

SERMON III.*

James 1. 2.

My Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.

I TAKE it for granted that by temptations here, we are to understand afflictions; such as are, for trial's sake, laid upon the people of God. And whereas such, namely, those to whom the compellation of brethren is agreeable, are enjoined to count such afflictions matter of all joy; this plainly implies, that to such persons they are so. For they are not surely enjoined to judge otherwise of the matter than it really is, nor directed to make a false judgment of things. Therefore the truth I have to insist upon you may take briefly thus;

That the afflictions laid upon christians, for the sake of trial, are to a right and spiritual judgment the matter of joy; even of all joy, as you have it here expressed.

Now that this truth may be capable of use (which is the main thing I design upon it) it is necessary that I do these two things in the general; namely,

- I. That I state this truth; and then,
- II. Give you the grounds of it.

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I. I shall state this truth, or shew you how it is to be taken and understood. And here we have two things to open to you; namely, the object of that judgment, which is here directed to be made, and then the nature of it. The opening of these two things concerning the judgment we are to make of afflictions, which good men are exercised withall, will take up the whole of the business that is needful by way of explication; so as that you may have the distinct state of the matter before you.

1. I shall consider the object of the judgment here to be made; that is, the truth of this proposition, that afflictions laid upon us for the sake of trial are matter of joy. And this is the thing to be judged; as indeed in any proper act of judgment, a proposition is still the object; wherein one thing is affirmed, or denied of another. And the truth of this proposition is the thing to be judged; that afflictions, such afflictions or temptations as the apostle speaks of, are really matter of joy. Therefore it is necessary that we open to you this proposition as the object of the judgment here to be made. Particularly that we,—consider what is supposed here to be matter of joy; namely, afflictions, for the sake of trial: then—we shall open to you that which is affirmed, or supposed, concerning temptations; namely, that they are matter of joy: and—then the manner of the agreement of the one of these, to the other.

(1.) Let us consider what it is that is supposed by the apostle to be matter of joy; namely, temptations, or afflictions for trial's sake. Not any man's afflictions, but those that befall a christian; not any afflictions of a christian neither, but those which are laid upon him for the sake of trial, as the word (*πειρασμοις*;) used in the text doth plainly import. For t one very well known, and very useful and necessary distinction of afflictions, that they are either corrective, even unto the people of God; or else tentative. This is not a distinction of afflictions considered in their natures, but taken from the end thereof: for in their natures they may be the very same, as the afflictions of good men and bad men may be.

Divers temptations are mentioned: which implieth not only multitude, as to number; but variety, as to kind. There may be the same kinds of them inflicted, for either the one or other of those ends. So that the distinction I mention to you is not of their natures, but it is taken from something extrinsical; as the end of any thing is extrinsical to the thing itself. God doth sometimes lay on afflictions to try, and sometimes to correct or chastise his people. The principle of those afflictions,

that are for the sake of correction, is displeasure and paternal justice ; which God doth exercise upon his own family, and among his own children. And they have been wont, as indeed they ought, so to understand the matter. Thus says the prophet Micah, in the name of the people ; “ I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.” Micah 7. 9. And his anger is sometimes said to smoke, and continue long to do so ; as several expressions in Scripture, that I might turn to, import. But when the afflictions are to try, the principle thereof is not displeasure ; but wisdom, and sovereign good pleasure. In this case, I say, they are to be resolved into wise and holy sovereignty ; not anger, as their principle.

Now it is concerning afflictions so designed, or directed to this end, namely, for trial, that the attribute here in the text must be understood ; that is, that they are matter of all joy, and are to be so accounted. And because we must take the state of the subject, so as to understand the apostle speaking not of punitive, but tentative afflictions, as such ; therefore we are a little more concerned to inquire in every case, how we may be able to discern when any affliction, or series of afflictions, are brought upon the people of God, or upon a particular person, for the sake of trial. For the stress of the whole business lies upon the right understanding of this matter, and is the main thing we have to do in stating of the truth before us.

In order to it therefore, you must know that though these two notions of afflictions, to wit, corrective and tentative, are very distinct ; yet we are not to suppose that they are always to be separated. It is very possible that an affliction, or a state of affliction, may come upon a good man for both these ends at once ; but it is impossible that both these ends should, at any time, be principal. When both these ends do fall in together, so that afflictions are sent both to correct and also to try ; yet still one of them only is the principal end, and it is from thence that the denomination is to be taken. As for instance ; that affliction is to be called tentative, or that state of affliction is to bear the name of temptation or trial, when this appears to be the chief end, which God designed and aimed at, in ordering such a state of things to be the lot of his people, or of this or that person. But when the principal end appears to be their chastisement, then they are to be accounted corrective afflictive ; or punishments, and judgments, as these expressions are also used with respect to the people of God. But yet it may be said, “ How shall we know which end is principal, when an afflictive condition comes to be the lot of any of God’s people ?”

This case cannot be very distinctly and particularly spoken to now, for that would take up all our time. I shall only say this one thing to it at present, which is very plain and clear; and I doubt not satisfactory to every one, that seriously attends to it. When the people of God, who are in a state of affliction, have been and still are in a declension, as to matters of religion; or when this and that person can reflect, that they have been guilty of some very great enormity, some more notable transgression, and an affliction befalls them: why, truly, in this case they have all the reason in the world to look upon this affliction as punitive; that is, as principally designed for correction. But if the state of the church of God, when such an afflicted condition falls out to be their lot, is spiritually good; that is, if they have been for some time in a better condition than ordinary, or under no very observable delinquency and decay in their spiritual state; then the course of afflictions, which they at such a time fall under, is chiefly tentative; or to be reckoned as sent principally for the sake of trial.

And truly if we look into the afflictions which befell the people of God in common, at different ages, you will find, by what you have recorded in the Old Testament, concerning the church in those days (which consisted of the Jews for the most part) that miseries always befell them, when they were in a state of apostacy from God, or some more notable defection; which therefore constantly passed under the notion of corrections, or chastisements and punishments, upon that account. But as to what we find recorded of the sufferings of the church of God in the New Testament (which you know gives us an account only of a small space of time) those afflictions and sufferings befell good men, at a time when the church of God was in its best state; and when there was most of the vigour, the power and spirit of religion, that ever was known. Therefore we have most reason to look upon the afflictions, that befell them, as designedly tentative; whereupon it is that you have afflictions more usually spoken of, in the New Testament, under the notion of trials and temptations.

So that this is a short and summary account that I give you of this matter: afflictions befall persons for correction, when they are in their worst state; for trial, when they are in their best. And now you have the state of the subject (as far as it is necessary) cleared up to you. But concerning afflictions it is said, when it is discernible that they are principally tentative, that they are to be accounted matter of all joy. And

(2.) This is the thing spoken of this subject, which we are now to speak to; we are to reckon these afflictions joy, *all joy*.

We shall need to say but little here. This joy, if we take in the term *all* with it especially, includeth these two things; to wit complacency, and gloriation: a being well pleased with these afflictions, and also a visible glorying upon such an account. It is true indeed these things are wont to be expressed by two different words, (*Χαρα*, and *Αγαλλιασις*) whereas we have but one in the text. You have them put together by our Saviour when he pronounces blessedness on them who suffer persecution for righteousness sake; "Rejoice" (says he) "and be exceeding glad." Matt. 5. 10, 11, 12. There is inward pleasure, an inward sense of pleasure, and a certain kind of triumph, that appear and shew forth themselves in conjunction. And when it is said, that we are to account it all joy when we fall into such temptations, it implies, that we are to comprehend both these together in the sense of the expression. In which expression, we are indeed to understand joy objectively, as is usual, and so very obvious that I need not hint it to you; not, I say, the act, but the matter of joy, as we before explained it to you.

(3.) We have further to consider, concerning this proposition, the agreement of the object, with the subject of it. How comes it to be truly said of afflictions that they are matter of all joy? How do these agree together? It is very plain it is not a natural agreement; it is no agreement arising from any affinity that these afflictions have, in their own nature, unto joy. Nothing more remote than affliction, and joy. Affliction "for the present is not joyous, but grievous." Therefore that which connects them must be something extrinsical; somewhat which God puts in the case, so as wholly to alter it from what it would else be in its natural state. But this we shall have occasion to shew by and by, when we speak to the grounds of it, which we are to come to presently.

2. Having considered the object, we are now to consider the nature of this judgment. The apostle bids us so to account such affliction, as we have considered, all joy, as that this may be a fixed kind of judgment with us; for so the word *ηγησασθα*, signifies. I shall particularly say but these two things about it:

(1.) That it must be a judgment spiritually enlightened: a judgment that is irradiated by a divine light shining upon it, by which the truth of the thing might be discerned; which otherwise would go for a paradox, and that the most incredible one that ever was heard of. It must be a heavenly divine light, which must inform that judgment that shall be able to discern the truth here asserted, that these trying afflictions are matter of joy. And

(2.) It must be a judgment spiritually actuated and enlivened that so it may become a practical judgment. By the former means it comes to be a clear judgment, when divine light once shines in the mind, so as that the truth of this matter appears very clear ; by the latter means it comes to be a practical judgment, that is, such as is impressive of a proportionable correspondent frame of heart, which is that which the apostle chiefly intends here. For it would do persons but little good, to have such a notion only hovering in their minds concerning afflictions, that they are matter of joy ; this would be but a cold business. The word *count* here in the text, is taken from the word *πυγμακονικον*, from whence that phrase is taken, which is expressive of the leading faculty and power of the soul. But there is nothing leading, where nothing follows ; the one implies the other. It is therefore implied here, that this must be such a judgment as commands what is duly and properly the subject of it, and what ought to be commanded ; namely, the heart, and will, and affections of the soul. It implies that a person willingly bear a temper of spirit, proportionable to this judgment ; that is, maintain a holy cheerfulness and vigour, and liveliness of spirit, through the whole course of such an afflicted state, as may happen to be his lot. Such a judgment it is that being enlightened from above is in some measure clear, and does not suffer us to be always in the dark, puzzled and entangled in our thoughts about the matter. In a word, it is a judgment that being actuated by a divine power ought to be practical, proportionable and conformable to itself ; that so we may carry ourselves in a state of affliction, as though we judged in this case, that it is matter of great joy that we are brought into such a condition as this.

Thus now you have the state of the truth in reference to the things propounded to be opened, concerning the subject spoken of ; and particularly the nature of the judgment that is to be made concerning the afflictions that befall good men : which as I have shewn, must be spiritually enlightened, and so spiritually enlightened as to be a practical principle in the soul.

II. I now proceed to the next general head to be spoken to, after having stated this truth ; and that is to give you the grounds of it. What should be the ground of this, that to a true judgment such afflictions as these are should be matter of joy ? I can but just touch at what requires to be largely insisted upon. In general, if this be our case, that we are christians exercised with tentative afflictions, we are to count them all joy, if we would judge rationally and prudently ; both upon God's account, and our own

1. On God's account ; and you have no reason to think it strange, that this should be alleged as a ground of a christian's rejoicing in temptations. For God and good men are no such strangers to one another, but that wherein his interest is concerned and advantaged, they have real matter of joy, both upon the account of their relation to him, and the determination of their spirits towards him, and his interest. Now his interest is manifestly concerned to great advantage in this case ; and by this means it hath always been promoted, and his glory hath shone forth illustriously through the trials that have befallen his people.

If we speak of the glory of God, which is capable of being given to him ; which cannot be the glory that is essential to his being, but his extrinsical, or adventitious glory, it may be said to lie in these two things : namely, in the display thereof, and in the agnition and acknowledgement of his glory upon that display. That is all we can make of glorifying God, and of his being glorified in the world : that there is a lustre shineth forth, or a visible glorious representation of him made ; and then, that this be acknowledged, or taken notice of, and he be confessed hereupon to be glorious. Why both these are concerned, whenever it falls out to be the lot of his people to be exercised with tentative afflictions.

(1.) There is a most visible display of his glory in this case ; to wit, the glory of his power, of his wisdom, of his goodness, of his faithfulness and truth, both in sustaining and delivering his afflicted ones. There is a spirit of glory resting upon them in such a time and state as that is. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye." 1 Pet. 4. 14. Men cast upon you reproach, God puts a glory upon you ; for, as St. Peter expresses it, "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you : " it stays and abides with you, and hath a fixed settled residence upon you. Agreeable hereunto is the tenor of that prayer of St. Paul for the Colossians : "That ye might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Colos. 1. 11, 12. Here is a very great display of the divine glory in this case. And,

(2.) The agnition or acknowledgement thereof is wont to ensue, which is the other thing considerable in God's being glorified. Such as feel supports from God in their afflictions, do highly magnify him in their spirits ; yea and many times his glory is acknowledged by afflicting enemies themselves.

They are made to confess that they have to do with somewhat they cannot master, a spirit that is too hard for them, even an invincible spirit. They are made to own and confess that greater is he that is in the sufferers, than he that is in this world.

I have sometimes taken notice in the histories of former times, concerning the persecutions that befell the people of God more than once, that this expression hath been used in those cases, "The devil is in them;" that is, a more than an ordinary spirit. They could not but believe it was somewhat more than the spirit of a man, that supported them; but if they called it by any other name they must have reproached themselves, and acknowledged that they were fighters against God. However they could not but have a secret conviction, (and it appears sometimes they had so) that it was an almighty Spirit they were fighting against, when they were dealing with the people of God in this kind.

This then is the ground of joy to the patients themselves, that though they suffer, yet God is glorified. His glory shineth through all the clouds and darkness that involve them, and wherein they are inwraught. The apostle speaks as if he did not care what became of him, so that Christ might be but magnified by him, living or dying. Phil. 1. 20.

2. I now come to shew that good men, exercised with such afflictions as the apostle speaks of, ought to rejoice in them on their own account; not only because of the glory that redounds to God thereby, but also because of the advantage that accrues to themselves; which is twofold, namely reputative, and real.

(1.) A reputative advantage accrues to them from hence: for it is an honour and dignity put upon them to be called to suffer on this account, that is, for the sake of trial. As I remember, a heathen moralist says, "A soldier who is one of the number selected or picked out to go upon some very hazardous enterprize, if he be one of true fortitude and real valour, he will not say *Imperator de me male meruit, sed bene judicavit*. My general discovers a good opinion of me, and so he puts the honour of such a service upon me." So when God thinks fit to exercise his people in a way of trial, he puts an honour upon them, saying; "Come forth, now you shall be my champions, you shall be the butts and marks against which all the power and malice of devils and men shall be directed, and yet I will make you stand." A poor bruised reed, God is able to make to stand, as in another case is said concerning a

weak christian. A reed that is bruised, and hangs its head, is capable of being made to stand against all the storms and rage of earth and hell. "You," as if he had said, "are some of my instruments, which I will make use of to baffle hell and all the powers of darkness. I will make them, even by you confess themselves outdone."

Here then is a great reputative advantage, an honour and dignity put upon good men, to come forth as God's own champions; to contend on his behalf against every adversary and power in a way of affliction: that so they may overcome them by the blood of Jesus and the word of his testimony, not loving their lives even to the death. This is some of the honour of these saints of God. And if it had not been accounted so in former days, we should not have had, among the writings of some of the antients, consolations writ purposely to them who missed of martyrdom; whose lot it was to be delivered, and not to fall as martyrs, in the common day of trial. And then,

(2.) There is a real advantage accruing from afflictions or temptations of this nature, both present and eternal. They that are exercised with them get great advantage by them at present, and foresee that they are like to do so hereafter; as is instanced in one particular in the words immediately following my text. "My brethren count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1. 2, 3, 4. So that at the long run they tend to their consummation and perfection. But first it is said, "knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience;" which carries this intimation along with it, that this one single advantage or gain by the trial of faith, even the grace of patience, countervails all evils whatever which such trials can bring upon them.

And certainly it is so, if it be considered what a heaven patience carrieth in it; namely, that meekness, that subjection to the Father of spirits, that complacency in his will, that holy fortitude and greatness of mind, which, I say, patience carries in itself. So that if a man had lost all that ever he had in the world, and got patience, he is a great gainer. Such a one is refined, and purged, and shines so much the more gloriously, as a star in the higher region, or the upper firmament. But this is only a leading thing to the universal gain, which they, who are spiritual, have in other respects; for upon this improvement of patience the whole inward man partakes of so much more strength, vigour, sprightliness and activity. Spi-

ritual strength and soundness are thereby throughout promoted; so that they have great reason to glory with respect to the present gain and advantage, accruing from their afflictions.

And then with respect to hereafter, what matter of joy and glory to think how all will be compensated to them in the other world! The "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If we suffer with Christ, we shall be also glorified together; "for I reckon," says the apostle, (this is the computation I make) "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." These are things not to be mentioned the same day, one with the other, for there is no comparison between them.

Therefore you see how it is that this same joy doth guide itself, and which way the eye of the soul is directed to the exercise of it: not to pore upon afflictions alone, but to consider them as subservient to glory. Thus says the apostle, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." And then it presently follows too, "We rejoice in tribulations also;" that is, considered with and in their subserviency to future glory. And this it is that makes them the matter of the highest joy.

But I would say something by Way of *Use*, though the time hath almost overslipped me. Sundry things might be *inferred* from hence, which I shall but name to you.

1. Since this judgment, and the temper of spirit agreeable thereto, are peculiar to the case of trials or tentative affliction, they must be necessarily otherwise where afflictions are visibly punitive, and principally of a chastising nature. As this judgment, namely to count them all joy, answers the one case; so truly deep humiliation cannot but answer the other: even very deep humiliation, abasing one's self and lying low, and owning that the holy, righteous, jealous God is punishing them for the evil they have done. For in this case he is dealing with his children another way; he is not arraying them with glory, but clothing them with shame, before all the world. And therefore it is a season for them to be deeply humbled whenever that appears to be their stated case. Though to such persons there may be a mixture of pleasure, arising from the hope that God will bring such a state out of it (out of their sin and suffering) as shall turn into matter of joy afterwards. But the occasion of joy in such a case is more occult, and remote; and is wrapt up in a great deal more visible matter of sorrow, shame and humiliation, when it appears that an afflicted state is brought upon them purposely for punishment and rebuke. And again,

2. We may infer hence, that mere patience is not enough for christians under trying afflictions. It is not sufficient to be merely patient; they are to account their condition all joy. Therefore the apostle prays that more patience might be granted to the Colossians, in the place mentioned before; that they might suffer with joyfulness, and give thanks to him who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Col. 1. 10—14. He writes there to such as were likely to meet with, or to have very little of any earthly inheritance; rather to lose what they had, for the sake of Christ: and he intimates that it was not enough for them to be merely content, or patient under such a loss, but it was suitable to their state to be in a high triumph and exultation of spirit upon this account; because God was thereby making them meet for another inheritance with the saints in light. Those christians do not quit themselves well, nor as becomes them, who do only not murmur or repine that they are tried by afflictions: for the thing to be aimed at, in the midst of all such exercises, is to thank God, and rejoice in the thoughts of what they are to enjoy; namely, an inheritance with the saints in their pure, lightsome, peaceful, blissful regions. “What an inheritance have I above! Blessed be God, though I lose all I have in this world, while he is making me meet for such an inheritance; and makes it evident he hath such a design in hand as this upon me!”

3. We learn too, that to be impatient and repining upon the account of afflictions, is greatly intolerable. To be patient merely, is not enough; to be impatient, is simplicity, folly, and sin. It is intolerable that we should think we are ill dealt with, when we are exercised with such afflictions as are designed only for the sake of trial. But I cannot stay on this head.

4. We learn, that joy is most exceedingly connatural to true living religion. There cannot be a greater demonstration of it than this, that there can be no state, externally so bad, that can make their joy unseasonable; or that can make it an incongruous, or unfitting thing for them to rejoice. To have a disposition unto spiritual and heavenly joy is a thing very intimate to the constitution of a true christian. That must needs be a very strong, predominant, prevailing principle in any thing, which converts and turns that which is of an opposite nature into nutriment to itself; such is the joy as can even feed upon, and maintain itself out of afflictions. God's people can rejoice, not only notwithstanding they are afflicted, but because they are so afflicted. The divers temptations they are exercised with are

counted the matter of their joy. And we may yet further infer hence,

5. That there is something very peculiar in living true Christianity. For how odd a sound doth this carry to an unchristian ear, and how uncouth a taste to an unchristian heart, that afflictions are to be made, and accounted matter of joy. But it is past all doubt that there is a real truth in the matter. We find that it hath been so; and that this is not a mere notion that hovers in the air, but is a practical thing, and has been a tried case. Do not we read of the apostles' rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ? Acts 5. 41. This was not only so in their account, but was really so. So we are told of the believing Hebrews, that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Heb. 10: 34. What! for a man to rejoice to be undone? A strange paradox that any, who was not seriously a christian, should count this matter of joy! Therefore true Christianity hath somewhat peculiar to itself belonging to it. It is a very extraordinary thing, which lies without the compass and comprehension of all, who do not experimentally know it.

Before I close, there are two things I would say to you by way of *counsel*.

1. Labour to fix this judgment in general upon your minds. Let it not seem to you as an uncouth incredible thing. It is a most certain truth, that afflictions in some cases may most reasonably be matter of joy. It is a sad thing when we cannot obtain so much of ourselves as to receive this notion, and to believe the truth of what is here implied. For when we are bid to count so, it is implied that it is really so; that is, that afflictions in such a case, namely, for the sake of trial, are matter of joy. But our spirits boggle at this; we cannot tell how to receive, or entertain it. And then,

2. Endeavour that it may be your judgment with application to yourselves and your own state and case. And we must here take notice to you of what is in itself most obvious, that when we are directed to count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations, we are also directed to do whatever is necessarily presupposed hereunto. It is never to be imagined or thought, that one who lives in sin; who is a secure, carnal, earthly-minded creature, and a stranger to God and heaven, if any affliction should come upon him, that he must off-hand count it a matter of joy. No there is something must intervene. What then is it we should apply ourselves to? Why to endeavour to get into a safe state of soul, and that things may be so with us Godward, that if ever it come to be our case to be afflicted we may

be able to pass this judgment, so clear and satisfied as to impress the heart, that afflictions are to be counted all joy and in such a case may actually ourselves rejoice.

I Thought to have insisted on sundry things here, but have not time. Yet I must observe, that to get our states clear with respect to God, and to keep and maintain our consciences both clean and quiet, are necessary to such a happy state as to be able to rejoice in adversity. Then we shall suffer without grudging, and with rejoicing for the sake of Christ. How impossible is it ever to rejoice in an afflicted condition, till we have hearts brought under the power of a self-denying spirit; till we are mortified to this world, and our spirits loosened and disengaged from every thing terrene! The man whose heart cleaveth to this earth; who is taken with an ample estate, an opulent trade, a neat habitation, all desirable comforts and accommodation: the man, I say, who is so taken up with these things that his life his bound up in them, cannot endure the thought, upon any terms, of suffering in these kinds; it is death to him to think of it. But if a man's spirit be once divested of an earthly frame, and can tell how to digest the thoughts of being undone, he may rejoice, and say; "What am I, that I may not be undone? have not many as good as I been undone? who had as good an estate, lived in as good credit in the world? Why may not I be poor, come into straits, be destitute of friends, and exposed to wants as well as others?" When a man by familiar converse with these objects hath reconciled his spirits to them, so that he can digest these things, then he is in a way to rejoice in such a case, when it comes to be his, and is able to say; "Blessed be God that I had an estate to sacrifice for Christ! that I had liberty, and have still a life to sacrifice for him, whenever he calls for it." If we did but thus labour beforehand to inure ourselves to such thoughts as these; if we did but put the case frequently and make the supposition familiar to ourselves, "What if we were to live in a wilderness? dwell in a cave of the earth? What if we were to go up and down helpless, living upon providence for daily bread?" When we had, I say, used ourselves to think thus, and made the matter familiar to ourselves we might if it should come to be really our case, or God should put us upon the trial, turn it into a matter of triumph and great joy.

And so likewise it is highly necessary to live much in heaven, and to realize that state to ourselves; not to make it as a strange country, but this state rather in which we are. To a man that is abroad in some foreign country, which is full of

war, trouble, and blood, it is some comfort to him (if he be certain of a way of return) to think, "Well! I am not to stay here long in this troublesome country; I know how to get home, to mine own house in a peaceful country; I shall find all quiet there." How pleasant a thought I say is this, especially if a man is sure of a return! In this case he may be sure, and a christian may say, "My own country is a quiet country; there will be nothing but peace, rest, pleasures and delights to people of God. Here indeed I do not intend to abide. I do not expect to stay long here this is not my country." Oh, to be here as in a strange country, and to look upon that other, namely heaven, as our own; will make it possible to us not only to despise, but even to rejoice in what we meet withall that is troublesome in this world, because it is part of our way home. It is indeed a dirty way, but it is our way notwithstanding to our better country.

I would enforce all that has been said by a consideration or two, and so conclude.

1. Think with yourselves how pleasant it is to have spirits got into this frame and posture, that we can really count it matter of joy to fall into afflictions. Oh think, I say, how pleasant it is! For how happy are those persons, who when they have a prospect of great evils before them, are yet not afraid of them? and certainly we shall not be afraid of that, which we have an actual disposition to rejoice in. In such a case we shall be under the pressure of no very tormenting fear. "They that hearken to me" (saith Wisdom) "shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." Prov. 1. 33. He that has got to this pitch, who can count it all joy to fall into divers temptations, is arrived already to a safe dwelling: he hath so hid himself in the divine presence, that he is secure from the fear of evil. No evil can ever reach him. And consider again,

2. That this is the only way we have to make any good or advantage of a matter, that is bad in itself and in its own nature. For let us a little recount ourselves. I believe there are few among us, if any, that have not some prospect, more or less, of troublesome days a coming; a very afflictive condition. Pray what shall we do in this case, if we will not do those things that tend to bring us into a capacity of making this judgment our own, in reference to our own concernments? What have we else to do? Would we busy our thoughts how any such condition shall be prevented? Shall that be our concern? Shall we try if we can stop the sun, or alter the course of the stars?

Do we think to change the external posture of the world? That is, alas! a hopeless thought, a vain attempt.

But we have a nearer and a possible thing to do, namely, to get the temper of our own spirits altered; brought off from this world; pitched upon another, and a better world. We have no other course to take. Let us then drive the nail that will go. We have hopes that we may alter our spirits if we will employ our power so to do, but we cannot change the times and the seasons. That is our province and business. We have work to do here. We have a superintendency over our own spirits; here we are authorized; God puts us upon it to see to our own spirits, that if they be earthly, we may endeavour to get them made heavenly; if impure, holy; if dead, lively; if vain, serious. This is our own proper business. So that as our case is, our circumstances are. We cannot hope to avoid suffering, our business therefore is to avoid suffering uncomfortably; this, I say, is our great business. To avoid suffering we cannot reasonably hope, though we should resolve to make shipwreck of faith, and a good conscience. For do we think, that all such persons that do so are secure from suffering? It is a remarkable passage from Scripture we have in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. "There hath no temptation befallen you, but such as is common to men." That is one consideration. Another is, "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted, above what you are able, &c." 1. Cor. 10. 13. It is the former I would now speak to: "No temptation hath befallen you, but such as is common to men." As if he had said: You are liable to afflictions as you are men, not merely as you are christians: so that you cannot certainly save yourselves from them, though you should abjure your Christianity. For what can a man be safe from, that is common to man? These afflictions follow humanity. Are christians the only men that are poor? that are crossed? or in a prison? If a man be a man (reckon only so) he is liable on that account to these things. Therefore, I say, since we have no way in the world to secure us from suffering, our great concern is to labour that we may suffer in the most comfortable way we can: so as that when it comes to be our lot, we may be capable of counting it all joy. And then we are a thousand times upon better terms, than if we were sure never to feel affliction: for that is only an external good; but the other is a spiritual good. And these are to be estimated according to the capacity and condition of the subject. I hope my flesh, my body, is not capable of so much hurt, as my spirit is of good. To be freed from afflictions, it is true, would be the advantage of the out-

ward man ; but to be able to bear them rejoicingly is an advantage to the soul ; a thing capable of greater good, than my outward man is capable of.

Therefore this is the great thing that lies upon us to do ; to take heed, since we cannot be sure we shall not suffer, that we do not suffer as evil doers ; neither in respect of the cause, nor of the temper of our spirits : to take heed that we suffer not so, as that it shall be the effect of a controversy between God and us ; or the affliction be regarded as his coming upon us with anger and displeasure. We are to see to it that we have no rebuke nor anger to reflect upon ; (these tend to shame, these are humbling things) that we may regard his sovereignty and divine pleasure as things in which we may rejoice and triumph ; which sovereign pleasure we may rejoicingly comply with, when once we can make it out, that the affliction of our lot is principally of a tentative nature, to try our loyalty to God, and fidelity to his interest.