

SERMON XII.*

Joshua 24. 20.

If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt; and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

SOME few things I shall offer to your notice, by way of introduction to what I intend from this portion of Scripture. As, in the first place,

That the good which God had done this people, he was confessedly the Author of it. He not only was really, and indeed so; but he was owned, and acknowledged to be so. There was not a doubt in the case. It was a thing taken for granted, and which every one would own; that all the good which had been done to them, proceeded only from him, who is the Author of all good. And again,

That the good which he did for this people was very peculiar, such as he had then done for no people beside. He gave his

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testimonies unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he had not done so to any people. Ps. 147. 19, 20. Moreover,

That the peculiarity of his favourable dispensation towards them was resolvable only into good pleasure. No other account could be given of it, why he should be so particularly favourable to that people above other people, than, as our Lord says in another case, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Mat. 11. 26. And lastly,

That though the destruction threatened unto one people, so and so offending against goodness and mercy, doth not import the certainty of such an event, in reference to another people, offending in the like manner; yet it imports the case of such a people to be very insecure, and that they are liable to the same destructive severities and consuming judgments, as if they had been the people immediately and directly threatened. I say they are liable, and cannot reckon themselves entitled to an immunity from such destructive judgments.

These things being premised, the ground of our present discourse will lie thus: That the good which God hath, of mere good pleasure, and in a peculiar distinguishing way, done for a nation; leaveth them liable to consuming judgments, if they grossly offend God, and generally revolt from him. In speaking to this, I shall,

I. Give you the state of this truth, generally, and indefinitely considered. And then,

II. Speak unto it with special application to our own case, and the state of things among ourselves.

I. I shall give you the state of this truth, as considered more indefinitely. And therein,—shall consider that good, which God may be supposed to do a people; of his own good pleasure, and in a peculiar way: and—their liableness unto his consuming wrath, upon the supposition here put; that is, if they should grossly offend, and generally revolt from God, or rebel against him.

1. Let us consider the good, which God may be supposed to do such, or such a people, out of mere good pleasure. And here we shall consider, in what respects he may be supposed to do a nation good, and also upon what accounts.

(1.) In what respects. And for this we shall take our measure from what we find, even in this very chapter, in reference to the people of Israel. The chapter you see, begins with a large narrative and rehearsal of what God hath done for them; and it is well worth your notice, and observation. You must consider, that the time of Joshua's leaving them was now at

hand. He was apprehensive of it, and therefore gathers the princes, and heads of the tribes to him on purpose to take a solemn leave. They had been under his conduct by divine appointment; and, as their general, he had led them into that good land, which God, by promise and oath to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had entitled them to as their seed, and now conferred upon them. He was apprehensive of the state of their case, after his departure; knowing well the terms, upon which God had put himself under such bonds and obligations to them. Therefore he gathers the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for their elders, their judges and officers, who presented themselves before God. Upon which he begins his narrative of what God had done for them; and in what particular respects he had favoured them, and done them good. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, your fathers dwelt on the other side the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed and gave him Isaac."

Joshua here begins with that, which was the most observable thing, and was first in the divine eye and intention; namely, his making this people a plantation of religion, when the world was generally over-run with idolatry and wickedness. He puts them in mind how God did select, and sever the head of this people, from the rest of the idolatrous world. As elsewhere the history acquaints us with his calling him out of his idolatrous family, saying: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Gen. 12. 1. And we are told, that "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. 11. 8. This is the fit posture of a devoted soul, and so inwardly had God touched his spirit that he should upon his call readily answer him, and not dispute the matter, nor say, "Lord, must I go - I know not whither? and into that state, and in that way I know not?" No, faith formed his spirit, not for disputation, but obedience. He obeyed, and went. "Here am I, thy ready prepared instrument; do with me what thou wilt." And that which God designed to do, was to make him the head of a religious people; among whom he would be known, when so gross and general darkness had spread itself over the rest of the world. This was the main and principal thing in God's design; and with this Joshua begins

this narrative : and then continues it in shewing in what ways, and by what gradations, God pursued the design which he had so graciously laid in favour of this people ; out of whose line the promised seed was to arise, in which, at length all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

But in the mean time, the more special notices of God were to be confined much within the limits of this people, or them that should be proselyted unto them. " In Judah was God known, and his name was great in Israel." Psal. 76. 1. And whereas this was finally a design of grace, the rest of the narrative sheweth, how providence did work in subserviency to that design ; to multiply this people, to keep them entire, and unmingled with other nations : till that seed should spring out of them, in the appointed season, in and by which there was to be so universal a diffusion of blessings through all nations.

Therefore, the workings of providence are recounted afterwards, in subserviency to this design of grace, till he comes to shew how by a succession of wonderful works, in a continued series, God had conducted them from Egypt (where they were oppressed, and multiplied at once) through a wilderness, where they were under his more immediate care : till at last, according to promise, they were planted in Canaan ; the type of that heaven, into which the antitypical Joshua, our blessed Jesus was to introduce all that should be adjoined to him as the great Captain and Prince of their salvation.

(2.) As we have seen in what respects, God did thus do good to his people ; so we may also see upon what account. And this matter is capable of being resolved into nothing else, but the divine good pleasure. It was upon such terms, that this people were formed at first. The Lord did not set his love upon you, (said Moses) because ye were more in number than any other people ; for ye were the fewest of all people : but because the Lord loved you. Deut. 7. 7, 8. And why did he love them ? why did he so peculiarly favour them ? The matter resolves itself ; he sets his love upon you, because he loved you. Divine love, which is the original love of him who is the Fountain of goodness is its own reason ; for there can be nothing former to, or higher than the first. And the same thing Samuel takes notice of after they were become a formed people. The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake ; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. 1 Sam. 12. 22. How came you to be made his people ? Nothing can it be referred to, but that he was so pleased whose people you are. And that he makes the ground why he would never forsake them, in respect of their external constitution, otherwise than

upon such terms as he himself did express before, even when he took them to be his people. Of which more hereafter.

And when their state was to be restored, after its being lost in great measure through their defection and revolts from him, it is still upon the same terms. He would indeed gather them again, re-collect them out of the several nations into which for their defection they had been scattered. But why? Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel; but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. Ezek. 36. 22. So that still the matter is resolved into divine pleasure and goodness itself, the prime import of his name, as he himself proclaimed it to Moses; The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Exod. 34. 6. And so much concerning the good, which God may be supposed to do for such a people indefinitely considered.

2. We are next to consider the liableness of such a people, notwithstanding, to more severe, and terrible, and even consuming judgments in case of their general revolt from him, and rebellion against him. This we see plainly exemplified, in the course of God's dispensation towards this people. And we are here to consider, that whatever good he did for this people, it was but according to free promise; and that such promise was made, with a reserved liberty to make use of his own right to vindicate himself, when, by injurious wickedness, the design of all that goodness is frustrated, and perverted, as much as in them lies.

(1.) It is plain, that whatever good he did for this people, was according to free promise. But that is more than can be said of other people. They had such promised peculiar favours, as no other people ever had. That is, they had that good and rich country, which they possessed, given them by immediate grant from heaven, which no people under heaven ever had the like besides; and a promise ratified and sealed by solemn oath, over and over, unto their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose God he declared himself to be, and the God of their seed; by which he obliged himself to do them good in this respect, by planting them, as a distinct people, in a rich country; where they should have all the accommodations that were needful for answering the ends, for which he would have such a peculiar people in this world. And though what he did for them was thus according to promise, yet

(2.) In the very tenour of that promise he reserved to himself

the liberty of animadverting upon their wickedness ; and of making a way (as he sometimes expresseth himself) for his wrath to break in upon them, till at length it came upon them to the uttermost. 1 Thes. 2 16. So that when any such destructive judgments should befall them, they could not pretend to be surprised ; it was nothing but what they might expect and look for, even by the express tenour of that very grant, by which they held what they did before enjoy. And thus they were foretold it should be, as you may see if you look into the course of God's treating and stipulating with them. "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul ; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season," &c. Deut. 11. 13. All suitable blessings are, upon that supposition, promised to them. But it follows ; "Take heed to yourselves that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them : and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit, and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you." Deut. 11. 16, 17.

Now according to the tenour of this word of his, which you may meet with in multitudes of other places, was the course of his actual dispensations towards them. For see how things were, between God and them, after Joshua's decease. He had seen them planted, and settled in that good land. And we are told that "when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land : And the people of Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua ; who had seen all the great works of the Lord that he did for Israel." Judg. 2. 6, 7. But now, Joshua being dead, we find soon after, that "Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim. And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them ; and they were greatly distressed."

Judg. 2. 11—16. And afterwards, in the residue of this second chapter of Judges, is the summary given us of their deportment towards God ; and of God's procedure towards them, under all the several succeeding judges, that governed them, till the time they had a king set over them by their own choice. Whereas before, their government was designed to have been an immediate Theocracy ; that is, they were to have lived in all points, under the immediate direction of God himself. But they affected to be like their neighbours, both in civil and religious respects and so God, having, in his first grant of special favour to them, reserved a power of doing himself right upon them, managed the course of his dispensation towards them accordingly.

And this we may take for an account of the state of this case, more indefinitely considered ; forming our idea from what we find exemplified in this people. Great things were in a peculiar way of favour done for them ; yet we find all this did not exempt them from the terrible severities of vindictive justice upon their revolts from God, and rebellions against him. I come now,

II. To consider all this with application to our own case, and the state of our affairs ; in which application, two things must be considered.

1. A commemoration, with great thankfulness and gratitude, of the good, which God hath done for our nation ; in a continued series, and course of dispensations, through a long tract of time. And,

2. A representation, notwithstanding, how vain an imagination it would be that we are thereby exempt from a liableness to vindictive and consuming judgments, in case of a gross and general revolt from God, and rebellion against him. Of these two parts this application shall consist.

1. We are to make a thankful commemoration of the great good, which God hath done for our nation even in a long continued course ; as he did for that people, who have given us the ground of our present instruction. And here we are concerned to say as we find the prophet speaking : " I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us ; and the great goodness towards the house of Israel (we may say towards our England) which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses." Isa. 63. 7.

And here we may go back a great deal further than Joshua could, at this time, in recounting God's favours towards Israel.

They were not then of that antiquity. He had not so long a tract of time, as we have, to reflect and look back upon from their beginning to be a people; that is, the time when God took Abraham out of his father Terah's idolatrous family, to make him the head of a people, among whom there should be a plantation and nursery of true religion, from age to age, till the fulness of time. It was but a few hundreds of years, of which Joshua puts them upon the review; when he calls upon them to reflect upon, and look back to the years of former times. We have a far longer time to reflect and look back upon. Ours is a country severed and distanced, as you know from the rest of the world;

*Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos,**

and we are at so remote a distance, that it is to be reckoned among the miracles of providence, that the gospel and Christianity should visit our island so soon.

It is true, the history of so early times is so much the more uncertain; but such as it is, it makes Britain to begin to be christianized even in the first century, and as some have reported by the ministry of Joseph of Arimathea, who had been under the ministry of our Lord himself, as the Teacher come forth from God. John. 3. 2. And though afterwards this island of ours was invaded, first by one pagan, then by another; still Christianity kept its footing, so as never to be extinct. And when at last the romish apostacy and corruption had spread itself, here did more ancient primitive Christianity contend long against it; and with that steadfastness, and earnestness, that they found it impossible to make proselytes without making martyrs, even in those early days. And after a more general night of popish darkness had spread itself over this land of ours (then unhappy indeed, as the greatest part of the Christian world was) the dawns of renewed light were earlier with us, than with a great part of the rest of Europe, where the reformation has obtained. We may count above three hundred years backward, wherein there was most express opposition among us, by the bright light which then shone against the worst of the popish abominations. And when that light was grown brighter and brighter, unto a more perfect day; by what wonders of providence has our day been prolonged and the light of it extended for so long a space! With how indulgent an eye has heaven watched over us to prevent the return of that enchanted night and darkness, out of which we had escaped! what designs have there been prevented from time to time, to bring

* Virgil Ecl. 1. 67.

us back again under both a darkness and a bondage worse than Egyptian!

And it is admirable to see and take notice, how providence hath signalized the very seasons of our deliverance from those dark and horrid designs, which have been set on foot against us; that he should also twice put such marks upon such a year, and such a day; upon the year eighty-eight in one century after another, and twice upon the fifth of November in the same century; and at length draw two ancient mercies to meet together, as it were, upon one day, and in eighty-eight. This seems to be an artifice in wise providence to accommodate itself to our unapprehensive, and less retentive minds; that he should so mark out for us times and seasons, that when such a year, and such a day reverted, we might recollect ourselves and consider, and also those that shall come after us: "Oh, how hath God signalized these days, by special favours and kindnesses to England! and all aiming at one mark, that is, to keep us safe from that popish delusion and all the abominations which it sheltered, that he had before delivered us from; that we might not be brought back again, and return into so dismal, so gloomy, and so imbondaged a state.

And it concerns us to bethink ourselves as to this our last deliverance, now seven years ago the fifth of November 1688; in what a state of things we then were, and how our matters stood when a divine hand was reached forth towards us, to pluck us out of the gulph into which we were sinking. We are to consider in how prepared a posture all things were for our destruction, as to our most principal concerns; those especially of our religion, than which we are to count nothing more so. The providence of God ordered us the view of our danger; not that it might overtake, or oppress us, or end in our ruin, but that it might excite in us so much higher gratitude when he should deliver us. That is, in the course of providence he let it come to pass, that we should be under the power of a popish prince; intent to promote his own religion: that things should proceed so far, as that we should see mass-houses set up, even in the very metropolis of England; in this very city, Jesuits' schools opened; colleges in our universities seized, to serve the same purpose; and an Irish army brought into our bowels, easily to be assisted, if there should be occasion, by a French one; even when we knew how strict the confederacy was between those two princes, and by what methods the latter, to wit, the king of France, had been labouring to reduce all that were under his government to one religion, namely that of popery.

And where are they now that dispute whether a providence

governs this world? Is there no specimen, no appearance of a divine hand in this? That all the while that mighty French monarch was gradually springing up, until at length he should appear on the public stage with so aspiring a mind, as to think himself capable of giving law and a religion to all the world beside; as if he was not only greater, and more potent, but wiser too than all the rest of mankind, and a better judge of religion: I say, that while he was gradually springing up to this pitch, God should be forming his own instrument to appear upon the stage too, when it should be most seasonable? A prince, in such circumstances, and with such inclinations too! formed, and fitted, and placed on the stage, on purpose to give check (and we hope mate too) to that ambitious one, who made it his business, and doth still make it his business, to enslave, not only the bodies, but the minds and consciences too of all, to whom his power can reach and extend itself! is there, I say, nothing of a divine hand in all this? We know indeed what extraordinary, unlimited power could otherwise have done; but God uses to work by ordinary means. And if he had not marked out this way, if he had not raised up such a one, if he had not had this in his councils; to wit, "While that prince is gradually springing up, whom I design to be a just scourge to a wicked European people, I will have one that shall spring up by degrees at the same time, that shall prevent his being more than a scourge, that though he shall chastise yet he shall not destroy." I say if God had not done so, by way of opposition to those horrid designs that were on foot; we might suppose it as probable a means for any of us to repel the inundation of the sea by our breath, as by any other means in view to have prevented a universal deluge of the greatest calamities and miseries, all Europe over, that could be thought of or imagined.

And if there be a divine hand eminently appearing in all this, and in a way of favour, if God hath been doing us, and the nations about us good; all this ought to be acknowledged with the most grateful mention, and with hearts full of thanksgiving. For, consider, What if this had not been? Then had there nothing been in view to prevent our case, long before this day, from being like theirs, who professed the Protestant religion in France, and in Peidmont. We might come nearer home, even to Ireland; which though we look upon it as a firebrand plucked out of the fire, yet we should consider that, and ourselves as firebrands, not plucked out, but consuming in the fire, till we, and our religion, should have been reduced to nothing. If we would urge our own souls to a grateful com-

memoration of the goodness God hath shewn, and the great things he hath done for us ; we should, I say, state the case so as it would have been, if these things had not been wrought, and done for us.

Think then, what would have been our case ! to be dragoon-ed out of our habitations, our estates, and our families ; out of our religion, our consciences, and eternal hopes, if we had not patiently comported with the former, to save the latter ! And whereas the case of our brethren in France was such, that they had some refuges, some retreats, and knew whither to go ; yet if the overflowing calamity had deluged all, us as well as them, whither should we have fled ? what retreat should we have had ?

Think we with ourselves, how many peaceful years have gone over our heads ! Think too by what miracles of providence our state hath been preserved these several successive years ! seven years past, and how much more than seven might we look back upon ! One valuable life indeed (most valuable ! and of precious savour) hath been plucked away from the throne ;* but the other is preserved : and by how slender a thread doth so great a weight hang, and depend, as our visible All ! How strangely is that life preserved from year to year ! so as that after every campaign, we have, as it were, a king given us anew, as by a resurrection from the dead. Through so many surrounding deaths is he kept, and still from time to time returned, and brought safe back again to us ; whereas the continuation of such a thread by moments, hath so great a weight hanging upon it, that if there had been an intercision, as there might have been in a moment, it is inexpressible, yea inconceivable, what miseries might have come upon us. Though, as was said before, we are not to measure or circumscribe omnipotence, but we are to speak and judge of things according to the appearance, which they carry to our view ; who are not expected to judge with the judgment of God, but with the judgment of men, of what is obvious to our notice. And upon all these accounts we have cause to own even with the most sincere gratitude, that God hath all this while been doing us good, and has done it of his own good pleasure, and in very peculiar kinds and respects. But then, I must come to the

2. Part too, that I may be just to the truth and to you, to shew how vain a thing it would be (though we are obliged to

* Queen Mary, who died universally lamented, December 28, 1604 ; in the 33d year of her age.

acknowledge, and indeed to own it with the greatest gratitude, that God hath been all this while doing us good ; yet, I say, how vain it would be) thence to conclude ourselves secure from destroying judgments, and consuming wrath ; if still we grossly revolt from God, and generally offend against that goodness itself. And to this purpose let us,

(1.) Cast an impartial eye upon our own provocations ; and see what matter for divine displeasure, there is to be found among us. Certainly there is what may equal that of this people, who are our present exemplar. It may be some may say, " We are not for serving strange gods, as they did." But pray, how many are there who are for worshipping no God at all ! Set the atheism of the one, against the idolatry of the other. And were the Israelites for worshipping strange and false gods ? O, what multitudes among us are there, who cannot be supposed to be less guilty for their slight and careless and trifling worship of the true God ; while they acknowledge and own him in all the perfections and excellencies of his being, which exalt him far above all blessing and praise ! who come to worshipping assemblies with as slight minds, as others carry with them to the play-house ! O, what provocation is there in this ! How provoking is their wickedness, who deny the Lord that bought them ! who contend even against his Deity itself, his All ; who is to us our All in all, and upon whom our eternal hopes depend ! How horrid is it to consider the gross immoralities that shelter themselves among us under the abused, and usurped Christian name ! So that the justice, the honesty, the temperance, the veracity, which were to be found among pagans should be, from time to time, produceable to rebuke and shame us for their contraries, which we allow ourselves in, while we call ourselves christians ! Are not these high and great provocations ? And then, let us hereupon consider,

(2.) What pretence have we to think ourselves secure from vindictive severities, or that wrath should not come upon us, even until it consume us, after God hath done us so much good ? Is his doing us good, or his having done us good, any security ? Pray let us weigh some considerations with reference to this.

[1.] How was it any security to the Jews ? Do not we find, notwithstanding all the good which God had done for them, that yet there were times and seasons when their armies were routed, that they could not stand before their enemies ? When their ark, in which they gloried (that peculiar symbol of the divine presence) was made a captive to their enemies, and ravished away from them by paganish hands ? Was there not a

time, when notwithstanding all the good which God had done them, the Assyrian power sacked and enslaved their country, and they were carried away even beyond Babylon? Did all the good, which God had formerly done them, protect their country from invasion; their great city, which was the glory and praise of the earth, from being plundered and ravaged; their temple, one of the wonders of the world, from being turned into a ruinous heap? Again let us consider,

[2.] Can we pretend any antecedent right to any of those favours, by which our state is distinguished from others, who have been most miserable round about us? Can we pretend any better right than the Jews had? They had a right by promise, we have not a right so much as by promise. Did God ever promise us that we should have peace in our own bowels, when the nations round about us should be involved in blood and ruin, and this for seven years together? This people had what they enjoyed by promise; but so conditional, so limited, as not to be a bar against such vindictive judgments, as did actually befall them: but we have not so much to say as that. We have no such prior right to our enjoyments, as that we can say, if such and such judgments should befall us, God would do us wrong; that if he should let our houses be burnt, our goods rifled, and ourselves come under oppression, bonds, tyranny, slavery, we should be injured, and wrong would be done to us by the common Ruler of the world. Dare any of us be so hardy as to say so? If we should, that alone would be provocation enough to bring the utmost of divine severities upon us; for we can claim no such right without invading his, who is the common Lord of all. And again,

[3.] Let it be considered, whether it is not very apparent that God hath done us all that good, all the while, which we have been the continual subjects of. Was it not all from him? Is it not he that protected our peace and religion hitherto; and kept off from us calamities and miseries, wherein others are involved? If we should deny that God hath done all this for us, even that itself were enough to give him matter of most terrible controversy against us. But,

[4.] If we do grant, that God hath done all this for us (exempted us all this while from miseries and ruins, put us under his protection, and that shadow, which his wings have spread over us; if we will grant, I say, that God vouchsafes us the mercy of all these years, which we have enjoyed) then let us consider, whether we must not apprehend him to have had some end, in such peculiar vouchsafements of favour to us. Is he indeed most infinitely wise, and in all respects the most ab-

solutely perfect? And what! can he act without design? Can he in so distinguishing a way have shewn favour to us, and not to others, as it were by casualty? or without saying, "So I will do. When I suffer such and such miseries to fall upon a people, professing my name, in France, in Hungary, in Piedmont, in Ireland, and elsewhere; yet I will cover and shelter those who profess my name in England?" Do we think this was without design or end?

[5.] If there be a design, if God aims at some end in all this, let it be considered, whether it is not an end worthy of himself; an end that was suitable to the wisdom, the excellency, and greatness of a God? And if so, then

[6.] Consider, whether we can suppose it to be an end worthy of God, and suitable unto his universal perfection, only to gratify our inclination, by keeping off such and such miseries and calamities from us; when he hath not done it from others, round about us. Why was it more worthy of God to gratify the desires, and inclinations in this kind, of an Englishman, than of a Frenchman, or an Hungarian, and the like? Was his end only, that he might not disturb and disquiet a people unwilling to be disturbed, and not patient of molestation? Was this his end? But

[7.] If his end was higher and more Godlike, that is, that we might have a peaceful opportunity of enjoying the gospel, and improving it through such a tract of time; then let us consider, whether we have answered this end. Where are our advances? where is our profit? wherein is it to be seen that such a people have, for seven years together, lived under a peaceful state, and dispensation of the truth, and ordinances of the everlasting gospel; which with others have been discontinued, and with many actually broken off? Pray, where is the difference? wherein are we better after all than they? We have experienced God's great goodness; and may still, if we continue in his goodness, and be attempered and suited thereto, in the disposition of our spirits, but if there is no such thing, what comes next but severity? Behold (saith the apostle) the goodness and severity of God! which are conjoined upon the distinct suppositions which are there put in the context Rom. 11. 22. And in the next place,

[8.] Let us but consider, whether we dare, any of us, lay a claim as matter of right, unto any of those private temporal mercies that we severally enjoy; namely, the health, the strength, the competent provisions which we find, and the reputation we have in the world, or with one another. Can any of us lay a claim to any of these good things, considered in a

private, or a personal, regard? If we cannot, then the good state of a people, which results from the particular enjoyments, accommodations, and comforts, of the several individuals, is owing entirely to the goodness and mercy of God. And who of us can say, "Because I have health this hour, therefore I shall certainly have it the next; I have health to-day, therefore I shall have it the next?" and so on. Can any of us say, "If we have peace this month, or this year, that we shall have it the next month, or year? Or, as we have now free opportunities of worshipping God, so shall we have in all future time?" How absurd reasoning would all this be! But then consider, further,

[9.] That greater miseries, than can be comprehended within the compass of time, are due to every impenitent sinner; to every one who is not converted, or turned effectually unto God in Christ. What do we talk of their not being liable unto the troubles, the calamities, and miseries, that lie within the measure of time; who, in the mean while, are liable unto eternal miseries? that they are not liable to have their houses, or their city burnt, who are liable to that fire, which can never be quenched? and to have it said to them, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. 25. 41. And consider,

[10.] That they who live under the gospel, and obey it not, nor comply with the gracious design of it are every way liable to greater severities, than un-gospelized nations ever were. Would you think it a hard saying, if one should positively determine, that London is generally liable to more terrible things, than Sodom was, or Gomorrah? Hath not our Lord himself told us, that the people among whom he conversed, of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, were exposed to worse calamities, than Sodom and Gomorrah, or than Tyre and Sidon? Mat. 11. 21—25 We should consider this, not only with conviction but with consternation, to think what we are on this account liable to; as having still such matter of provocation, as you have heard found among us.

And therefore now, since it cannot with the least modesty be pretended that we are not liable, because God hath done us so much good, to the suffering of such grievous evils, as have been mentioned; as we have in view before us, even in ancient and in modern example: if this, I say, cannot with modesty be pretended, the most fruitful inquiry will be, how we shall demean ourselves agreeable to the state of our case, as being exposed to the terrible severities of consuming vengeance. Is it plain? doth the thing speak itself, that we are liable to very

severe consuming judgments? What shall we do hereupon? how shall we demean ourselves, or what shall be our deportment in this case? I shall shut up this discourse with a few words in answer to this.

First, Let us not hereupon cease from the most grateful acknowledgements of God's great goodness to us, in lengthening out our tranquillity so far, as he hath been pleased to do. For wherein he hath done us good, even freely, and from mere good pleasure; certainly the most grateful acknowledgements are due. We are to give thanks with the most serious gratitude for all that good, which we could never claim; and to which we could not pretend that we had any right. But,

Secondly: Though we are to rejoice in the remembrance, and continual observation of God's great goodness, yet we are to mingle trembling with rejoicing ("Rejoice with trembling") that is, we are to take heed of being secure. Our hearts should not be secure, when our state is not. It is unbecoming a prudent and considering christian (our state being stated as you have heard) to admit such a thing as a drowsy slumbering security, to enwrap, and stupify his heart! or that we should be of them, that cry peace, peace to themselves, when sudden destruction may be at the door. "Therefore let us not sleep as do others," lest such a day of calamity should overtake us as a thief. It is very unbecoming a wise man to be liable to a surprise, while our case is so stated, standing in view as it doth before us.

Thirdly: We should have also inwrought into the temper of our spirits, a firm persuasion that God is to be justified, even upon the supposition that the most destructive, and consuming calamities should befall us. Let this be inlaid deeply as a principle with us, if any thing should fall out, or whenever calamities or judgments befall us, that it is our business the first thing we do, and shall be continually upon that supposition, to say, "Righteous art thou O Lord"! Jerem. 12. 1. While we have no right to be indemnified, he hath a right to punish. Again,

Fourthly: We should also labour to keep our hearts loose from all our temporal enjoyments, and good things; that they may not be torn away from us by violence, but by an implicit, previous consent. "Lord, I have made over my All to thee. I have resigned all into thy hands. If it shall make for the honour of thy justice, and the dignity of thy government, for me to be involved in calamities and ruins (as no one can pretend to claim an exemption) I submit to it; and lay myself, and all at thy foot. I desire that my heart may cleave to no-

thing against thee, nor against any determination of thine. I live in my house, as having no right to it. I go out, as having no certainty, or assurance to return. I lie down in it, as if I expected to arise in the midst of flames." And so in reference to all the temporal good things we enjoy, we should lie before him as so many convicted creatures, ready to receive our judgment from his hand. For even his Moseses and his Aarons, while he vouchsafeth them mercy, and a pardon, with respect to their eternal concerns; yet, in reference to their temporal concerns, he may take vengeance upon their inventions. Psal. 99. 8. And in the

Last place: Make sure your interest in eternal good things, by coming to a covenant closure with God in Christ. Then shall your hearts not be afraid of the desolation of the wicked when it cometh. Then will you be able to apply to yourselves that sentence of the divine wisdom, the Son of God (for so we are to understand it, the supreme, archetypical, and eternal wisdom) "He that hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil"; (Prov. 1. 33,) and so shall we have a calm, a quiet, a serenity in our own spirits; not from presuming, or because we conclude we shall not suffer, but upon a supposition that we shall: as was said to the church of Smyrna, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." Revel. 2. 10. This is the way not to be in an astonishment, or confusion at such a time; having our hearts possessed with the faith of such a saying as this, which is surer and more stable, than the foundations of heaven and earth: When the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 John 2. 17 Such a one may say, "I shall be unconcerned in the common ruin, when that day of the Lord cometh, which shall burn as an oven. When the whole hemisphere shall be like one fiery vault burning as an oven, I shall not be concerned in this destruction. All that have vital union with the Son of God shall be caught up to meet their Redeemer in the air, and be for ever with the Lord. I can see all this world consumed, and think myself to have lost nothing. My good lieth not here. My treasure is in heaven, and my principal interest is there."

Let this matter be once put out of doubt; and then with how cheerful, with how childlike, with how submissive spirits, may we expect and wait for the most dismal, and the most dreadful things, that can fall out within the compass of time!