

THE
DREADFULNESS OF GOD'S WRATH AGAINST
SINNERS.

HEB. X. 30, 31.

*For we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people.
It is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God.*

THERE are two principal attributes of God, which the scripture propounds to us, as the most powerful and efficacious motives to restrain us from sin: and they are his mercy and his justice.

Mercy, though it be a soft, yet it is a strong argument, to encourage us to purity and holiness. And, therefore, says the apostle, Rom. ii. 4. "The goodness of God leadeth us to repentance." And, certainly, that mercy, that expresseth itself so ready to pardon sin, cannot but lay a mighty obligation upon the ingenuity of a Christian spirit, to abstain from the commission of it. He, that can encourage himself in wickedness, upon the consideration of the infinite free-grace of God, doth but spurn those very bowels that yearn towards him, and strike at God with his own golden sceptre: yea he tears abroad those wounds, which were at first opened for him; and casts the blood of his Saviour back again in his face.

BUT because ingenuity is perished from off the earth, and men are generally more apt to be wrought upon by

arguments drawn from fear than love, therefore the scripture propounds to us the consideration of the dreadful justice of God, arrayed in all the terrible circumstances of it; that, if mercy cannot allure us, justice at least might affright us from our sins. And, as those, who are to travel through wildernesses and deserts, carry fire with them to terrify wild and ravenous beasts, and to secure themselves from their assaults; so doth the great God, who hath to deal with brutish men, men more savage than wild beasts: he kindles a fire about him, and appears to them all in flames and fury; that so he may fright them from their bold attempts, who otherwise would be ready to run upon his neck, and "upon the thick bosses of his buckler." Job xv. 26.

And, therefore, in the four preceding verses, we find the apostle threatening most tremendous judgments against all that should wilfully transgress, after they had received the knowledge of the truth. He tells us, ver. 26. that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for their sins:" nothing to expiate their guilt; but that they themselves must fall a burnt-sacrifice to the offended justice of God; consumed with that fiery indignation, that shall certainly seize and prey upon them for ever. And, in ver. 28, 29. he sets forth the exceeding dreadfulness of their judgment, by a comparison between those that violated the law of Moses, and those that renounce and annul the law of Christ. "He, that despised Moses' law," who himself was but a servant, and whose laws consisted of inferior and less spiritual ordinances; yet a despiser and transgressor of these was to die without mercy: certainly, much sorer judgments await those, who reject the laws of Christ; and trample him, who is the Son and Lord of the house, under foot; accounting his blood unholy and profane, renouncing his merits, and blaspheming the Holy Spirit by which our Saviour acted: such as these, says the apostle, shall eternally perish with less mercy, than those that died without mercy.

Where, by the way, observe the strange emphasis, that the apostle lays upon this dreadful commination. He tells us that they shall be sorer punished, than those that are punished without mercy: to let us know, that, as there are

transcendent glories, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive," reserved in the highest heavens for those that love God; so, also, are there woes and torments, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive" how great and insupportable they are, prepared in hell for those that hate him. They shall die with less mercy, than those that die without mercy.

Now that we might not wonder at such a paradox as this, the apostle gives the reason of it in my text: "For we know him, that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me." It is the vengeance of God, and a falling into the hands of God: and, therefore, it is no wonder if their punishments shall be beyond all extremity. They fall under the power and wrath of an infinite God; which, when we have heaped superlatives upon superlatives, yet still we must express defectively: and all, that we can conceive of it, falls vastly short of reaching but a faint and languishing resemblance thereof. It is a state so full of perfect misery, that misery itself is too easy a name to give it: yea, whatsoever we can speak most appositely of it, is but diminishing it; for, because it is the wrath and vengeance of an infinite God, it can no more be known by us, than God himself. Plunge your thoughts as deep into it as you can, yet still there remains an infinite abyss, which you can never fathom.

O that the consideration of this wrath might cause us all to tremble before this great and terrible God! that we might so fear it, as never to feel it; and be persuaded to fall down at his feet, that we may never fall into his hands!

And, that we may be thus affected, I have chosen this text to set forth the greatness and dreadfulfulness of that wrath and vengeance, which the righteous God will execute upon all stubborn and disobedient wretches. A text, that speaks to us, as God did to the Israelites from mount Sinai, out of the midst of the fire and blackness, darkness, and tempest, in the voice of a trumpet.

And, truly, we have all need to have such rousing truths frequently inculcated upon us; for the best of us

are lethargical: and though, sometimes, when our consciences are pinched hard by a severe and searching truth, we start up and look abroad; yet, as soon as the present impression is over, we suddenly close our eyes, and fall asleep again in sin and security. A strange dullness and stupor hath seized us; that we can no longer keep waking, than we are shaken.

And, therefore, as we use to apply fire and burning coals to lethargic persons to awaken them: so we have need to heap coals of fire upon men's heads; to speak with fiery tongues, and thunder woe and wrath and judgments against them, that we may rouse the secure, stupid world.

In the words, we have these two parts observable.

I. An appropriation of vengeance unto God: "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

II. The dreadfulfulness of that vengeance inferred, from the consideration of the Author and inflicter of it: "It is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God."

I. I begin with the first of these, *God's appropriating and challenging vengeance unto himself*. "Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

Which passage the apostle cites out of Deut. xxxii. 35, 36. "To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence." And, "the Lord shall judge his people." It is his great and royal prerogative, that he doth sometimes make use of in inflicting judgments upon the wicked, in this world; but, most especially, in the world to come: and, to this, future vengeance, the words ought particularly to be applied.

From this consideration, that vengeance in a peculiar manner belongs unto the great God, we may observe, that *God himself will be the immediate inflicter of the punishments of the damned*.

It is therefore, here, likewise, called a falling "into the hands of the living God," which denotes his immediate efficiency in their torments.

It is true, God doth use several instruments of torture in hell. There are the worm, that never dies; and the

fire, that never goes out: which I suppose to be not only a metaphorical, but possibly a material fire; elevated to such a degree of subtlety, as that it shall, at once, torture the soul and not consume the body. And this fire the devils, who are the executioners, will be still very officiously raking about them; using all their malicious art to increase their eternal misery.

But, yet, these things are but small appendages, and only the slighter circumstances of their torments. The most exact and intolerable part of their torture, they shall feel inflicted upon them from another fire; an intelligent, everlasting, and therefore an unquenchable fire: and that is God himself; for so he is said to be, Heb. xii. 29. "Our God is a consuming fire."

And, though we ordinarily speak only of hell fire; yet not only hell, but heaven itself is full of this fire.

Consult that place Isa. xxxiii. 14. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" Would not one think, at the very first sound of the words, that the prophet speaks only of such as should be damned; of such as should be cast into hell, to remain there in everlasting fire and burnings: and demands of them, who among them could endure this? No: but it appears plainly, that this fire and burning is in heaven itself; and the prophet, by putting this question, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire, and everlasting burnings?" asks who shall be saved, and not who shall be destroyed. And, therefore, in the 15th verse, he tells us, that he shall do it, "who walketh uprightly, and speaketh uprightly; that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing of evil." Such an one shall dwell with the devouring fire: that is, he shall for ever dwell and remain with God in heaven.

So that we see God is a fire, both to the wicked, and to the godly. To the wicked he is a penetrating and torturing fire; and they are combustible matter for the wrath and vengeance of God to prey upon: but to the godly, he is a purifying and cherishing fire only. And, as

lightning doth not only cleanse and refine the air, but rend trees and rocks in pieces, dissolve metals, and break through whatsoever opposeth it in its passage : so this great and almighty Fire, only refresheth and comforteth the godly ; whereas it breaks and tears the wicked in pieces, and melts them down like wax before the scorching heat of it

And, though I deny not but there may be somewhat like that which we commonly apprehend when we speak of hell, some unquenchable flames prepared by the wisdom and power of God for the eternal torment of those wretches that shall be cast therein ; yet, withal, I think that their most exquisite torments shall be from that fire that is God himself.

For, if we observe it, it is said to be " everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : " Mat. xxv. 41. Now the devils are spiritual substances, and flames of fire themselves. " He maketh his angels spirits ; and his ministers, that is his ministering spirits, whether good or evil, whether the ministers of his wrath and vengeance or the ministers of his mercy, he maketh them " flames of fire : " Psalm civ. 4. They are such piercing and subtle flames, that lightning itself is but gross and dull compared to them.

Yet here is a fire, that shall even torture fire itself ; a fire, that shall burn those flames of fire : and that is God ; who, being a spirit and the God of spirits, can easily pierce and insinuate into the very centre of their beings.

So that the damned in hell shall for ever find themselves burnt up with a double fire : a material fire, suited and adapted to impress pain and torment upon the body, yet without wasting and consuming it ; and an invisible, intellectual fire, that shall prey upon the soul, and fill it with unspeakable anguish and horror, and this is no other than God himself.

And, in this, there is a true parallel between heaven and hell. For, as in heaven, though there are many created excellencies and glories, which contribute to the beatitude of the saints ; yet their most substantial happiness is derived from their immediate fruition of God :

so, likewise, in hell, though there be many created, and, if I may so call them, many invented tortures; yet the highest and most intolerable misery of the damned, is from the immediate infliction and infusion of the divine wrath into them, which no creature doth or can convey to them in such a manner and measure as they there feel it, but God himself pours the full vials of it into their souls. And, therefore, as the saints are called vessels of mercy; so the wicked are called "vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction:" Rom. ix. 22: vessels, into which God will pour of his vengeance, and which he will fill brimful with his wrath and fury, for ever.

The apostle, 2 Thess. i. 9. speaking of wicked men, tells us, that they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Where we must not think that this phrase, "from the presence of the Lord," denotes only that part of their punishment, which we call 'pœna damni,' or 'the punishment of loss;' but rather that it denotes the efficient cause of their 'pœna sensûs,' or 'the punishment of sense:' not that their punishment shall only be, to be for ever banished from his presence; but that this presence shall be active in inflicting punishments upon them. And we may well read it thus; 'They shall be punished with everlasting destruction, by the presence of the Lord, and by the glory of his power:' for, as God's glorious power is effective of their destruction; so also is his presence, the dread presence of that consuming and tormenting fire.

And thus much, briefly, for the first thing observable in the text; namely, God's appropriating vengeance unto himself: "vengeance belongeth unto me," and it is a falling "into the hands of the living God."

II. I come now to the second thing observable in the words: and that is the *dreadfulness of this vengeance*, inferred from the consideration of the Author and Inflicter of it: for, because it is divine vengeance, and a falling into the hands of the living God, therefore it must needs be very terrible.

i. And here I shall take notice of those expressions that

my text affords, to set forth the terror of this wrath : and then consider other demonstrations of it.

1. Consider, that *all other vengeance is as nothing, in comparison of that, which God takes on a damned soul.*

You may possibly have heard of strange and horrid revenges, that some cruel men have carved out unto themselves ; putting those that have offended them, to such tortures, as were altogether unfit for men either to inflict or suffer. All histories abound with such barbarities. I am loth to offend your ears so much as to recount them. Let us only take an estimate, by the dreadful revenge that David took on the Ammonites : 2 Samuel xii. 31. where it is said, " He put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln : " and all this severity, if not to say cruelty, was to revenge the insolent affront done to his ambassadors. It is, doubtless, no small torture to be burnt alive ; for fire is a searching thing, and eats deep into the senses ; but, yet, this kind of death was a quick and merciful dispatch, in comparison of the others. Think what it is to be stretched along ; and to have the sharp spikes of a harrow tare up your flesh, and draw out your bowels and bones after them : or, what it is to be sawn asunder in the midst ; and to have those small teeth eat their way slowly through you, while they jar against your bones, and pull out your nerves and sinews thread by thread. How many deaths, think you, were these poor miserable creatures compelled to suffer, before they were permitted to die !

Yet, alas ! these, and all the witty tortures that ever were invented by the greatest masters of cruelty, are nothing, in comparison of the vengeance that God will take upon sinners in hell. And, therefore, he says, " Vengeance is mine, I will recompense : " as if he should say, ' Alas ! all that you can do one to another, signifies nothing : it is not to be called, nor accounted vengeance : that is too great a name for such poor effects.'

It is a prerogative, that God challengeth to himself, to be the Avenger : and whatever creatures meddle with, if they have not a commission from him, it is their sin : and therefore private persons whom he hath not invested

with any such authority, ought not to take upon them to avenge their own cause; or, if they have a commission, yet all their execution of vengeance is but feeble and weak.

We find in ecclesiastical history, that the holy martyrs have often mocked at all the cruel tortures of their enraged persecutors. And God hath either taken from them all sense of pain; or else, given them such strong consolations, that they have triumphed and exulted in all the extremity of them. How have they hugged the stake, at which they were to be burnt! courted the beasts, that were to devour them! and been stretched upon the rack, with as much content, as formerly they have stretched themselves upon their beds: and not so much suffered, as enjoyed their deaths! God hath so mercifully taken off the edge and keenness of their torments, to show that vengeance is his right and due; and that they are but contemptible things, that one man can inflict upon another, scarce worthy to be called vengeance.

And, besides, let it be never so sharp and cutting, yet it cannot be long durable. The more intolerable any torments are, the sooner do they work our escape from them. And, though spite and malice may wish the perpetuity of our pain; yet it is not possible for mortal men to prosecute an immortal revenge: the death, either of them or of ourselves, will put a period to our sufferings. And what a small matter is it, to undergo pain for a few days only! This is not worthy to be called vengeance; nor is it like that, which the great God will inflict: which is both insupportable and eternal.

2. And, therefore, the apostle calls it a falling "into the hands of the living God." And this denotes to us *the perpetuity and eternity of this vengeance.*

God for ever lives, to inflict it: and sinners shall for ever live, to suffer it: for they fall into his hands. God hath, as it were, leased out a life to every wicked man: he hath his term of years set him, wherein he lives to himself, enjoying his lusts, and the pleasures and profits of this present world; and, all this while, vengeance intermeddles but little with him. But, when his life is expired and his years run out, he then falls into the hands

of the great Lord of all, and becomes the possession of his vengeance and justice for ever.

And, then, he is "the living God;" and such wicked wretches must for ever live, to endure the most dreadful execution of his power and wrath. Were there any term or period set to their torments, should they when they have endured them thousands of thousands of years afterwards be annihilated, the expectation of this release, at the last, would give them some support: yea, it would be some solace to them in their sufferings, to think that, at last, they should be freed from them. But this is the accent of their misery, and that which makes them altogether desperate, that it is for ever: for ever, they must lie and wallow in those flames, that shall never be quenched; and shall always be bit and stung with that worm, that shall never die. They are fallen "into the hands of the living God," who will never let them go as long as he lives, that is, never to all eternity. He is "a consuming fire," but yet spends not any part of his fuel: he consumes, without diminishing them: and destroys, but yet still perpetuates their being. 'A wise and intelligent fire,' as Minutius calls him, 'that devours' the damned, but yet still 'repairs' them; and, by 'tormenting,' still 'nourishes' them for future torments: 'Sapiens ille ignis, urit et reficit, carpit et nutrit.' And, when they have lain burning in this fire all the ages that arithmetic can sum up, millions after thousands, and thousands of millions; yet, still, it is but the beginning of their sorrows.

O think with yourselves, how long and tedious a little time seems to you, when you are in pain; you complain then, that time hath leaden feet; and wish the days and hours would roll away faster with you: and you never find them so slow paced, as when they pass over a sick bed. O then, what will it be, when you shall lie sweltering under the dread wrath and vengeance of "the living God?" The intolerableness of your pain and torment will make every day seem an age, and every year as long as eternity; and yet you must lie there an eternity of these long years.

Methinks this consideration of eternal torments should astonish the heart, and sink the spirits of every wicked

wretch: for, though they were not to be so excessively sharp as they are; yet the eternity of them is that, which should make them altogether intolerable. There is scarce any pain so small, but it would make us desperate, were we assured it would never wear off, that we should never obtain any ease or freedom from it: whatever pain we suffer, our usual encouragement unto patience is, that shortly it will be over: but, in hell, there is no period fixed to the torments: they are all eternal; and, therefore, whatsoever they are for the degree and measure of them, yet are they utterly intolerable, at least for their duration and continuance. Couldst thou shove away millions of years with a wish, yet all this would avail nothing: for there are as many years in eternity as there are moments, and as many millions of years as there are years; that is, it is an infinite and boundless duration; and, when thou hast struck thy thoughts as deep into it as thou canst; yet, still thou art but at the top of the heap, and it is still a whole eternity to the bottom.

3. Consider, also, that the wrath and vengeance of God is most dreadful, not only from the eternal continuance and duration thereof, but also *from the excessive anguish and smart of those torments that he inflicts.*

Nothing, that we have ever felt or can feel in this present life, can come into any comparison with them; and therefore the text calls it, a falling into the hands of God. Here, on earth, God's hand doth sometimes fall upon us; and it falls very heavy too, and lays upon us sore and weighty burdens: but these are nothing considerable; to our falling into the hands of God. There is as much difference, between his wrath and displeasure falling upon us, and our falling upon it, as there is, between our having a few drops of a shower falling upon us, and our falling into a river, or into the sea, and being overwhelmed with the great waters thereof; and, yet, how dreadful is it, when God's hand only falls upon us! It was a sad complaint of the psalmist, Ps. xxxii. 4. that God's hand "lay heavy" upon him: and, Ps. xxxviii. 2. that God's hand "pressed him sore."

Grievous burdens and sore pressures may be laid upon

us by this hand of God; and that, both as to outward afflictions, and inward troubles.

As to *outward afflictions*, how dreadfully doth God stretch out his hand against some! making wide and terrible breaches upon them: some, in their estates; some, in their relations; and some, in their bodily health and strength. Have you never been about the sick beds of those, that have roared out through the extremity of their pains; when every limb hath been upon the rack, and God hath filled them with a complication of loathsome, tormenting, and incurable diseases? And, yet, all this is but a falling of God's hand upon them.

As to *inward troubles*, we see how God cramps some men's consciences, breathes fire and flames into their very souls, and makes deep wounds in their spirits; forcing them, through the extremity of their anguish, to cry out, they are damned, they are damned. Yea, some have even wished that they were in hell: supposing those everlasting torments would not be more unsufferable, than what they here felt.

And, indeed, these inward troubles are far more grievous than any outward can be. We hear Heman crying out, that, because of these terrors of the Lord, he was "ready to die from his youth up:" and, whilst he suffered this wrath of God, he was even "distracted" with it; Psalm lxxxviii. 15. And Job, whose patience is celebrated for bearing all his outward afflictions, his loss of estate, of his children, of his health, with a heroic constancy, ("Ye have heard," says St. James, "of the patience of Job,") yet, when God comes to touch his spirit with his wrath, then we hear of his impatience: he curseth the day of his birth; and wisheth that God would destroy him, "that he would let loose his hand and cut him off:" Job vi. 9; and wherefore are these passionate requests? Why he tells us, ver. 4. "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me:" and, therefore, though he could patiently bear all that the rage and spite of the devil could do against him; when he touched his wealth, when he touched his children, yea when he touched his

body; yet his patience could no longer hold out, when God came to touch his soul and conscience.

And yet the greatest terrors of conscience, whether in the children of God to their reformation, or in the wicked to their desperation, are still but light and small touches of his hand, in comparison with what shall be expressed hereafter on the damned in hell. For,

[1.] *To the godly, all these afflictions are mixed with love and mercy.*

They are brought upon them, not as plagues; but as medicaments, to do them good. But, in hell, all is wrath, all is fury; pure wrath and judgment, without mercy. And, certainly, if those sufferings, which are inflicted in love and allayed with mercy, are yet so very dreadful to the people of God, how dreadful will the wrath of God be in hell, where it shall be pure and unmixed, and nothing put into that cup which the damned are there to drink of, but the rankest venom that can be squeezed out of all the curses that ever God hath denounced! And, then,

[2.] *To the wicked, all the troubles and terrors, which they here endure, are nothing, in comparison with what they must eternally suffer in hell.*

They are now only sprinkled with a few drops of God's wrath; but in hell, all his waves shall go over them for ever. Here, they do but sip a little of that cup, and taste a little of the froth of it; and, should they drink deeper, earth could not hold them, but they would grow drunk, and reel and stagger into hell: but, there, they must for ever drink the very dregs of that cup of trembling and astonishment. And thou, who now roarest and strugglest like a wild bull in a net, when God's hand is only upon thee, what wilt thou do, when thou shalt eternally fall into his mighty hands? Thou now criest out of the intolerableness of thy present pain; but, alas! hadst thou but felt one gripe of the torments of the damned in hell, thou wouldst choose to live for ever here on earth in the most exquisite torture that could be devised, choose to bear the sharpest paroxysms of the stone or gout, to be stretched upon the rack, to lie broke upon the wheel, to have thy flesh plucked off by fiery pincers; thou wouldst choose to suffer

all these to all eternity; yea, and choose them too as recreations and divertisements, rather than return again to that place of torment, where, not only the eternity, but the smart and anguish of them, is infinite and unconceivable. And, as one day in the joys of heaven is better than a thousand days, nay than a thousand years, in all the impure and low delights of earth: so, one day in the torments of hell, is far worse than a thousand in the sharpest miseries we can possibly endure in this life. Here, our pains usually are but partial: God aims and shoots with his arrow but at some one part of us: if he wound our spirits; yet this invisible shaft, like lightning, passeth through, without making a breach in our bodies, or in our estates; we have still our health and our plenty left us: or, if he strike the body, usually it is but in one, or at most but in some few places, and we enjoy ease in the rest: But, in hell, God doth, as it were, wrap the whole man up in searcloth, and set it on fire round about him, so that he is tormented in every part; neither soul nor body escaping, nor any power or faculty of the one, nor any part or member of the other. When we fall into the hands of God, we are plunged into an ocean of wrath, and are covered all over with his fury and indignation: the understanding, will, conscience, affections, are all as brimfull of torments as they can hold: for what can be greater anguish to the mind, than to know our misery, and to know it to be remediless? and what can be greater anguish to the will and affections, than most ardently and vehemently to desire freedom from those torments, but yet to despair of ever obtaining it? and what can fill the conscience with greater anguish, than to reflect, with infinite horror and regret, that it was only sinners' own folly and madness that brought them to this woeful and miserable condition? how will they be ready even to rend and tear themselves in pieces, their consciences curse their wills, and their wills curse their affections, and their affections the objects that enticed them to the commission of those sins, the revenges of which they must now eternally suffer! And as for the bodies of these damned souls, they shall, after the resurrection and dreadful day of judgment, become all fire, like a live coal: fire

shall be imbibed into the very substance of them, and they not have so much as a drop of water afforded them to cool the tip of their tongues. Luke xvi. 24.

And this is a third consideration of the dreadfulfulness of everlasting vengeance: it is a falling into God's hands.

4. Consider, *it is a falling into the hands of the living God himself, and not of any creature.*

Indeed, we read in 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. that David chose rather to fall into the hands of the Lord, than into the hands of men. It is true, when there are true repentance and hopes of obtaining mercy, this is far more eligible: for the chastisements of the Lord are full of mercy; but "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." But, where all hopes and expectations of mercy are excluded, as they are in hell; certainly, there, it is infinitely more dreadful to fall into the hands of a sin-revenging-God, than into the hands of all the creatures in heaven, or earth, yea or hell itself.

One would have thought it had been terrible enough, if the apostle had said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of devils." And so indeed it were; if we consider, either their power, or their malice. Certainly, they can easily find out such tormenting ingredients, and apply them also to such tender parts, that it would transcend the patience of any man on earth quietly to bear but what one devil can inflict. Do we not often see, in the illusions of black and sooty melancholy, what strange fears and terrors they can imprint upon the fancy; what horror and despair they can work in the conscience; so as to make men weary of their lives, and many times persuade them to destroy themselves, only to know the worst of what they must suffer? And all this he can do out of his own kingdom! What then can he do, when he hath got sinners into his own territories, and under his own dominion! What exact tortures can he inflict upon them there; such, indeed as we cannot tell what they are; and may it please God we never may!

And yet the devil is but a fellow-creature: but wicked men are to fall into the hands, not of a creature, but of the great Creator; into the hands of God himself, whose power

is infinitely beyond the devils, so that he is the tormentor even of them.

Think then with thyself, O sinner, that, if God binds and scourges and torments the very devils, who yet do so insufferably torment the damned : how infinitely intolerable then is that wrath, which God himself shall inflict upon them ! Consider with thyself, if thou canst not bear those pains and torments, which the devils inflict ; and if the devils cannot bear those pains and torments, which God inflicts upon them ; how wilt thou then, O sinner, be able to bear the immediate wrath, fury, and vengeance of the great God himself ?

Nay, let me go yet a great deal lower ; and suppose that God should make use of common and ordinary creatures, for the punishment of wicked men : who is there, that could bear even this ?

If God should only keep a man living for ever in the midst of a furnace of gross and earthly fire, how dreadful would this be ! If but a spark of fire fall upon any part of the body, consider what an acute pain it will cause : much more, if thy whole man should be all over on a light flame, and thou for ever kept alive to feel the piercing torment of it. And, yet, what is our dull, unactive fire ; in comparison of that pure, intelligent fire ?

Or, suppose God, who knows the several stings that are in all his creatures, should take out of them the most sharp ingredients ; and, from them all, make up a most tormenting composition : if he should take poison and venom out of one, and fire and scorching out of another, and smart and stinging out of a third, and the quintessence of bitterness out of a fourth ; and, by his infinite skill, heighten all these to a preternatural acrimony : if now God should apply this composition, thus fatally mixed and blended together, unto any of us, what an intolerable anguish would it cause in us !

And, if creatures can cause such tortures, what a dreadful thing then is it to fall into the hands of God himself ! For, when God conveys his wrath to us by creatures, it must needs lose infinitely in the very conveyance. When God takes up one creature to strike another, it is but as if a

giant should take up a straw or feather to strike a man with; for, though he be never so strong, yet the blow can be but weak because of the weakness of the instrument: and yet, alas! how terrible are even such weak blows to us! What will it then be, when God shall immediately crush us by the unrebated strokes of his own almighty arm; and shall express the power of his wrath, and the glory of his justice and severity, in our eternal destruction?

And this is the fourth demonstration of the dreadfulness of divine vengeance.

5. Consider, that the apostle calls this wrath, which the living God will inflict upon sinners by the name of "vengeance." "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense it."

Now vengeance, when it is whet and sharpened by wrath, will enter deep, and cut the soul to the very quick.

God acts a two-fold part, in the punishment of sinners.

(1.) *Of a Judge.*

In relation to which, their eternal torments are sometimes called condemnation: so, 1 Tim. iii. 6. we have mention made of "the condemnation of the devil;" that is, that state of woe and wrath, to which the devil is for ever sentenced:—and damnation: Matt. xxiii. 33. "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" And, sometimes, it is termed judgment: Heb. x. 27. "A certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation:" and, in Jude 15, "to execute judgment upon all" the ungodly; which denotes that their punishment shall be inflicted upon them from God, as he is a just and righteous Judge.

(2.) God is *an Avenger*, as well as a Judge.

He is a party concerned; as having been wronged, affronted, and injured by their sins. And, in relation to this, the punishments, that God will inflict upon them, are called wrath and fury, smoking anger and jealousy: Deut. xxix. 20. "The anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." Also, "fiery indignation:" Heb. x. 27. All which we find amassed and heaped together, Zeph. iii. 8. "My determination," saith God, "is to gather the nations, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." All these expressions signify to us, the terribleness of that vengeance, which God

will take; for, when the wrath of man only stirs him up to revenge an injury, he will be sure to do it to the very utmost extremity of all his power: and, if the revenge of a poor weak man be so dreadful a thing; how insupportable will be the vengeance of the great God, who assumes it to himself as part of his royalty! "Vengeance is mine." See that terrible place, Nahum i. 2. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth: the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." God reserveth wrath for sinners, and keeps it up in store; even that wrath, which they themselves have treasured up against the day of wrath.

This revenging wrath of God hath these two things in it, that justly make it dreadful.

[1.] In that *revenge always aims at satisfaction*; and seeks to repair injuries received, by inflicting punishment on the offender.

This gives ease to the party grieved: and, if this revenge be commensurate to the greatness of the offence, he rests satisfied in it. And, therefore, God, speaking of himself according to the passions and affections of men, solaces himself in the thoughts of that vengeance, which he would take upon sinners; Isa. i. 24. "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, I will avenge me of mine enemies."

And O think how dreadful that revenge must needs be, that shall ease the heart of God; and give him satisfaction, for all the heinous provocations, that sinners have committed against him!

1st. For consider, *how great and manifold our sins and offences have been*. And every act of sin, yea the least that ever we committed, is an infinite debt; and carries in it an infinite guilt, because committed against an infinite Majesty.

For all offences take their measures, not only from the matter of the act, but from the person against whom they are committed: as a reviling, injurious word against our equals, will but bear an action at law: but against the prince, it is high treason, and punishable with death. So, here, the least offence against the infinite majesty of the great God, becomes itself infinite: the guilt of it is far

beyond whatsoever we can possibly conceive. And, yet what infinite numbers of these infinite sins have we committed! The psalmist tells us, "they are more than the hairs of our head:" Psalm xl. 12. Yea, we may well take in all the sands of the sea-shore, to cast them up by. Our thoughts are incessantly in motion: they keep pace with the moments, and are continually twinkling; and yet "every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is evil." What multitudes of them have been grossly wicked and impious, atheistical, blasphemous, unclean, worldly, and malicious! and the best of them have been very defective; and far short of that spirituality and heavenliness, that ought to give a tincture unto them. And, besides the sins of our thoughts, how deep have our tongues set us on the score! We have talked ourselves in debt to the justice of God; and, with our own breath, have been blowing up our everlasting and unquenchable fire. And, add to these, the numberless crowd and sum of our sinful actions, wherein we have busily employed ourselves to provoke the holy and jealous God to wrath: and we shall find our sins to be doubly infinite, in their own particular guilt and demerit. And, now, O sinner, when an angry and furious God shall come to exact from thee a full satisfaction for all these injuries, a satisfaction in which we may eternally rest and acquiesce, such as may repair and recompense his wronged honour; think sadly with thyself, how infinitely dreadful this must needs be. Assure thyself, God will not lose by thee: but will fetch his glory out of thee, and take such a revenge upon thee, as shall as much please and content him, as his infinite mercy doth in those, whom he saves and glorifies. And how great then must this vengeance be!

2dly. Consider *how dreadful a revenge God took on his own dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when he came to satisfy his justice upon him for our sins.* His wrath fell infinitely heavy upon him: and the pressure of it was so intolerable, that it squeezed out drops of clotted blood from him, in the garden; and that sad cry on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And yet our Lord Christ was supported under all his sufferings by the ineffable union of the Deity.

He had infinite power for him, as well as against him : infinite power to bear him up, as well as to crush him : in Christ's sufferings, the power of God seemed, as it were, to encounter with itself ; and to run contrary to itself, in the same channel. And, as he had the support of infinite power in his sufferings ; so, likewise, had he in the greatest of his agonies the ministry of angels, to comfort him, and to refresh the droopings and faintings of his human nature.—And the infinite dignity of Christ's person, being God as well as man, might well compound for the rigour of his punishments ; and stamp such a value upon his humiliation, that less degrees of suffering from him might be fully satisfactory. For, indeed, it cannot be but an infinite punishment, for an infinite person to be punished.

But thou, that art but a vile contemptible creature, hast nothing in thy nature wherewith to satisfy the dread justice of God, but only the eternal destruction and perdition of it. Thou hast no worth nor dignity, the consideration whereof might persuade the Almighty to mitigate the least of his wrath and fury towards thee : and, when it falls in all its weight and force upon thee, thou hast nothing to uphold or support thee. It is true, the almighty power of God shall continue thee in thy being : but thou wilt for ever curse and blaspheme that support, that shall be given thee only to perpetuate thy torments ; and, ten thousand times, wish that God would destroy thee once for all, and that thou mightest for ever shrink away into nothing. But that, alas ! poor miserable wretch, will not be granted thee : no ; thou shalt not have so much as the relief and comfort of dying, nor escape the vengeance of God by annihilation ; but his power will for ever so support thee, as for ever to torment thee ; which is only such a support as a man receives on the rack or on the wheel ; supported, so as they cannot come off : the very engine of their torture upholds them. And, as for any help or relief which the ministry of angels will afford thee, think what solace it will bring thee, when God shall set on whole legions of infernal ghosts, black and hideous spirits, as the executioners of his wrath ; who shall for ever triumph in thy woes and add to them, hurl firebrands at thee, heap fuel about thee, and fully satiate their malice upon thee, as God satisfies his justice.

And this is one consideration of the dreadfulness of this vengeance: in that it aims at and exacts satisfaction for sin, which will be infinitely intolerable; because our sins are infinite, both in number and heinousness; and because Jesus Christ, who was to satisfy not for his own but for the sins of others, though he were upheld by the divine nature and possibly underwent not such acrimony of wrath as the damned do, yet his sufferings were unspeakable and unknown sorrows: and how much sorer then shall wicked men bear for their own sins, when justice shall come to reckon with them, and to exact from them to the very utmost farthing of all that they owe!

[2.] Consider, that *revenging wrath stirs up all that is in God against a sinner.*

Wrath, when it is whet and set on by revenge, redoubles a man's force; and makes him perform things, that he could not do in his cold blood: it fires all a man's spirits; and calls them forth to express their utmost efforts. So this revenging wrath of God draws forth all the force and activity of his attributes, and sets them against a sinner: and how dreadful then must that execution needs be! We see what great works God can perform, when he is not stirred up thereunto by his wrath and indignation: he speaks a whole world into being, and speaks it with a cold and calm breath: certainly, it was no small piece of work, to spread out the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and to work all those wonders of creation and providence which we daily behold; but, yet, all these things God did, if I may so speak, without any emotion. But when he comes to take vengeance upon sinners, he is then enflamed: all, that is in God, is, as it were, on fire: "Jealousy," says Solomon, "is the rage of a man," Prov. vi. 34. Now, when God's jealousy shall be stirred in him, think how impetuously it will break forth in the fearful effects of it: Isa. xlii. 13. "The Lord shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry; yea, roar: he shall prevail against his enemies." If the calm and sedate works of God are so great and wonderful, how great then will his vengeance be; when anger, fury, and indignation shall excite and whet his power to show the very utmost of what it can do! and, therefore, though

God had inflicted dreadful plagues upon the Israelites in the wilderness, and had shown mighty effects of his power and vengeance, yet we find that the church blesseth him, that "he turned away his anger, and did not stir up all his wrath:" Ps. lxxviii. 38. But, in hell, God stirs up all his wrath: every thing is set and bent against the damned: and as to the saints in heaven, every attribute of God concurs to make him merciful and gracious to them; so, to the wicked in hell, all the perfections of God conspire either to stir up and kindle his wrath, or else to assist him in the execution of it upon them: the infinite wisdom of God contrives their punishments; and which way to lay them on, so that they shall be most sharp and poignant; the power of God rouses itself against them; and proffers all its succours and assistance unto vengeance: the eternity and unchangeableness of God come in as a dreadful addition; and make that wrath, which of itself is unsupportable, to be also everlasting: yea, that sweet and mild attribute of God, his mercy, the only refuge and the only comfort of miserable mankind, yet even this turns against them too; and because they despised it when it shone forth in patience and forbearance, will not now regard them when they stand in need of its rescue and deliverance: so that all, that is in God, arms itself to take vengeance on sinners. An oh, think how sore and fearful that vengeance will be, when God shall put forth all that is in himself for the executing of his wrath upon impenitent sinners!

And thus I have done with the demonstrations of the dreadfulfulness of God's wrath taken from the words in the text, "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense it. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

ii. Let us now consider *some other demonstrations of the greatness of this wrath.* And,

1. It appears to be exceeding dreadful, in that *it is set forth to us in scripture by all those things, which are most terrible to human nature.*

God maketh use of many metaphorical expressions of things most grievous to our senses, that from them we may take a hint to conceive how intolerable his wrath is in itself.

It is called "a prison:" 1 Peter iii. 19. where mention is made of "the spirits in prison:" that is, the souls of those men, to whom the Spirit of Christ in Noah went, and preached in the days of their mortal life; but which, for their disobedience, are shut up under the wrath of God in hell. And, certainly, hell is a prison, large enough to hold all the world: Ps. ix, 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." A prison it is, where the devil and wicked spirits are shackled with chains of massy and substantial darkness: 2 Peter ii. 4. they are, says the apostle, "reserved in chains of darkness, unto the judgment" of the great day. And they are there kept "in everlasting chains under darkness;" there being not one cranny in this great prison, to let in the least ray or glimpse of light.

It is called "a place of torment:" Luke xvi. 28. It is a region of woe and misery: wherein horror, despair, and torture for ever dwell: and are in their most proper seat and habitation.

It is called, a drowning of "men in destruction and perdition:" 1 Tim. vi. 9. One would think, that, to be drowned, might signify death enough of itself; but, to be drowned in perdition and destruction, signifies moreover the fatality and the depth of that death, into which they are plunged.

It is called, a being "cast, bound hand and foot, into outer darkness:" Mat. xxii. 13: a being thrown "into a furnace of fire," to be burnt alive: Mat. xiii. 42, 50.

It is called "a lake of fire:" Rev. xx. 15. into which wicked men shall be plunged all over; where they shall lie wallowing and rolling among millions of damned spirits, in those infernal flames. And this lake is continually fed with a sulphurous stream of brimstone: Rev. xix. 20. And this fire and brimstone is that, which never shall be quenched: Mat. iii. 12. "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

And, lastly, to name no more, it is called "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" Mat. xxv. 41. And now we are arrived at the highest pitch of what sense can feel, or imagination conceive.

Or, if it be possible, that, in your deepest thoughts,

you can conceive any thing more dreadful than this, you may call it a sea of molten brimstone, set all on fire, and continually spewing out sooty dark flames : wherein endless multitudes of sinful wretches must lie tumbling to all eternity ; burned up with the fierceness of a tormenting and devouring fire ; scourged with scorpions ; stung with fiery serpents ; howling and roaring incessantly, and none to pity, much less to relieve and help them ; grinding and gnashing their teeth, through the extremity of their anguish and torture.

If now you can fancy any thing more terrible and dreadful than this, hell is that ; yea, and much more : for these things are metaphorical ; and, though I cannot deny but some of these may be properly and literally true, yet the literal sense of these metaphors does but faintly and weakly show us, what is the least part of those everlasting torments.

2. Another demonstration of the dreadful of this vengeance is this, that " it is a wrath, that shall come up unto and equal all our fears."

You know what an inventive and ingenious thing fear is : what horrid shapes it can fancy to itself, out of every thing. Put but an active fancy into an affright, and presently the whole world will be filled with strange monsters and hideous apparitions. The very shaking of a leaf will sometimes rout all the forces and resolutions of men. And, usually, it is this wild passion, that doth enhance all other dangers ; and makes them seem greater and more dreadful, than indeed they are.

But, now, here, it is impossible for a wicked man to fear more, than he shall certainly suffer. Let his imaginations be hung round with all the dismal shapes, that ever frightened men out of their wits : let his fancy dip its pencil in the deepest melancholy that ever any soul was besmeared with, and then strive to pourtray and express the most terrible things, that it can judge to be the objects of fear, or the instruments of torment : yet the wrath of the great God vastly exceeds all, that fear itself can possibly represent.

See that strange expression, Ps. xc. 11. " Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to thy fear, so

is thy wrath:" that is, according to the fear men have of thee, as dreadful and as terrible as they can possibly apprehend thy wrath to be, so it is, and much more. Let the heart of man stretch itself to the utmost bounds of imagination, and call in to its aid all the things that ever it hath heard or seen to be dreadful; let it (as that painter, who, to make a beautiful piece, borrowed several of the best features from several beautiful persons) borrow all the dreadful, all the direful representations, that ever it met with, to make up one most terrible idea: yet the wrath of God shall still exceed it. He can execute more wrath upon us, than we can fear.

Some wicked men, in this life, have had a spark of this wrath of God fall upon their consciences; when they lay roaring out, under despair, and fearful expectations of the fiery indignation of God to consume and devour them. But, alas! this is nothing, to what they shall hereafter feel. God now doth but open to them a small chink and crevice into hell: he now doth but suffer a few small drops of his wrath to fall upon them. And, if this be so sore and smart, that their fears could never think of any thing more dreadful than what they now suffer: oh, what will it be then, when he shall overwhelm them with a whole deluge of his wrath, and cause all his waves to go over them? "Fear him," says our Saviour, "which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell: yea, I say unto you, Fear him:" Mat. x. 28. Luke xii. 5. And yet, when we have feared according to the utmost extent of our narrow hearts; still, his infinite power and wrath is infinitely more fearful than we can fear it.

3. Consider *the principal and immediate subject of this wrath of God*; and that is the soul.

And this adds much to the dreadfulness of it. The acutest torments, that the body is incapable of, are but dull and flat things, in comparison of what the soul can feel. Now when God shall immediately, with his own hand, lash the soul, that refined and spiritual part of man, the principle of all life and sensation; and shall draw blood from it at every stripe; how intolerable may we conceive those pains and tortures to be! To shoot poisoned darts into a man's marrow, to rip up his bowels with a

sword red hot; all this is a nothing to it. Think what it is, to have a drop of scalding oil or melted lead fall upon the apple of your eyes, that should make them boil and burn till they fall out of your heads: such torment, nay infinitely more than such, is it, to have the burning wrath of God fall upon the soul. We find that spirits, which are infinitely inferior unto God, can make strange impressions upon the souls of men: and shall not the great God, much more, who is the Father of spirits? yes: he can torture them by his essential wrath. And that God, who, as the prophet Nahum speaks, (ch. i. 5, 6.) can melt mountains, and make hills and rocks flow down at his presence, can melt the souls of the damned, like lumps of wax: for, in his displeasure, he doth sometimes do it to the best of men, even in this life: Psalm xxii. 14. "My heart is melted like wax in the midst of my bowels."

4. The dreadfulfulness of this wrath of God may be demonstrated by this, that *the punishment of the damned is reserved by God as his last work.*

It is a work, which he will set himself about, when all the rest of his works are done. When he hath folded up the world, and laid it aside as a thing of no further use; then will God set himself to this great work, and pour out all the treasures of his wrath upon damned wretches: as if God would so wholly mind this business, that he would lay all other affairs aside, that he might be intent only upon this, having no other thing to interrupt him. Think, then, how full of dread and terror this must needs be, when God will, as it were, employ all his eternity about this; and have no other thing to take him off, from doing it with all his might.

God hath reserved two works, and but two, for the other world: one, is the salvation of the elect; and, the other is, the damnation of reprobates.

Now it is remarkable, that God's last works do always exceed his former. And, therefore, we find in the creation of the world, God still proceeded on, from more imperfect kinds of creatures, to those, that were more perfect; until he had fully built and finished, yea carved and as it were painted this great house of the universe: and, then, he brings man into it, as his last work; as the crown and

perfection of the rest. So God likewise acted, in the manner of revealing his will unto mankind : first, he spake to them by dreams and visions ; but, in " the last days," as the apostle expresseth it, " he hath spoken unto us by his Son." So, also in the dispensation of the covenant of grace and exhibition of the Messiah : first, he was made known only by promise to the fathers ; then, in types and obscure resemblances to the Jews : but, in the latter days, himself came and took upon him the form of a servant, and wrought out a complete redemption for us. So, usually, the last works of God are more complete, perfect and excellent than the former.

Now God's punishing work is his last work ; and, therefore, it shall exceed in greatness all that ever went before it. In his first work, the creation of the world, he demonstrated his infinite power, wisdom, and godhead ; but, in the destruction of sinners, which is his last work, he will manifest more of power and wisdom, than he did in his creating them : and how fearful a destruction then must this needs be !

God hath variety of works that he is carrying on in this world ; and, if his glory doth not perfectly appear in one, he may manifest it in another. But, when he shall confine himself only to two, as he will in the world to come, the saving of the godly and the damning of the wicked, and this without any variety or change ; certainly, then these shall be performed to the very utmost of what God can do : for, as he will save the saints to the very utmost ; so, likewise, will he damn and destroy sinners to the very utmost.

5. Another demonstration of the dreadfulness of this wrath shall be drawn from this consideration, that *God will for ever inflict it for the glorifying of his power on the damned.*

Rom. ix. 22. " What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known : " and, 2 Thess. i. 9. They " shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

Now, certainly, if God will inflict eternal punishments

upon them to show forth his power, their punishments must needs be infinitely great. For,

(1.) *All those works, wherein God shows forth his power, are great and stupendous.*

Consider what power it was, for God to lay the beams of the world, and to erect so stately a fabric as heaven and earth. The apostle therefore tells us, that by "the creation of the world," is understood the "eternal power" of God: Rom. i. 20. When God showed his power in creating, oh what a great and stupendous work did he produce! and, therefore, certainly, when God shall likewise show his power in destroying, the punishments he will inflict will be wonderful and stupendous.

(2.) *Consider, God can easily destroy a creature without showing any great power; or putting forth his almighty arm and strength to do it.*

If he only withdraw his power, by which he upholds all things in their beings, we should quickly fall all abroad into nothing: so easy is it for God to destroy the well-being of all his creatures. But, if God will express the greatness and infiniteness of his power in destroying sinners, whom yet he can destroy without putting forth his power, yea only by withdrawing and withholding it; oh how fearful must this destruction needs be! Alas, we are crushed before the moth; and must needs perish, if God do but suspend the influence of his power from us: how dreadfully then will he destroy, when he shall lay forth his infinite power to do it, who can easily do it without power!

And thus I have laid down some demonstrations of the dreadfulfulness of the wrath and vengeance of God; five of them drawn from the words of the text, and five drawn from other considerations.

III. I shall now shut up, with two or three words of application.

i. *Be persuaded to believe, that there is such a dreadful wrath to come.*

I know well, you all profess that you believe, that, as there are inconceivable rewards of glory reserved in heaven for the saints, so there are inexhaustible treasures of

wrath reserved and laid up in hell for all ungodly and impenitent sinners : but, oh, how few are there, that do really and cordially believe these things ! Men's own lives may be evident convictions to themselves, of their atheism and infidelity : for all that dissoluteness, which we see abroad in the world, proceeds much from hence, that men are not persuaded that these dreadful terrors of the Lord, which have now been set before us, are any thing but an honest artifice. They look upon them, as things only invented to scare the world into good order, and to awe men into some compass of civility and honesty ; they think all those tremendous threatenings, that God hath denounced in his law, to be things intended rather to fright men, than to do execution upon them. And, whereas one of the most effectual motives to piety and a holy life, is, to be persuaded of the terrors of the Lord ; these are not yet persuaded, that there are any such terrors. But, assure yourselves, these are not the extravagant dreams of melancholy fancies, nor the politic impostures of men that design to amuse the world with frightful stories ; but they are sad and serious truths : such, as, however you may now slight and contemn them, yet shall you be woefully convinced of by your own experience ; when, after a few years, or possibly a few days, you shall be sunk down into that place of torment, that gulph and abyss of misery, where the great God shall for ever express the art and the power of his vengeance, in your everlasting destruction.

ii. This speaks *abundance of comfort to all those, whose sins are pardoned, and who are delivered from the wrath to come.*

Look what spring-tides of joy would rise in the heart of a poor condemned malefactor, who every moment expects the stroke of justice to cut him off, to have a pardon interpose and rescue him from death ; such, yea far greater, should be thy joy, who art freed merely by a gracious pardon, from a condemnation infinitely greater and worse than death itself. When we look into hell, and consider the wrath that the damned there lie under, oh, to behold them there restlessly rolling to and fro in chains and flames ; to hear them exclaim against their own folly and madness, and to curse themselves and their associates as

the causes of their heavy and doleful torments ; how should we rejoice, that, though we have been guilty of many great and heinous sins, and have ten thousand times deserved hell and everlasting burnings, yet our good and gracious God hath freely pardoned us our debts, and freed us from the same merited punishments.

iii. This also should *excite us to magnify the love of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us.*

Who, though he knew what the dreadful wrath of God was, how sore and heavy it would lie upon his soul : yet, such was his infinite compassion towards us, that he willingly submitted himself to be in our stead ; took upon him our nature, that he might take upon him our guilt ; and first made himself wretched, that he might be made accursed. He drank off the whole bitter cup of his Father's wrath, at one bitter draught ; received the whole sting of death into his body, at once ; fell and died under the revenges of divine justice, only that we might be delivered from the wrath that we had deserved, but could not bear. O Christian, let thy heart be enlarged with great love and thankfulness to thy blessed Redeemer : and, as he thought nothing too much to suffer for thee, return him this expression of thy thankfulness, to think nothing too much nor too hard to do or suffer for him.

iv. *You that go on in sin, consider what a God you have to deal withal.*

You have not to do with creatures, but with God himself. And do you not fear that uncreated fire, that will wrap you up in flames of his essential wrath, and burn you for ever ? Consider that dreadful expostulation, that God makes, Ezek. xxii. 14. " Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee," saith the Lord ? The very weakness of God is stronger than man. God can breathe, he can look a man to death : Job. iv. 9. " By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed." " They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance : " Psalm lxxx. 16. O, then, tremble to think what a load of wrath his heavy hand can lay upon thee : that hand, which spans the heavens ; and, in the hollow of which, he holds the sea : Isa. xl. 12. What punishment will this great

hand of God, in which his great strength lies, inflict, when it shall fall upon thee in the full power of its might ! And tell me now, O sinner, wouldst thou willingly fall into the hands of this God, who is thus able to crush thee to pieces, yea to nothing ? O how shall any of us then dare, who are but poor weak potsherds of the earth, to dash ourselves against this Rock of Ages ? Indeed, we can neither resist his power, nor escape his hand : and, therefore, since we must necessarily sooner or later fall into the hands of God, let us, by true repentance and an humble acknowledgment of our sins and vileness, throw ourselves into his merciful hands ; and, then, to our unspeakable comfort, we shall find that he will extend his arm of mercy to support us, and not his hand of justice to crush and break us.