwhelmed with its griefs.

If we have here Joseph's prudent care concerning himself, we have in what follows a reason. It was justice to Pharaoh, to let him know that such a colony was come to settle in his dominions. Note, If others repose a confidence in us, we must not be so base and disingenuous, as to abuse it by imposing upon them. If Jacob and his family should come to be a charge to the Egyptians, yet it should never be said, that they came among them clandestinely, and by stealth. Thus Joseph took care to pay his respects to Pharaoh before the face of his brethren. Time was, when they were contriving to be rid of him; now he is contriving to settle them to their satisfaction and advantage; this is rendering good for evil. Now, 1. He would have them to live by themselves, separate as much as might be from the Egyptians, in the land of Goshen, which lay nearest to Canaan, and perhaps was more thinly peopled by the Egyptians, and well furnished with pastures for cattle. He desired they might live separately, that they might be in less danger both by being infected by the vices of the Egyptians, and of being insulted by the malice of the Egyptians. Shepherds, it seems, were an abomination to the Egyptians, that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and scorned to converse with them; and he would not send his brethren to Egypt, till they were weaned upon. And yet, 2. He would have them to continue shepherds, and not to be ashamed to own that as their occupation before Pharaoh. He could have employed them under himself in the corn-trade, or perhaps, by his interest in the king might have procured places for them at court or in the army, and some of them at least were deserving enough; but such preferment would have exposed them to the envy of the Egyptians, and would have tempted them to forget Canaan, and the promise made unto their fathers; therefore he contrives to continue them in their old employment. Note, (1.) An honest calling is no disparagement, nought we to account it so either in ourselves, or in our relations; but rather reckon it a shame to be idle, or to have nothing to do. (2.) It is generally best for people to abide in the callings that they have been bred to, and used to, 1 Cor. 7. 24. What employment and condition God, in his providence, has allotted for us, let us accommodate ourselves to, and satisfy ourselves with, and not mind high things. It is better to be the credit of a mean post than the shame of a high one.

CHAP. XLVII.

In this chapter, we have instances, 1. Of Joseph's kindness, and affection to his relations; presenting his brethren first, and then his father to Pharaoh, (v. 1. 10.) settling them in Goshen, and providing for them there, (v. 11. 12.) and paying his respects to his father when he sent for him, v. 27. 31. II. Of Joseph's justice between prince and people in a very critical affair; selling Pharaoh's corn to his subjects with reasonable profits to Pharaoh, and yet without any wrong to them, v. 13. 58. Thus he approved himself wise and good, both in his private and in his public capacity.

1. WHEN Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan; and, behold, they are in the land of Goshen. 2. And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh. 3. And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? And they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers. 4. They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is sore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen. 5. And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee; 6. The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. 7. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. 8. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? 9. And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. 10. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh. 11. And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. 12. And Joseph
nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

Here is,

I. The respect Joseph, as a subject, showed to his prince. Though he was his favourite, and prime-minister of state, and had particular orders from him to send for his father down to Egypt, yet he would not suffer him to settle till he had given notice of it to Pharaoh, v. 1. Christ, or Joseph, disperses of his followers in his kingdom as it is prepared of his Father, saying, It is not mine to give Matt. 20. 28.

II. The respect Joseph, as a brother, showed to his brethren, notwithstanding all the unkindness he had formerly received from them.

1. Though he was a great man, and they were comparatively mean and despisable, especially in Egypt, yet he owned them. Let those that are rich and great in the world, learn hence not to overlook or despise their poor relations. Every branch of the tree is not a top branch; but, because it is a lower branch, is it therefore not a tree? Our Lord Jesus, like Joseph here, is not ashamed to call us brethren.

2. They being strangers and no courtiers, he introduced some of them to Pharaoh, to kiss his hand, as we say, intending thereby to put an honour upon them more than was due to them. He in this manner presented his brethren in the court of heaven, and improves his interest for them, though in themselves unworthy, and an abomination to the Egyptians. Being presented to Pharaoh, according to the instructions which Joseph had given them, they tell him, (1.) What was their business; that they were shepherds, v. 5. Pharaoh asked them, and Joseph knew it would be one of his first questions, ch. 46. 33. (2.) What is your occupation? He takes it for granted they had something to do; else Egypt should be no place for them, no harbour for idle vagrants. If they would not work, they should not eat of his bread in this time of scarcity. Note, [1.] All that have a place in the world, should have an employment in it according to their capacity, some occupation or at least a trade. [2.] Those that need not work for their bread, yet must have something to do, to keep them from idleness. [3.] Magistrates should inquire into the occupation of their subjects, as those that have the care of the public welfare; for idle people are as drones in the hive, unpromising burthen of the commonwealth. (2.) What was their business in Egypt; to sojourn in the land, (v. 4.) not to settle there for ever, only to sojourn there for a time, while the famine prevailed in Canaan, which lay high, so that it was not habitable for shepherds, the grass being burnt up much more than in Egypt, which lay low, and where the corn chiefly failed, while there was tolerable good pasture.

3. He obtained for them a grant of a settlement in the land of Goshen, v. 5, 6. This was an instance of Joseph's gratitude; because he had been such a blessing to him and his kin; and therefore he would be kind to his relations, purely for his sake. He offered them preferment as shepherds over his cattle, provided they were men of activity; for it is the man who is diligent in his business, that shall stand before kings. And whatever our profession or employment is, we should aim to be excellent in it, to prove ourselves ingenious and industrious.

III. The respect Joseph, as a son, showed to his father.

1. He presented himself to Pharaoh, v. 7. And here, (1.) Pharaoh asks Jacob a common question; How old art thou? v. 8. A question usually put to old men, for it is natural to us to admire old age, and to revere it, (Lev. 19. 32.) as it is very unnatural and unbecoming to despise it, Isa. 3. 5. Jacob's countenance, no doubt, showed him to be very old; for he had been a man of labour and sorrow: in Egypt, people were not so long-lived as in Canaan, and therefore Pharaoh looks upon him as a wonder; he was a show in his court. When we are reflecting upon ourselves, this should come into the account; "How old are we?"

(2.) Jacob gives Pharaoh an uncommon answer, v. 9. He speaks as became a patriarch, with an air of seriousness, for the instruction of Pharaoh. Though our speech be not always of grace, yet it should be always with grace. Observe here, [1.] He calls his life a pilgrimage, looking upon himself as a stranger in this world, and a traveller towards another world: this earth his inn, not his home. To this the apostle refers: (Heb. 11. 13.) They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. He not only reckoned himself a pilgrim, now that he was in Egypt, a strange country in which he never was before; but his life, even in the land of his nativity, was a pilgrimage, and those who so reckon it, can the better bear the inconvenience of banishment from their native soil; they are but pilgrims still, and so they were always. [2.] He reckons his life by days; for soon, it is soon reckoned. Perhaps we have made use of it for a day or an hour without any warning. Let us therefore number our days, (Ps. 90. 12.) and measure them, Ps. 39. 4. [3.] The character he gives of them was, First, That they were few. Though he had now lived one hundred and thirty years, they seemed to him but a few days, in comparison with the days of eternity, the eternal God, and the eternal state, in which a thousand years (longer than the term of man's life) are but as one day. Secondly, That they were evil; this is true concerning man in general; (Job 14. 1.) he is of few days, and full of trouble; since his days are evil, it is well they are few; Jacob's life, particularly, had been made up of evil days; and the pleasantest days of his life were yet before him. Thirdly, That they were short of the days of his fathers; not so many, not so pleasant, as their days. Old age came sooner upon him than upon his fathers. As the young man should not be proud of his strength or beauty, so the old man should not be proud of his age, and the crown of his hoary hairs, though others justly reverence it; for those who are accounted very old, attain not to the years of the patriarchs. The hearty head is then only a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness. (5.) Jacob, both addresses himself to Pharaoh, and takes leave of him with a blessing, v. 7. Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and again, v. 10, which was not only an act of civility, (he paid him respect,) and returned him thanks for his kindness; but an act of piety, he prayed for him, as one having the authority of a prophet and a patriarch. Though in worldly wealth, Pharaoh was the greater, yet in interest of God, Joseph had the preeminence over him. Pharaoh was God's anointed, Ps. 105. 15. And a patriarch's blessing was not a thing to be despised, no, not by a potent prince. Darius valued the prayers of the church for himself and for his sons, Ezra 6. 10. Pharaoh kindly received Jacob, and, whether in the name of a prophet or no, thus he had a prophet's reward, which sufficiently recompensed him, not only for his courteous reception of him, but for all the other kindnesses he showed to him and his sons.

2. He provided well for him and his; placed him in Goshen, (v. 11.) nourished him and all his with food convenient for them, v. 12. This bespeaks, not only Joseph a good man, who took this tender care of his poor relations, but God a good God, who
raised him up for this purpose, and put him into a capacity of doing it, as Esther came to the kingdom for such a time as this. What God here did for Jacob, he has, in effect, promised to do for all his, that serve him and trust in him, Ps. 37. 19. In the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

13. And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine. 14. And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. 15. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? For the money faileth. 16. And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. 17. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle for that year. 18. When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not aught left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands: 19. Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread; and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. 20. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them: so the land became Pharaoh's. 21. And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt even to the other end thereof. 22. Only the land of the priests bought he not; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them: wherefore they sold not their lands. 23. Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land, for Pharaoh: lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land. 24. And it shall come to pass in the increase, that ye shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones. 25. And they said, Thou hast saved our lives: let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants. 26. And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's. 27. Care being taken of Jacob and his family, the preservation of which was especially designed by Providence in Joseph's advancement, an event of the greatest consequence, viz. a man given of the saving of the kingdom of Egypt too from ruin; for God is King of nations, as well as King of saints, and provideth food for all flesh. Joseph now returns to the management of that great trust which Pharaoh had lodged in his hand. It would have been pleasing enough to him to have gone and lived with his father and brethren in Goshen: but his employment would not permit it. When he had seen the state of Egypt, and the parts adjacent, were reduced to by the famine. There was no bread, and they fainted, (v. 13.) they were ready to die, v. 15. 19. 1. See here what a dependence we have upon God's providence; if that suspend its usual favours but for a while, we die, we perish, we all perish. All our wealth would not keep us from starving, if the rain of heaven were withheld for two or three years. See how much we lie at God's mercy, and let us keep ourselves always in his love. 2. See how much we smart by our own improvidence; if all the Egyptians had done for themselves in the seven years of plenty, as Joseph did for Pharaoh, they had not been now in these straits; but they regarded not the warning they had of the years of famine, concluding that tomorrow shall be as this day, next year as this, and much more abundant. Note, Because man knows not his time, (his time of gathering when he has it,) therefore his misery is great upon him, when the spending time comes, Eccl. 8. 6, 7. 3. See how early God put a difference between the Egyptians and the Israelites, as afterwards in the plagues, Exod. 8. 22.—9. 4, 26.—10. 23. Jacob and his family, though strangers, were plentifully fed on free corn, when every Egyptian was reduced to beggary. Isa. 65. 13. My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry. Happy art thou, O Israel. Whoever wants, God's children shall not, Ps. 34. 10. 11. The price they were come up to, for their supply, in this exigence. 1. They parted with all their money, which they had hoarded up, v. 14. Silver and gold would not feed them, they must barter corn for it. 2. The money they had brought into the exchequer, the means this brought into the exchequer. 2. When the money failed, they parted with all their cattle, those for labour, as the horses and asses; and those for food, as the flocks and the herds, v. 17. By this it should seem, that we may better live upon bread without flesh, than upon flesh without bread. We may suppose they parted the more easily with their cattle, because they had fed them for four years, and now Pharaoh saw in reality what he had before seen in vision, nothing but lean kine. 3. When they had sold their stocks off their land, it was easy to persuade themselves (rather than starve) to sell their land too; for what good would that do them, when they had neither corn to sow it, nor cattle to eat it? They therefore sold that next, for a further supply of corn. 4. When the land was sold, so that they had nothing to live on, they must of course
sell themselves, that they might live purely upon their labour; and hold their lands by the base tenure of villeinage, at the courtesy of the crown. Note, Skin for skin, and all that a man hath, even liberty and property, (those darling twins,) will he give for his life; for that is sweet. There are few, (though perhaps there are some,) who would even dare to die, rather than live in slavery and dependence on an arbitrary power. And perhaps there are those who, in that case, out of the sweat of their brow, would not deliberately die by famine, which is much worse, Lam. 4. 9. Now it was a great mercy to the Egyptians, that, in this distress, they could have corn at any rate; if they had all died for hunger, their lands perhaps would have eschewed to the crown of course, for want of heirs; they therefore resolved to make the best of bad.

III. The method which Joseph took to accommodate the matter between prince and people, so that the prince might have his just advantage, and yet the people not be quite ruined.

1. For their lands, he needed not come to any bargain with them, while the years of famine lasted; but when these were over, (for God will not contend for ever, nor will he be always wroth,) he came to an agreement, which it seems, both sides were pleased with, that they should be free, and enjoy the lands, as he thought fit to assign them, and should have seed to sow them with out of the king's stores, for their own proper use and behoof, yielding and paying only a fifth part of the yearly profits as a chief rent to the crown. This became a standing law, v. 26. And it was a very good bargain to have food for their lands, when otherwise they and their sons must have starved, and then have lands again upon such easy terms. Note, Those ministers of state are worthy of double honour both for wisdom and integrity, that keep the balance even between prince and people, so that liberty and property may not intrench upon prerogative, nor the prerogative bear hard upon liberty and property: in the multitude of such counsellors there is safety. It afterward the Egyptians thought it hard to pay so great a duty to the king out of their lands, they must remember, not only how just, but how kind, the first imposing of it was. They might think thankfully pay a fifth when all was due. It is observable, how faithful Joseph was to him that appointed him; he did not put the money into his own pocket, nor cancel the lands upon his own family; but converted both entirely to Pharaoh's use; and therefore we do not find that the lands of the Egyptians were reduced to the rest of their poor brethren. Those in public trusts, if they raise great estates, must take heed that it be not at the expense of a good conscience, which is much more valuable.

2. For their persons, they removed them to cities, v. 21. He transplanted them, to show Pharaoh's sovereign power over them, and that they might, in time, forget the loss of their liberty, and be more easily reconciled to their new condition of servitude. The Jewish writers say, "He removed them thus from their former habitations, because they reproached his brethren as strangers; to silence which reproach, they were all made, in effect, strangers." See what changes a little time may make with a people, and how soon God can empty them of everything that is dear to them and their lesse. How hard sooner this seems to have been upon them, they themselves were at this time sensible of it as a very great kindness, and were thankful they were not worse used; (v. 25.) Thou hast saved our lives. Note, There is good reason that the Saviour of our lives, should be the Master of our lives. "Thou hast saved us, do what thou wilt with us." IV. The reservation: he made in favour of the priests. They were maintained on free cost, so that they needed not to sell their lands, v. 22. It supper will be rich and plentiful; and they, will be kind to those that attend the public service of their God, and that minister to them in holy things; and we should, in like manner, honour our God, by esteeming his ministers highly in love for their work's sake.

27. And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly. 28. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred and forty and seven years. 29. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: 30. But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying-place. And he said, I will do as thou hast said. 31. And he said, Swear unto me. And he sware unto him, and Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

Observe, 1. The comfort Jacob lived in, (v. 27, 28.) While the Egyptians were impoverished in their own land, Jacob was replenished in a strange land. He lived seventeen years after he came into Egypt, far beyond his own expectation; seventeen years he had nourished Joseph, (for so old he was when he was sold from him, ch. 37. 2.) and now, by way of requital, seventeen years Joseph nourished him. Observe how kindly Providence ordered Jacob's affairs; that when he was old, and least able to bear care and fatigue, he had least occasion for it, being well-provided for by his son without his own forecast. Thus God considers the frame of his people.

2. The care Jacob died in. At last, (v. 29.) The time drew nigh that Israel must die. Israel, a prince with God, that had power over the angel, and prevailed, yet must yield to death. There is no remedy, he said, it is appointed for all men, therefore for him; and there is no discharge in that war. Joseph supplied him with bread, that he might not die by famine; but that did not secure him from dying by age or sickness. He died by degrees; his candle was not blown out, but gradually burnt down to the socket, so that he saw, at some distance, the time drawing nigh. Note, It is an advantage to men, to see the approach of death, before we feel its presence; the assured knowledge of it enabled us to do what our hand finds to do, with all our might; however, it is not far from any of us. Now Jacob's care, as he saw the day approaching, was about his burial, not the pomp of it, (he was no way solicitous about that,) but the place of it.

(1.) He would be buried in Canaan; this he resolved on, not from mere habit, because Canaan was the land of his nativity, but in faith, because it was the land of promise, (which he desired thus, as it were, to keep possession of, till the time should come when his posterity should be masters of it,) and because it was a type of heaven, that better country which he that said these things, declared plainly that he was in expectation of, Heb. 11. 14. He aimed at a good land, which would be his rest and bliss on the other side death.
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220 (2.) He would have Joseph sworn to bring him thither to be buried, (v. 29, 31.) that Joseph being under such a solemn obligation to do it, might have that to answer to the objections which otherwise might have been made against it, and for the greater satisfaction of Jacob now in his dying minutes. Nothing would better help to make a death-bed easy, than the certain prospect of a rest in Canaan after death.

(3.) When this was done, Israel bowed himself upon the bed's-head, yielding himself, as it were, to the stroke of death; (“Now let it come, and it shall be welcome?”) or worshipping God, as it is explained, Heb. II. 21, giving God thanks for all his favours, and particularly for this, that Joseph was ready, not only to put his hand upon his eyes to close them, but under his thigh to give him the satisfaction he desired concerning his burial. Thus they that go down to the dust, should with humble thankfulness, how before God, the God of their mercies, Ps. 22. 29.

CHAP. XLVIII.

The time drawing nigh that Israel must die, having in the former chapter given order about his burial, in this, he takes leave of his grand-children by Joseph, and in the next of all his children. This Jacob does in word and in record, because he then spake by a spirit of prophecy; Abraham's and Isaac's are not. God's gifts and graces shine forth much more in some souls than in others upon their death-beds. The Spirit, like the wind, blows where it listeth. In this chapter, I. Joseph, hearing of his father's sickness, goes to visit him, and takes his two sons with him, v. 1, 2. II. Jacob solemnly adopts his two sons, and takes them for his own, v. 3-7. III. He blesses them, v. 8-10. IV. He explains and justifies the crossing of his hands in blessing them, v. 17-20. V. He leaves a particular legacy to Joseph, v. 21, 22.

1. AND it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. 2. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. 3. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me, 4. And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession. 5. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. 6. And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance. 7. And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come into Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Beth-lehem.

Here,

I. Joseph, upon notice of his father's illness, goes to see him; though a man of honour and business, yet he will not fail to show this due respect to his aged father, v. 1. Visiting the sick, to whom we lie under obligations, or may have opportunity of doing good, either for body or soul, is our duty. The sick bed is a proper place both for giving comfort and counsel to others, and receiving instruction ourselves. Joseph took his two sons with him, that they might receive their dying grandfather's blessing, and that what they might see in him, and hear from him, might make an abiding impression upon them. Note, 1. It is good to acquaint young people that are coming into the world, with the aged servants of God that are going out of it, whose dying testimony to the goodness of God, and the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, may be a great encouragement to the rising generation. Manasseh and Ephraim would have been left when Joseph passed at this time. 2. Pious parents are desirous of a blessing, not only for themselves, but for their children. "O that they may live before God!" Joseph had been, above all his brethren, kind to his father, and therefore had reason to expect particular favour from him.

II. Jacob, upon notice of his son's visit, prepared himself as well as he could to entertain him, v. 2. And did so well as he could to stir up the gift that was in him; what little was left of bodily strength, he put forth to the utmost, and sat upon the bed. Note, It is very good for sick and aged people to be as lively and cheerful as they can, that they may not fail in the day of adversity.

III. In recompense to Joseph for all his attentions to him, he adopted his two sons. In this charter of adoption, there is, 1. A particular recital of God's promise to him, to which this had reference. "God blessed me; (v. 3.) and let that blessing be enailed upon them." God had promised him two things, a numerous issue, and Canaan for an inheritance; (v. 4.) and Joseph's sons, pursuant hereunto, should each of them multiply into a tribe, and each of them have a distinct lot in Canaan, equal with Jacob's own sons. See how he blessed them by faith in that which God had said to him, Heb. II. 21. Note, In all our prayers, both for ourselves and for our children, we ought to have a particular eye to, and remembrance of, God's promises to us.

And thus the reception of Joseph's sons into his family, "Thy sons are mine, (v. 5.) not only my grand-children, but as my own children." Though they were born in Egypt, and their father was then separated from his brethren, which might seem to have cut them off from the heritage of the Lord, yet Jacob takes them in, and owns them for visible church-members. He explains it; (v. 16.) Let my name be named upon them, and that they be the sons of my father; as if he had said, "Let them not succeed their father in his power and grandeur here in Egypt; but let them succeed me in the inheritance of the promise made to Abraham," which Jacob looked upon as much more valuable and honourable, and would have them to prize and covet accordingly. Thus the aged dying patriarch teaches the young part of the church of old age, (being about twenty-one years old,) not to look upon Egypt as their own, nor to incorporate themselves with the Egyptians, but to take their lot with the people of God, as Moses afterward in the like temptation, Heb. II. 24. 26. And because it would be a piece of self-deception in them, who stood so fair for preferment in Egypt, to adhere to the despised Hebrews; to encourage them, and cause each of them the head of a tribe. Note, Those are worthy of double honour, who,
through God's grace, break through the temptations of worldly wealth and preferment, to embrace religion in disgrace and poverty. Jacob will have Ephraim, and Manasseh to believe, that it is better to be low, and in the church, than high, and out of it, that to be called by the name of poor, Jacob, is better than to be called by the name of rich Joseph.

3. A proviso inserted concerning the children he might afterward have; they should not be accounted heads of tribes, as Ephraim and Manasseh were, but the one of the one or the other of their brethren, v. 6. It does not appear that Joseph had any more children; however, it was Jacob's prudence to give this direction, for the preventing of contest and mismanagement. Note, In making settlements, it is good to take advice, and to provide for what may happen, while we cannot foresee what will happen. Our prudence must attend God's providence.

4. Mention is made of the death and burial of Rachel, Joseph's mother, and Jacob's best-beloved wife, (v. 7.) referring to that story, ch. 35. 19. Note, (1.) When we come to die ourselves, it is good to call to mind the death of our dear relations and friends, that are gone before us, to make death and the grave the more familiar to us. See Numb. 27. 13. Those that were to us as our own souls are dead and buried; and shall we think much to follow them in the same path? (2.) The removal of dear relations from us, is an affliction the remembrance of which cannot but abide with us a great while. Strong affections in the enjoyment, cause long afflictions in the loss.

8. And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? 9. And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. And he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them. 10. Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near unto him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. 11. And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed. 12. And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. 13. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him. 14. And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the first-born. 15. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, 16. The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth. 17. And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he laid up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head. 18. And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the first-born; put thy right hand upon his head. 19. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations. 20. And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel be blessed, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

21. And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers. 22. Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.

Here is,

1. The blessing with which Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, which is the more remarkable, because the apostle makes such particular mention of it, (Heb. 11. 21.) when he says nothing of the blessing which Jacob pronounced on the rest of his sons, though that also was done in faith. Observe here,

1. That Jacob was blind for age, v. 10. It is one of the common infirmities of old age; They that look out of the windows are darkened, Eccl. 12. 3. It is folly to walk in the sight of our eyes, and to suffer our hearts to go after them, while we know death will shortly close them, and we do not know but some accident between us and death may darken them. Jacob, like his father before him, when he was old, was dim-sighted. Note, (1.) If we be that have the honour of age, must therewith be content to take the burthen of it. (2.) The eye of faith may be very clear, even then when the eye of the body is very much clouded.

2. That Jacob was very fond of Joseph's sons. He kissed them, and embraced them, v. 10. It is common for old people to have a very particular affection for their grand-children, perhaps more than they had for their own when they were little; which Solomon gives a reason for, (Prov. 17. 6.) Children's children are the crown of old men. With what satisfaction does Jacob say here, (v. 11.) I had not thought to see thy face, (having, many years, given him up for lost,) and, lo, God hath showed me also thy seed! See here, (1.) How these two good men own God in their children. Joseph says, (v. 9.) These my sons whom God hath given me, and, to magnify the favour, he adds, "In this place of my banishment, slavery, and imprisonment." Jacob says here, God hath showed me thy seed. Our comforts are then doubly sweet to us, when we see them coming from God's hand. (2.) How often God, in his merciful providences, outdoes our expectations, and thus greatly magnifies his favours! He not only prevents our fears, but exceeds our hopes. We may apply this to the promise which is made to us and to our children. We could not have thought that we should have been taken into covenant with God ourselves, considering how guilty and corrupt we are; and yet, lo, he has showed us our seed also in covenant with him.
GENESIS, XLIX.

3. That before he entailed his blessing, he recites his experiences of God's goodness to him. He had spoken (v. 3) of God's appearing to him. The particulars of his grace, and the special commission he had sometimes had with God, ought never to be forgotten. But (v. 15, 16,) he mentions the constant care which the Divine Providence had taken of him all his days. (1.) He had fed him all his life long unto this day, v. 15. Note, As long as we have lived in this world, we have had continual experience of God's goodness to us, in providing for the support of our natural life. But God has graciously kept him from the evil of his troubles. Now that he was dying, he locked upon himself as redeemed from all evil, and bidding an everlasting farewell to sin and sorrow. Christ, the Angel of the covenant, is he that redeems us from all evil, 2 Tim. 4. 18. Note, (1.) It becomes the servants of God, when they are old and dying, to witness for our God that they have found him gracious. (2.) Our experiences of God's goodness to us are improvable, both for the encouragement of others to serve God, and for encouragement to us in blessing him, through Jesus Christ, to the end. 4. That when he confers the blessing and name of Abraham and Isaac upon them, he recommends the pattern and example of Abraham and Isaac to them, v. 15. He calls God, the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, that is, in whom they believed, whom they observed and obeyed, and with whom they kept up communion in all the divine ordinances, according to the condition of the covenant. Walk before me, ch. 17. 1. Note, (1.) Those that would inherit the blessing of their godly ancestors, and have the benefit of God's covenant with them, must tread in the steps of their piety. (2.) It should recommend religion and the service of God to us, that God was the God of our fathers, and that they had satisfaction in walking before him. 5. That in blessing them, he crossed hands. Joseph placed them so as that Jacob's right hand should be put on the head of Manasseh the eldest, v. 12, 13. But Jacob would put it on the head of Ephraim the youngest, v. 14. This displeased Joseph, who was willing to support the reputation of his first-born, and would therefore have removed his father's hands, v. 17, 18. But Jacob gave him to understand that he knew what he did, and that he did it neither by mistake, nor in a humour, nor from a partial affection to one more than the other, but from a spirit of prophecy, and in compliance with the divine counsels. Manasseh should be great, but truly Ephraim should be greater. When the tribes were mustered in the wilderness, Ephraim had the most number of men, (Num. 1. 32, 33, 35. 2. 18, 20,) and was named first, Ps. 80. 2. Joshua was of that tribe, so was Jerobeam. The tribe of Manasseh was divided, one half on one side Jordan, the other half on the other side, which made it the less powerful and considerable. In the foresight of this, Jacob crossed hands. Note, (1.) God, in his Divine blessings upon his people, gives more to some than to others, more gifts, graces, and comforts, and more of the good things of this life. (2.) He often gives most to those that are least likely. He chooses the weak things of the world; raises the poor out of the dust. Grace observes not the order of nature, nor does God prefer those whom we think fittest to be preferred, but as it pleases him. It is observable, how often God, by the distinguishing favours of his covenant, advanced the younger above the elder; Abel above Cain, Shem above Japheth, Abraham above Nahor and Haran, Isaac above Ishmael, Jacob above Esau. Judah and Joseph were preferred before Reuben; Moses before Aaron; David and Solomon before their elder brethren. See 1 Sam. 16. 7. He tied the Jews to observe the birth-right, (Deut. 21. 17.) but he never tied himself to observe it. Some make this typical of the preference given to the Gentiles above the Jews; the Gentile converts were far more numerous than those of the Jews. See Gal. 4. 27. Thus free grace becomes more illustrious.

II. The particular tokens of his favour to Joseph. 1. He left with him the promise of their return out of Egypt, as a sacred trust; (v. 21.) I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again. Accordingly, Joseph, when he died, left it with his brethren, ch. 50. 24. This assurance was given them, and carefully preserved among them, that they might neither lose Egypt too much when it favoured them, nor fear it too much when it frowned upon them. These words of Jacob furnish us with comfort in reference to the death of our friends; they die. But, (1.) God shall be with us, and his gracious presence is sufficient to make up the loss. They leave us, but he will never fail us. (2.) He is the heavenly Canaan, whither our godly fathers are gone before us. If God be with us while we stay behind in this world, and will receive us shortly to be with them that are gone before to a better world, we ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope. 2. He bestowed one portion upon him above his brethren, v. 22. The lands bequeathed are described for his encouragement, by calling them the Amorit, with his sword, and with his bow. He purchased them first, (Jesh. 24. 32.) and it seems, was afterward dispossessed of them by the Amorites, but retook them by the sword, repelling force by force, and recovering his right by violence, when he could not otherwise recover it. These lands he settled upon Joseph; mention is made of this grant, v. 4. It is certain that a considerable parcel of ground was given to the tribe of Ephraim, in this or that part, and the lot was never cast upon it; and in it Joseph's bones were buried, which perhaps Jacob had an eye to, as much as to any thing, in this settlement. Note, It may sometimes be both just and prudent to give some children portions above the rest: but a grace is that which we can most count upon as our own in this world.

CHAP. XLIX.

This chapter is a preface: the like to it we have yet met with, that of Noah, ch. 9. 25, &c. Jacob is here upon his death-bed, making his will: he put it off till now, and said nothing of it, seemingly because he had deep impressions, and to be remembered long; what he said here, he could not say when he would, but as the Spirit gave him utterance, who chose this time, that divine strength might be seen in him in weakness. The twelve sons of Jacob were, in their day, men of renown, but the twelve tribes of Israel, which descended and were denominates from them, were much more renowned. We find their names upon the gates of the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 12, in the prospect of which, their dying father says something remarkable of each son, or of the tribe that bore his name. Here 1. The preface, v. 1, 2. II. The charge to Joseph, v. 3. III. The charge to each tribe, v. 9. 38. III. The charge repeated concerning his burial, v. 39, 42. IV. His death, v. 33.

1. And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days. 2. Gather yourselves to-
gethcr, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father. 3. Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.

4. Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up unto thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

Here is

I. The preface to the prophecy, in which,

1. The congregation is called together; (v. 2.) Gather yourselves together, let them all be sent for from their several employments, to see their father die, and to hear his dying words. It was a comfort to Jacob, now that he was dying, to see all his children about him, and none missing, though he had sometimes thought himself bereaved. It was of use to them, to attend him in his last moments, that they might learn of him how to die, as well as how to live: what he said to each, he said in the hearing of all the rest; for we may profit by the reproofs, counsels, and comforts, that are principally intended for others. His calling upon them once and again, to gather together, intimated both a precept to them that they should love, to keep together, and a permission to them, to follow the Egyptian plan, of the assembling of themselves together, and a prediction that they should not be separated from each other, as Abraham's sons and Isaac's were, but should be incorporated, and all make one people.

2. A general idea is given of the intended discourse. (v. 1.) That I may tell you that which shall befall you, (not your persons, but your posterity,) in the last days, this prophecy, I would be of no less value than those that came after them, for the confirming of their faith, and the guiding of their way, on their return to Canaan, and their settlement there. We cannot tell our children what shall befall them, or their families in this world; but we can tell them, from the word of God, what will befall them in the last day of all, according as they conduct themselves in this world.

3. Attention is demanded. (v. 2.) "Hearken to Israel your father; let Israel, that has prevailed with God, prevail with you." Note, Children must diligently hearken to what their godly parents say, particularly when they are dying; Hear ye children, the instruction of a father, which carries with it both authority and affection, Prov. 1. 8.

II. The prophecy concerning Reuben; he begins with him, (v. 3, 4.) He was the first-born; but by committing uncleanness with his father's wife, to the great reproach of the family which he ought to have been an ornament to, he forfeited the prerogatives of the birth-right; and his dying father here solemnly degrades him, though he does not disown or desist inherit him: he shall have all the privileges of his family, but none of his authority. We must not think that Reuben had repented of his sin, and it was pardoned; yet it was a necessary piece of justice, in detestation of the villany, and for warning to others, to put the mark of disgrace upon him. Now according to the method of degrading, 1. Jacob here puts upon him the ornaments of the birth-right, (v. 3.) that he and all his brethren might see what he had forfeited, and, in that, might see the evil of the sin; as the first-born, he was his father's joy, almost his pride, being the beginning of his strength. How welcome he was to his parents, his name be-speaks, Reuben, See a son. To him belonged the excellency of his dignity, above his brethren, and some power over them. Christ Jesus is the First-born among many brethren, and to him, of right, belong the most excellent power and dignity: his church also, through him, is a church of the first-born. 2. He then strips him of these ornaments; (v. 4.) lifts him up, that he may cast him down, by that one word, "Thou shalt not excel; a being thou shalt have as a tribe, but not an excellency:"

2. The judgment, prophecy, or prince, is found of that tribe, nor any person of renown, only Dathan and Abiram, who were noted for their impious rebellion against Moses. That tribe, as not aiming to excel, meanly chose a settlement on the other side Jordan. Reuben himself seems to have lost all that influence upon his brethren, which his birth-right entitled him to; for when he spoke unto them, they would not hear, Ex. 42. 22. Those that have not understanding and spirit to support the honours and privileges of their birth, will soon lose them, and retain only the name of them. The character fastened upon Reuben, for which he is hid under this mark of infamy, is, that he was unstable as water. (1.) His virtue was unstable; he had not the government of his own appetites: medicines he would be very regular and orderly, but at other times he deviated into the wildest excesses. Note, Instability is the ruin of men's excellency. Men do not thrive, because they do not fix. (2.) His honour consequently was unstable; it departed from him, vanished into smoke, and became as water spilt upon the ground. Note, Those that throw away their virtue, in so not expect to save their reputation. Jacob charges him particularly with the sin for which he was thus disgraced; Thou wentest up to thy father's bed. It was forty years ago that he had been guilty of this sin, yet now it is remembered against him. Note, As time will not of itself wear off the guilt of any sin from the conscience, so there are some sins whose stains will not wipe off from the good name, especially so enshrined-commandments-sins. Reuben's sin left an indelible mark of infamy upon his family; a dishonour that was a wound not to be healed without a scar, Prov. 6. 32. 33. Let us never do evil, and then we need not fear being told of it. 

3. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. 6. O my soul, come not thou into their secret unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. 7. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

These were next in age to Reuben, and they also had been a grief and shame to Jacob, when they treacherously and barbarously destroyed the Shechemites, which he here remembers against them. Children should be a terror to their parents, lest their parents just displeasure, lest they fear the worse for it long afterward, and, when they would inherit the blessing, be rejected. Observe,

1. The character of Simeon and Levi; they were brethren in disposition; but, unlike their father, they were passionate and revengeful, fierce and uncontrollable; their swords, which should have been only weapons of defence, were (as the margin reads it, v. 5.) weapons of violence, to do wrong to others, not to save themselves from wrong. Note, It is now new thing for the temper of children to differ very much from that of their parents; we need not think it strange, it was so in Jacob's family. It is not in the power of parents, no, not by education, to form the dispositions of their children; Jacob knew his sons to
every thing that was mild and quiet, and yet they proved to be thus furious.

II. A proof of this is the murder of the Shechemites, which Jacob deeply resented at the time, (ch. 34. 30.) and still continued to resent. They slew a man, Shechem himself, and many others; and, to effect that, they digged down a wall, broke the houses, to plunder them, and murder the inhabitants. Note, The best governors cannot always restrain those under them from commission of such villanies. And when two in a family are mischievous, they commonly make one another so much the worse, and it was wisdom to part them. Simeon and Levi, it is probable, were most active in the wrong done to Joseph, which some think Jacob has here some reference to; for in their anger they would have slain that man. Observe what a mischievous thing it will be in young people: Simeon and Levi would not be advised by their aged and experienced father; no, they would be governed by their own passion, rather than by his prudence. Young people would better consult their own interest, if they would less indulge their own will.

III. Jacob's protestation against this barbarous act of their's, O my sons, come not thou into their secret. Here he parented not only the enormity of such practices in general, but his innocence particularly in that matter. Perhaps he had been suspected as, under-hand, aiding and abetting; he therefore thus solemnly expresses his detestation of the fact, that he might not die under that suspicion. Note, 1. Our soul is our honour; by its powers and faculties we are distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts that perish. 2. We ought, from our heart, to detest and abhor all society and confederacy with bloody and mischievous men. We must not be ambitious of coming into their secret, or knowing the depths of Satan.

IV. His abhorrence of these brutish lusts that led them to this wickedness; Curst be there anger. He does not curse their persons, but their lusts. Note, 1. Anger is the cause and original of a great deal of sin, and exposes us to the curse of God, and his judgment, Matt. 5. 22. 2. We ought always, in the expressions of our zeal, carefully to distinguish between the sinner and the sin, so as not to love or bless the sin for the sake of the person, nor to hate or curse the person for the sake of the sin.

V. A token of displeasure which he foretells their posterity should be under for this; I will drive them. The Levites were scattered throughout all the tribes, and Simeon's lot lay not together, and was so strait, that many of the tribe were forced to disperse themselves in quest of settlements and subsistence. This curse was afterwards turned into a blessing to the Levites; but the Simeonites, for Zimri's sin, (Num. 25. 13.) had it bound on. Note, Sinful dispersions are the just punishment of sinful unions and confederacies.

8. Judah, thou art with thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. 9. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? 10. The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. 11. Binding his sole unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. 12. His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Glorious things are here said of Judah. The mention of the crimes of the three eldest of his sons, had not so put the dying patriarch out of humour, but he would discourse of blessing ready for Judah, to whom blessings belonged. Judah's name signifies praise, in allusion to which, he says, Thou art with thy brethren shall praise, v. 8. God was praised for him, (ch. 29. 35.) praised by him, and praised in him; and therefore his brethren shall praise him. Note, Those that are to God for a praise, shall be the praise of their brethren.

His prophecies are these. 1. That the tribe of Judah should be victorious and successful in war! Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies. This was fulfilled in David, Ps. 18. 40.

2. That it should be superior to the rest of the tribes; not only in itself more numerous and illustrious, but having a dominion over them; Thy father's children shall bow down before thee; Judah was the lawgiver, Ps. 60. 7. That tribe led the van through the wilderness, and in the conquest of Canaan, Judg. 1. 2. The prerogatives of the birth-right which Reuben had forfeited, the excellency of dignity and power, were thus conferred upon Judah. Observe, Thy brethren shall bow down before thee, and yet shall praise thee, reckoning themselves happy in having so wise and bold a commander. Note, One mean of power are then a blessing to those that have them, when they are not grudged and envied, but praised and applauded, and cheerfully submitted to.

3. That it should be a strong and courageous tribe, and so qualified for command and conquest; (v. 9.) Judah is a lion's whelp. The lion is the king of beasts, the terror of the forest when he roars; when he seizes his prey, none can resist him; when he goes up from the prey, none dares pursue him to revenge it. By this it is foretold that the tribe of Judah should become very formidable, and should not only obtain great victories, but should peaceably and quietly enjoy what was got by those victories; that they should make war, not for the sake of war, but for the sake of peace. Judah is compared, not to a lion rampant, always tearing, always raging, which was fulfilled in David, in whose person the satisfaction of his power and success, without creating vexation to others; this is to be truly great.

4. That it should be the royal tribe, and the tribe from which Messiah the Prince should come; (v. 10.) The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come. Jacob here foresees and foretells, (1.) That the sceptre should come out of the tribe of Judah, which was fulfilled in David, in whose person the crown was entailed. (2.) That Shiloh should be of this tribe; his Seed, that promised Seed, in whom the earth should be blessed; that peaceable and prosperous one, or the Saviour, so often translated is, he shall come of Judah. Thus dying Jacob, at a great distance, saw Christ's day, and it was his comfort and support on his death-bed. (3.) That he continued the sceptre to the tribe of Judah, it should continue in that tribe, at least, a government of their own, till the coming of the Messiah, in whom, as the King of the church, and the great High-Priest, it was fit that both the priesthood and the royalty should determine. Till the captivity, all along from David's time, the sceptre was in Judah, and the term ran, when government over the tribes of Levi and the Levites that adhered to it, (that was equivalent,) till Judea became a province of the Roman empire, just at the time of our Saviour's birth, and
was at that time taxed as one of the provinces, Luke 2. 1. And at the time of his death the Jews expressly owned, *We have no king but Caesar.* Hence it is undoubtedly against the Jews, that our Lord Jesus is he that should come, and that we are to look for no other; for he came exactly at the time appointed. Many excellent pens have been admirably well employed in explaining and illustrating this famous prophecy of Christ.

3. That it should be a very fruitful tribe, especially that it should abound with milk for his table, and wine to make glad the heart of strong men, v. 11. 12. Fines, so common in the hedge-rows, and so strong, that they should tie their ass to them, and so fruitful, that they should load their asses from them. Wine, as plentiful as water, so that the men of that tribe should be very healthful and lively, their eyes brisk and sparkling, their teeth white. Much of that which is here said concerning Judah, is to be applied to all our Lord Jesus. (1.) He is the Ruler of all his father's children, and the conqueror of all his father's enemies; and he is that, is, 'that is the praise of all the saints.' (2.) He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, as he is called with reference to this here. (Rev. 5. 5.) who, having spoiled principalities and powers, went up a Conqueror, and couched as none can stir him up, when he sat down on the right hand of the Father. (3.) To him belongs the sceptre; he is the Law-giver, and to him shall the gathering of the people be, as the Desire of all nations, (Hag. 2. 7.) who, being lifted up from the earth, should draw all men unto him, (John 12. 32.) and in whom the children of God, that are scattered abroad, should meet, as the centre of their unity, John 11. 52. (4.) In him there is plenty of all that which is nourishing and refreshing to the soul, and which maintains and cheers the divine life in him; he may have wine and milk, the riches of Judah's tribe, without money, and without price, Isa. 55. 1.

13. Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon. 14. Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: 15. And he said that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute. 16. Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. 17. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. 18. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord. 19. Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last. 20. Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties. 21. Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

Here we have Jacob's prophecy concerning six of his sons.

1. Concerning Zebulun, (v. 12.) that his posterity should have their lot upon the sea-coast, and should be merchants and mariners, and traders at sea. This was fulfilled, when two or three hundred years after, the land of Canaan was divided by lot, and the border of Zebulun went up towards the sea, Josh. 19. 11. Had they chosen their lot themselves, or Joshua appointed it, we might have supposed it done with design to make Jacob's words good; but, being done by lot, it appears that that was divinely disposed, and Jacob divinely inspired.

Note. The lot of God's providence exactly agrees with the plan of God's counsel, like a true copy with the original. If prophecy says, Zebulun shall be a haven of ships, Providence will so plant him. Note. 1. God appounds the bounds of our habitation. 2. It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our lot, and to improve it. If Zebulun dwell at the haven of the sea, let him be for a haven of ships. II. Concerning Judah, v. 14. 15. That the men of that tribe should be the first at the head of all that should fall to their lot. (1.) He saw that rest at home was good. Note, The Labour of the husbandman is really rest, with that of soldiers and seamen, whose hurries and perils are such, that these who tarry at home in the most constant service, have no reason to envy them. (2.) He saw that the land was pleasant, yielding not only pleasant fruits, but pleasant views, and pleasant scenes of the curious, but pleasant fruits to recompense the toil of the husbandman, and the pleasures of a country life, abundantly sufficient to balance the inconveniences of it, if we can but persuade ourselves to think so. Issachar, in prospect of advantage, bowed his shoulder to bear: let us, with an eye of faith, see the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant; and that will make our present services easy, and encourage us.

III. Concerning Dan, v. 16. 17. What is said concerning Dan, has reference either, 1. To that tribe in general; that though Dan was one of the sons of the concubines, yet he should be a tribe governed by judges of his own as well as other tribes; and should, by art, and policy, and surprise, gain advantages against his enemies, like a serpent suddenly biting the heel of the traveller. Note, (1.) In God's spiritual Israel there shall be no distinction of bond or free, Col. 3. 11. Dan shall be incorporated by as good a charter as any of the other tribes. (2.) Some, like Dan, may excel in the subtilty of the serpent, as others, like Judah, in the courage of the lion; and both may do good service to the cause of God against the Canaanites. Or, it may refer, 2. To Samson, who was of that tribe, and judged Israel, that is, delivered them out of the hands of the Philistines, not as the other judges hurrying them in the field, but by the vexations and annoyances he gave them underhand: when he pulled the horse down under the Philistines that were upon the roof of it, he made the horse throw his rider. Thus was Jacob going on with his discourse; but now, being almost spent with speaking, and ready to faint and die away, he relieves himself with these words which are as joyful as his Hebr. (v. 18.) Have waited for thy salvation, O Lord; and although the fainting, are helped by taking a spoonful of a cordial, or smelling at a bottle of spirits; or, if he must break off here, and his breath will not serve him to finish what he intended, with these words he pours out his soul into the bosom of his God, and even breathes it out. Note. The pious ejaculations of a man and his devotions, though sometimes they may be incoherent, yet they are such that they are to be censured as impertinent, that may be uttered affectionately, which does not come in methodically it is no absurdity, when we are speaking to men, to lift up our hearts to God. The salvation we waited for, was, (1.) Christ, the promised Seed, whom
he had spoken of, v. 10. Now that he was going to be grafted to his people, he breathed after him to learn the gaining of the people shall be. [2.] Heaven, the better country, which he declared plainly that he sought, (Heb. 11. 13, 14,) and continued seeking, now that he was in Egypt. Now that he is going to enjoy the salvation, he comforts himself with this, that he had waited for the salvation. Note, First, It is the character of a living saint, that he waits for the salvation of the Lord. Christ, as our Way to be served, must be waited on. Heaven, as one of the names of Christ, is to be waited for. Secondly, It is the comfort of a dying saint thus to have waited for the salvation of the Lord; for then he shall have what he has been waiting for: long looked for will come. 

IV. Concerning God, v. 19. He alludes to his name, which signifies a troop, foresees the character of that tribe, that it should be a strike tribe, and so we find, 1 Chron. 12. 8, the Gileadites, men of war fit for the battle. He foresees that the situation of that tribe on the other side of Jordan, would expose it to the incursions of its neighbours, the Moabites and Ammonites; and that they might not be proud of their strength and valour, he foretells that the troops of their enemies should in many skirmishes, overcome them; yet, that they might not be discouraged by their defeats, he assures them that the victory was fulfilled when, in Saul's time and David's, the Moabites and Ammonites were wholly subdued; see 1 Chron. 5. 18, &c. Note, The cause of God and his people, though it may seem for a time to be baffled and run down, yet it will be victorious at last, Vincimur in prisco, sed non in bello—We are foiled in battle, but not in a campaign. Grace in the soul often triumphs in its conflicts, troops of corruption overcome it, but the cause is God's, and grace will in the issue come off conqueror, yea, more than conqueror, Rom. 8. 37.

V. Concerning Asher, v. 20. That it should be a very rich tribe, replenished not only with bread for necessity, but with fatness, with dainties, royal dainties. (for the king himself is served of the field, Excl. 5. 9.) and these exported out of Asher, to other tribes, perhaps to other nations; and God of nature has provided for us, not only necessaries but dainties, that we might call him a bountiful Benefactor; yet, whereas all places are competently furnished with necessaries, only some places afford dainties. Corn is more common than spices. Were the supports of luxury as universal as the supports of life, the world would be worse than it is, and that it need not be.

VI. Concerning Naphtali, v. 21. A tribe that carries struggles in its name; it signifies wrestling, and the blessing entailed upon it signifies prevailing; it is a hind let loose. Though we find not this prediction so fully answered in the event as some of the rest, yet, no doubt, it proved true, that these of this tribe were, 1. As the loving hind, (for that is her epithet, Prov. 5. 19.) friendly, obliging to others, and courageous in their defence; they are remarkably kind and endearing. 2. As the loosened hind, zealous for their liberty. 3. As the swift hind, (Ps. 18. 33.) quick in despatch of business; and perhaps, 4. As the trembling hind, timorous in times of public danger. It is rare that those that are most amiable to their friends, are most formidable to their enemies. 5. That they should be ophite and cobra, their language refined, and their words, as they are called, giving gaudy words. Note, Among God's Israel there is to be found a great variety of dispositions, contrary to each other, yet all contributing to the beauty and strength of the body: Judah like a lion, Issachar like an ass, Dan like a serpent, Naphtali like a hind. Let not those of different tempers and gifts censure one another, or envy one another, any more than those of different states and complexions.

22. Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall. 23. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: 24. But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:) 25. Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: 26. The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren. 27. Benjamin shall stand as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

He closes with the blessings of his best beloved sons, Joseph and Benjamin; with these he will breathe his last. 

1. The blessing of Joseph, which is very large and full. He is compared (v. 22.) to a fruitful bough, or young tree; for God had made him fruitful in the land of his affliction; he owned it, ch. 41. 52. His two sons were as branches of a vine, or other spreading plant, running over the wall. Note, God can make these fruitful, great comforts to themselves and others, who have been looked upon as dry and withered. More is recorded in the history concerning Joseph, than concerning any other of Jacob's sons; and therefore what Jacob says of him, is historical as well as prophetical. Observe, 1. The providences of God concerning Joseph, v. 23, 24. These are mentioned to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Jacob's faith: and hope, that God had blessings in store for his seed. Here observe, (1.) Joseph's straits and troubles, v. 23. Though he now lived at ease, and in honour, Jacob reminds him of the difficulties he had formerly waded through. He had had many enemies here called archers, being skilful to do mischief, masters of their art of persecution; they hated him, there persecution begins; they shot their poisonous darts at him, and thus they sorely grieved him. His brethren, in his father's house, were very spiteful toward him, heacknowledged them, reproached him, threatened him, sold him, thought they had been the death of him. His mistress in the house of Potiphar, sorely grieved him, and shot at him, when she immoderately assaulted his chastity; (temptations are fiery darts, thorns in the flesh, sorely grievous to gracious souls;) when she prevailed not in this, she hated him and shot at him, by her false accusation to those against which there is little fence, but the hold God has in the consciences of the worst of men. Doubtless he had enemies in the court of Pharaoh, that envied his preferment, and sought to undermine him. (2.) Joseph's strength and support under all these troubles; (v. 24.) His bow abode in strength, that is, his faith did not fail, but
he kept his ground, and came on a conqueror. The arms of his hands were made strong; that is, his other graces did their part, his wisdom, courage, and patience were equal to the better part of the war. In short, he maintained both his integrity and his comfort through all his trials; he bare all his burdens with an invincible resolution, and did not sink under them nor do any thing unbecoming him. (3.) The spring and fountain of this strength; it was by the hands of the mighty God, who was therefore able to strengthen him, and give the God of Jacob and his family. Herein Joseph was a type, [1.] Of Christ: he was shut at and hated, but rose up under his sufferings, (Is. 50. 7–9.) and was afterward advanced to be the shepherd and stone. [2.] Of the church in general, and particular believers; heu shoots its arrows against the saints, but Heaven protects and strengthens them, and will crown them in the kingdom of glory.

II. The promises of God to Joseph. See how these are connected with the former! (v. 25.) Even by the God of thy father Jacob, who shall help thee. Note, Our experiences of God's power and goodness in strengthening us hitherto, are our encouraging statements to hope for help from him; that he has helped us will: we may build much upon our Ehem-Ebens. See what Joseph may expect from the Almighty God of his father. (1.) He shall help thee in a difficulties and dangers which may yet be before thee. help thy seed in their wars. Josua came from him, who commanded in chief in the wars of Canaan. (2.) He shall bless thee; and he only blesses indeed. Jacob prays for a blessing upon Joseph, but the God of Jacob commands the blessing. Observe the blessings conferred on Joseph. [1.] Various and abundant blessings. Blessings of heaven above; rain in its season, and fair weather in its season, and the benign influences of the heavenly bodies; blessings of the deep that hath under this earth, which, compared with the upper world, is but a great deep, with subterraneous mines and springs. Spiritual blessings are blessings of heaven above, which we ought to desire and seek for, in the first place, and to which we must give the preference, while temporal blessings, those of this earth, must lie under in our account and esteem. Blessings of the womb and the breasts are given, when children are safely born; and comfortably nursed. In the word of God, by which we are born again, and nourished up, (1 Pet. 1. 23.—2. 2.) there are the new man blessings both to the woman and to the man. [2.] In succeeding generations, blessings, which prevail above the blessings of thy progenitors, v. 26. His father Isaac had but one blessing, and when he had given that to Jacob, he was at a loss for a blessing to bestow upon Esau; but Jacob had a blessing for each of his twelve sons, and now, at the latter end, a copious one for Joseph. The great blessing entailed upon that family was Isaac's, which did not so immediately concern and so efficiently follow him, which Abraham and Isaac gave to their sons, as it followed the blessing which Jacob gave to his; for, soon after his death, they multiplied exceedingly. [3.] Durable and extensive blessings; unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills, including all the productions of the most fruitful hills, and lasting as long as they last, Isa. 54. 10. Note, The blessing of the everlasting God include the riches of the everlasting hills, and much more. Well, of these blessings it is here said, they shall be, it is a promise, v. 15. Let them be, so it is a prayer, on the head of Joseph; to which let them be as a crown to adorn it, and a helmet to protect it. Joseph was separated from his brethren, (so we read it,) for a time; yet, as others read it, he was a Nazarite among his brethren, better and more excellent than they. Note, It is no new thing for the best men to meet with the worst usage; yet, by the God of Jacob and his family, and therefore engaged to help him. All our strength for the resisting of temptations, and the bearing of afflictions, comes from God: his grace is sufficient, and his strength is perfected in our weakness. (4.) The state of honour and usefulness he was advanced to after this; from thence, from this strange method of providence, he became the shepherd and stone, the feeder and supporter, of God's Israel, Jacob and his family. Herein Joseph was a type, [1.] Of Christ: he was shut at and hated, but rose up under his sufferings, (Is. 50. 7–9.) and was afterward advanced to be the shepherd and stone. [2.] Of the church in general, and particular believers; hell shoots its arrows against the saints, but Heaven protects and strengthens them, and will crown them in the kingdom of glory.

28. All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them. 29. And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, 30. In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying-place. 31. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. 32. The purchase of the field of and of the cave that is therein, was from the children of Heth. 33. And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

Here is, 1. The summing up of the blessings of Jacob's sons, v. 28. Though Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, were put under the marks of their father's displeasure, yet he is said to bless them every one according to his blessing; for none of them were rejected as Esau was. Note, Whatever rebukes of God's word or providence we are under at any time, yet, as long
as we have an interest in God's covenant, a place and a name among his people, and good hopes of a share in the heavenly Canaan, we must account ourselves blessed.

2. The solemn charge Jacob gave them concerning his burial, which is a repetition of what he had before given to Joseph. See how he speaks of death, now that he is dying; (v. 29.) I am to be gathered unto my people. Note, It is good to represent death to ourselves under the most desirable images, that the terror of it may be taken off. Though it separate us from our children and our people in this world, it gathers us to our fathers and to our people in the other world. Perhaps Jacob uses this expression concerning death, as a reason why his sons should bury him in Canaan; for says he, If I am gathered unto my people, my soul must be gone to the spirits of just men made perfect; and therefore bury me with my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and their wives." v. 31.

Observe,
(1.) His heart was very much upon it, not so much from a natural affection to his native soil, as from a principle of faith in the promise of God, that Canaan should be the inheritance of his seed. He would keep up in his sons a remembrance of the promised land, and not only would have their acquaintance with it renewed by a journey thither on that occasion, but their desire towards it, and their expectation of it preserved.

(2.) He is very particular in describing the place, both by the situation of it, and by the purchase Abraham had made of it, for a burying-place. v. 30, 32. He was afraid lest his sons after seventeen years sojourning in Egypt, had forgotten Canaan, and even the burying-place of their ancestors there, or lest the Canaanites should dispute his title to it; and therefore he specifies it thus largely, and the purchase of it, even when he lies a-dying, not only to prevent mistakes, but to show how mindful he was of that country. Note, It is, and should be, a great pleasure to dying saints, to fix their thoughts upon the heavenly Canaan, and the rest they hope for there after death.

3. The death of Jacob. v. 33. When he had finished both his blessing and his charge, (both which are included in the commanding of his sons,) and so had finished his testimony, he addressed himself to his dying work. (1.) He put himself into a posture for dying; having, before, seated himself upon the bed-side, to lose (the spirits being) the fresh oil to his expiring lamp, Dan. 10. 19.) when that work was done, be gathered up his feet into the bed, that he might lie along, not only as one patiently submitting to the stroke, but as one cheerfully composing himself to rest, now that he was weary. I will lay me down, and sleep. (2.) He freely resigned his spirit into the hand of God, the Father of spirits; he yielded up the management of his soul to God. (3.) His expiring soul went to the assembly of the souls of the faithful, which, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; he was gathered to his people. Note, If God's people be our people, death will gather us to them.

CHAP. I.

Here is, I. The preparation for Jacob's funeral, v. 1. 6. II. The funeral itself, v. 7. 14. III. The setting of a good understanding between Joseph and his brethren after the death of Jacob, v. 15. 18. IV. Joseph's request that his body be carried to Canaan, v. 19. 21. Thus the book of Genesis, which began with the originals of light and life, ends with nothing but death and darkness; so sad a change has sin made.

1. AND Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

2. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father: and the physicians embalmed Israel. 3. And forty days were fulfilled for him; (for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed;) and the Egyptians mourned for him three score and ten days. 4. And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, 5. My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now, therefore, let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again. 6. And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

Joseph is here paying his last respects to his deceased father.

1. With tears and kisses, and all the tender expressions of a filial affection, he takes leave of the deserted body, v. 1. Though Jacob was old and decrepit, and must needs die, in the course of nature; though he was poor comparatively, and a constant charge to his son Joseph, yet such an affection he had for a loving father, and so sensible was he of the loss of a prudent, pious, praying father, that he could not part with him without floods of tears. Note, As it is an honour to die lamented, so is it the duty of survivors to lament the death of these who have been useful in their day, though for some time they may have survived their usefulness. The departed soul is out of the reach of our tears and kisses, but with them it is proper to show our respect to the poor body, of which we look for a glorious and joyful resurrection. Thus Joseph showed his faith in God, and love to his father, by kissing his pale and cold lips, and so giving an affectionate farewell. Probably, the rest of Jacob's sons did the same, much moved, no doubt, with his dying words.

2. He ordered the body to be embalmed, (v. 2.) not only because he died in Egypt, and that was the manner of the Egyptians, but because he was to be carried to Canaan, which would be in a little time, and therefore it was necessary the body should be preserved as well as it might be from putrefaction. See how vile our bodies are, when the soul has forsaken them; without a great deal of art, and pains, and care, they will, in a very little time, become noisome. If the body have been dead four days, by that time it is offensive.

He ordered the ceremony of solemn mourning for him, v. 3. Forty days were taken up in embalming the body, which the Egyptians (they say) had an art of doing so curiously, as to preserve the very features of the face unchanged; all this time, and thirty days more, seventy in all, they either confined themselves and sat solitary, or when they went out, appeared in the habit of these mourners, according to the decent custom of the country. The Egyptians, many of them, out of the great respect they had for Joseph, (whose good offices done for the king and country were now fresh in remembrance,) put themselves into mourning for his father. As with us, when the court goes into mourning, those of the best quality do so too. About ten weeks was the court of Egypt in mourning for Jacob. Note, What they did in state, we should do in sincerity, weep with them.
4. He asked and obtained leave of Pharaoh to go to Canaan, that he might attend the funeral of his father, Gen. 4. 6. (1.) It was a piece of necessary respect to Pharaoh, that he would not go without his permission: we may suppose, that though his charge about the corn was long since over, yet he continued a prime-minister of state, and therefore would not be so long absent from his business without licence. (2.) He observed decorum, in employing some of the royal family, or some of the officers of the household, to intercede for this licence; either because it was not proper for him, in the days of his mourning, to come into the presence-chamber, or because he would not presume too much upon his own interest. Note, Modesty is a great ornament to dignity. (3.) He pleaded the obligation his father had laid upon him, by an oath, to bury him in Canaan, v. 5. It was not from pride or humour, but from his regard to an indispensable duty that he desired it. All nations reckon that oaths must be performed, and the will of the dead must be observed. (4.) He promised to return; I will come again. When we return to our own houses from burying the bodies of our relations, we say, We have left them behind; but if their souls be gone to our heavenly Father’s house, we may say, with more reason, They have left us behind. (5.) He obtained leave; (v. 6.) Go, and bury thy father; Pharaoh is willing his business should stand still so long; but the service of Christ is more needful, and therefore he would not allow one that had work to do for him, to go first and bury his father; no, Let the dead bury their dead, Matt. 8. 22.

7. And Joseph went up to bury his father: and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt. Gen. 8. And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father’s house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen. Gen. 9. And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company. Gen. 10. And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation: and he made a mourning for his father seven days. Gen. 11. And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan. Gen. 12. And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13. For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying-place, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre. Gen. 14. And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

We have here an account of Jacob’s funeral.

Of the funerals of the kings of Judah, usually, no more is said than this, They were buried with their fathers in the city of David; but the funeral of the patriarch Jacob is more largely and fully described.

1. To show how much better God was to him than he expected; he had spoken more than once of dying for grief, and going to the grave bereaved of his children, but, behold, he dies in honour, and is followed to the grave by all his children. Note, Because his orders concerning his burial were given and observed in faith, and in expectation both of the earthly and of the heavenly Canaan.

2. It was a stately funeral: he was attended to the grave, not only by his own family, but by the courtiers, and all the great men of the kingdom, who in token of their gratitude to Joseph, showed this respect to his father for his sake, and did him honour at his death. Though the Egyptians had had an antipathy to the Hebrews, and had looked upon them with disdain, (eh. 43. 32.) yet now they were better acquainted with them, they began to have a respect for them. Good old Jacob had conducted himself so well among them, as to gain universal esteem. Note, Professors of religion should endeavour, by wisdom and love, to remove the prejudices which many may have conceived against them, because they do not know them. There went abundance of chariots and horsemen, not only to attend them a little way, but to go through with them. Note, The decent solemnities of funerals, according to a man’s situation, are very commendable; and we must not say of them, To what purpose is this waste? See Acts 8. 2. Luke 7. 12.

2. It was a sorrowful funeral; (v. 10, 11.) standers-by took notice of it as a grievous mourning. Note, The death of good men is a great loss to any place, and ought to be greatly lamented. Stephen dies a martyr, and yet devout men made great lamentations for him. The solemn mourning for Jacob gave a name to their place, Abel-mizraim, The mourning of the Egyptians; which served for a testimony against the next generation of the Egyptians, who oppressed the posterity of this Jacob to whom their ancestors showed such respect.

15. And when Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. Gen. 16. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, 17. So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. Gen. 18. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him. Gen. 19. And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants. Gen. 20. And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? Gen. 21. But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Gen. 22. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.
We have here the settling of a good correspondence between Joseph and his brethren, now that their father was dead. Joseph was at court, in the royal city; his brethren were in Goshen, remote in the country; yet the keeping up of a good understanding, and a good affection, between them, would be both his honour and their interest. Note, When Providence has removed the parents by death, there is no need of their being got up together, nor of the preventing of quarrels among the children, (which often happen about the dividing of the estate,) but for the preserving of acquaintance and love, that unity may continue, even when that centre of unity is taken away.

1. Joseph’s brethren humbly make their court to him for his favour. 1. They began to be jealous of Joseph; not that he had given them any cause to be so, but by their own disposition, we guilt, and of their own inactivity in such a case to forgive and forget, made them suspicious of the sincerity and constancy of Joseph’s favour; (v. 15.) *Joseph will peradventure hate us;* while their father lived, they thought themselves safe under his shadow; but now that he was dead, they feared the worst from Joseph. Note, A guilty conscience exposes men to continual frights, even where no fear is, and makes them suspicious of those that are in the best stead, and of those that would be fearless, must keep themselves guiltless. If our heart reproach us not, then have we confidence both toward God and man. 2. They humbled themselves before him, confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. They did it by proxy; (v. 17.) they did it in person, v. 18. Now that the sun and moon were set, the eleven stars did obeisance to Joseph, for the further accomplishment of their dreams, and the effect of their connexion with fresh regret; *Forgive the trespasses;* they throw themselves at Joseph’s feet, and refer themselves to his mercy; *We be thy servants.* Thus we must beware the sins we committed long ago, even those which we hope through grace are forgiven; and when we pray to God for pardon, we must promise to be his servants. 3. They pleaded their relation to Jacob, and to Jacob’s God. (1.) To Jacob, urging, that he directed them to make this submission, rather because he questioned whether they would do their duty in humbling themselves, than because he questioned whether Joseph would do his duty in forgiving them: nor could he reasonably expect Joseph’s kindness to them, unless they thus qualified themselves for it; (v. 16.) *Thy father did command.* Thus, in humbling ourselves to Christ by repentance, we must not rely on what is the command of his Father, and our Father, that we do so. (2.) To Jacob’s God. They pleaded, (v. 17.) *We are the servants of the God of thy father; not only children of the same Jacob, but worshippers of the same Jehovah.* Note, Though we must be ready to forgive all that are any way injurious to us, yet we must especially take heed of bearing malice towards any that are the servants of the God of our father; we must not shut our eyes against a peculiar tenderness; for we and they have the same master.

II. Joseph, with a great deal of compassion, confirms his reconciliation and affection to them; his compassion appears, v. 17. *He wept when they spake to him.* These were tears of sorrow for their suspicion of him, and tears of tenderness upon their submission. In his reply, he directs them to look up to God in their repentance; (v. 19.) *Am I in the place of God?* He, in his great humility, thought they showed him too much respect, as if all their happiness were bound up in his favour; and said to them, in effect, as Peter to Cornelius, *Stand up, I myself also am a man. Make your peace with God, and then you will find it an easy matter to make your peace with me.* Note, When we ask forgiveness of those whom we have offended, we must take heed of putting them in the place of God, by dreading their wrath, and soliciting their favour more than God’s. *Am I in the place of God, to whom alone vengeance belongs? No, I will leave you to his mercy.* Those that avenge themselves, step into the place of God, Rom. 12. 19.

2. He remittes their fault, from the consideration of the great good which God wonderfully brought out of it, which, though it should not make them the less sorry for their sin, yet it might make him the more willing to forgive it; (v. 20.) *Ye thought evil, to disappoint the dreams, but God meant it unto good, in order to the fulfilling of the dreams,* and the making of Joseph a greater blessing to his family than otherwise he could have been. Note, (1.) When God makes use of men’s agency for the performance of his counsels, it is common for him to mean one thing, and them another, even the quite contrary; but God’s counsels shall stand. See Isa. 10. 7. (2.) God often brings good out of evil, and serves the designs of his providence, even by the sins of men; not that he is the Author of sin, far be it from us to think so; but his infinite wisdom so overrules events, and directs the chain of them, that, in the end, his purpose is done. Note, God’s nature had a direct tendency to his dishonour; as the putting of Christ to death, Acts 2. 23. This does not make sin the less sinful, nor sinners the less punishable, but it redounds greatly to the glory of God’s wisdom.

3. He assures them of the continuance of his kindness to them; *Fear not, I will nourish you,* v. 21. See what an excellent spirit Joseph was of, and fear of the least to do good to evil. He did not tell them, they were upon their good behaviour, and he would be kind to them, if he saw they conducted themselves well; no, he would not thus hold them in suspense, nor seem jealous of them, though they had been suspicious of him; *he comforted them, and to banish all their fears, he spake kindly to them.* Note, Broken spirits must be bound up and encouraged. These we love and forgive, we must not only do well for, but speak kindly to.

22. And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father’s house; and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. 23. And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph’s knees. 24. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 25. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones hence. 26. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

Here is,

1. The prolonging of Joseph’s life in Egypt; he lived to be an hundred and ten years old, v. 22.

2. Having honoured his father, his days were long in the land, which, for the present, God had given him; and it was a very great mercy to his relations, that God continued him so long, a support and comfort to them.

3. The building up of Joseph’s family; he lived
to see his great-grand-children by both his sons, (v. 23.) and, probably, he saw his two sons solemnly owned as heads of distinct tribes, equal to any of his brethren. It contributes much to the comfort of aged parents, if they see their posterity in a flourishing condition, especially if with it they see peace upon Israel, Ps. 128. 6.

3. The last will and testament of Joseph published in the presence of his brethren when he saw his death approaching: those that were properly his brethren, perhaps were some of them dead before him, as several of them were elder than he; but to those of them who yet survived, and to the sons of those who were gone, who stood up in their fathers' stead, he said this.

(1.) He comforted them with the assurance of their return to Canaan in due time; (v. 24.) I die, but God will surely visit you; to this purport Jacob had spoken to him, ch. 48. 21. Thus must we comfort others with the same comforts with which we ourselves have been comforted of God, and encourage them to rest on those promises which have been our support. Joseph was, under God, both the protector and the benefactor of his brethren; and what would become of them, now that he was dying? Why, let this be their comfort, God will surely visit you. Note, God's gracious visits will serve to make up the loss of our best friends. They die; but we may live, and live comfortably, if we have the favour and presence of God with us. He bids them be confident; God will bring you out of this land, and therefore, [1.] They must not hope to settle there, nor look upon it as their rest for ever; they must set their hearts upon the land of promise, and call that their home. [2.] They must not fear sinking, and being ruined there; probably he foresaw the ill usage they would meet with there after his death, and therefore gives them this word of encouragement; "God will bring you in triumph out of this land at last." Herein he has an eye to the promise, ch. 15. 13, 14. and, in God's name, assures them of the performance of it.

(2.) For a confession of his own faith, and a confirmation of their's, he charges them to keep him unburied till that day, that glorious day should come, when they should be settled in the land of promise, v. 25. He makes them promise him with an oath, that they would bury him in Canaan. In Egypt they buried their great men very honourably, and with abundance of pomp; but Joseph prefers a significant burial in Canaan, and that deferred too almost two hundred years, before a magnificent one in Egypt. Thus Joseph, by faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, and the promise of Canaan, gave commandment concerning his bones, Heb. 11. 22. He died in Egypt; but lays his bones at stake, that God will surely visit Israel, and bring them to Canaan.

4. The death of Joseph, and the reservation of his body for a burial in Canaan, v. 26. He was put in a coffin in Egypt, but not buried till his children had received their inheritance in Canaan, Josh. 24. 32. Note, (1.) If the separate soul, at death, do but return to its rest with God, the matter is not great, though the deserted body find not at all, or not quickly, its rest in the grave. (2.) Yet care ought to be taken of the dead bodies of the saints, in the belief of their resurrection; for there is a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered, and a commandment is given concerning the bones.

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**Exposition, with Practical Observations, of the Second Book of Moses, Called Exodus.**

Moses, (the Servant of the Lord in writing for him, as well as in acting for him—with the pen of God, as well as with the rod of God, in his hand,) having, in the first book of his history, preserved and transmitted the records of the church, while it existed in private families, comes, in this second book, to give us an account of its growth into a great nation; and as the former furnishes us with the best Economics, so this with the best Politics. The beginning of the former book shows us how God formed the world for himself; the beginning of this shows us how he formed Israel for himself, and both to show forth his praise, Isa. 43. 21. There we have the creation of the world in history, here the redemption of the world in type. The Greek translators called this book Exodus, (which signifies a departure, or going out,) because it begins with the story of the going out of the children of Israel from Egypt. Some allude to the names of this and the foregoing book, and observe, that immediately after Genesis, which signifies the beginning, or original, follows Exodus, which signifies a departure, for a time to be born is immediately succeeded by a time to die. No sooner have we made our entrance into the world, than we must think of making our exit, and going out of the world. When we begin to live, we begin to die. The forming of Israel into a people, was a new creation. As the earth was in the beginning, first fetched from under water, and then beautified and replenished; so Israel was