

SERMON LX.

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.—HEB. xi. 25.

THE apostle is amplifying Moses' self-denial. In the former verse we heard what Moses had refused—'he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;' and here we learn for what he refused it, even for the afflicted state of God's people, together with the reasons of his choice. In this choice of Moses you may observe the wisdom, the justice, and the piety of it. The wisdom of it. It was a wise choice; why? Because it was *πρόσκαιρος ἀπόλαυσις*, a temporary enjoyment that he quitted; what we render 'to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,' is in the original, *πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν*—for the temporal enjoyment of sin. There was his wisdom; sin could yield him but a temporary enjoyment. Then the justice of it. It was just and fit it should be so. Why? because it was the pleasures of sin; they were not only unstable, but sinful; he could not without sin enjoy them. Then the piety of it, in casting the scales upon religious reasons. Choice is *actualis prelatio unius rei pre altera*. You must suppose a balance erected; in the one part of the balance there are afflictions, banishment, hard service, bitter afflictions; so the word signifies *συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ*, choosing to be evilly-handled, evilly-entreated; but it is with the people of God where God is enjoyed and glorified, and whom God hath undertaken to protect and deliver. Here is bitter afflictions, and nothing to allay them but the company of God's people. Then in the other scale there are the pleasures of sin for a season. Now godliness prevails and casts the scale—'He chooseth rather to suffer affliction with the people of God,' &c. The only difficulty that needs to be opened is 'the pleasure of sin that is but for a season;' the temporal enjoyment or delight of sin; so it is in the original. Wherein lay the sin of Moses' former condition? *Ans.* In living out of the communion of God's people, and the public worship of God, forbearing profession after conviction. For now he was come to years of discretion, it would have been a sin to embody himself with the Egyptians, to disown the true religion, and neglect fellowship and communion with God's people. Or else it may be now he was in danger to be tainted with the vices of the court; there were such pleasures there that might draw off his heart from God, to forsake God and his service. Or it may be he could no longer retain his honours unless he had a hand in promoting those cruel edicts for the prosecution of his own countrymen, a thing evil in itself, and against the light of his conscience. Or, which I rather prefer above all the rest, he could no longer enjoy this estate and obey God's call. He had a special impulse and call from God to be the deliverer of his people; now he could not manifest his obedience to this call unless he forsook the court and the pleasures there.

From these words many things might be observed. The main point is this, that it is the property of a gracious heart to choose the greatest affliction before the least sin. When once it came to sin, Moses could abide in the court no longer. It was Moses' judgment he was not over-seen, for he is commended for it by the Spirit of God. We may learn

also from hence other things, as that it is the usual lot and portion of God's people to be afflicted—'He chose rather to suffer affliction.' We see here also the value of the communion of saints, what a great privilege it is; he chose rather to suffer affliction 'with the people of God.' Again, learn hence the snare of pleasures, or worldly delights, how they draw off the heart from God; and the transitoriness of these delights, it is but an enjoyment for a season. All these were so many ingredients in Moses' faith. Delights are a snare; they are apt to draw our heart from God: and they are very transitory; they are but for a season. But I shall speak only to the main point.

Doct. That it is the property of a gracious heart to choose the greatest affliction before the least sin.

Before I prove it, let me illustrate it a little. Take the emphasis of the point along with you. Put sin in one balance, the least sin, and conceive of it as having great advantages. The least sin is a transgression of God's law; the greatest affliction that is, is but a diminution of our happiness, or a breach upon our interest or outward welfare. The least sin is a violation of God's law: Mat. v. 19, 'Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.' The least part of the law is of weighty and momentous consideration. The least sin is a sin, and it deserves hell: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death.' The apostle doth not say the wages of a great sin is death, but of sin; that is, of every sin. The less the sin is, the more imprudence to break with God, and to offend God, and to hazard our own happiness for a thing of no value. Conceive, again, of this little sin as having great pleasures and honours annexed to it. So it was here in the case of Moses' tarrying at court. But whatever advantages sin hath, let it have all that it can have, though every man is not put upon such temptations, but let it have honours, riches, all kind of advantages annexed thereto, the greatest pleasure a court life can yield; yet, Luke vi. 20-26, Christ pronounceth a woe against them that had worldly advantages in a sinful state. Though men had never such fulness, plenty, honour, and esteem in the world, yet still they are in a miserable condition, make the best of it that can be made, riches, honours, pleasure, applause; and though we could ruffle it out in a bravery and fulness of outward comfort every day, yet all this will not make us happy. If wicked men should join all their forces together, take what every man doth enjoy severally, and what they all jointly possess, yet a little and a good conscience is better—'A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked,' Ps. xxxvii. 10; Prov. xvi. 8, 'Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right;' Prov. xv. 16, 17, 'Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.' A dinner with herbs, poor, mean fare, coarse apparel, and hard life, yet with a good conscience this is a great deal better than all the conveniences of the world. But descend a step lower. If there were nothing to be enjoyed, take the greatest affliction; if a man were wholly left destitute, and had nothing but labour and sorrow, and fell from the highest condition to the most afflicted state, as the Israelites now were under great tyranny and slavery; though we are loth to

descend and go backward, yet still it is a greater misery to be in a sinful state than in an afflicted state. Moses is far more happy among the people of God, that were now oppressed and held in hard slavery, than when he was in the court. So he judgeth, and so we should, if we would judge aright. All honours must be renounced for the most afflicted state that can fall upon the people of God. In managing and proving this point—

1. I shall show the reasons why the greatest affliction is better than the least sin.

2. Why the people of God make such a choice as this is.

First, For the reasons why the greatest affliction is better than the least sin.

1. In suffering the offence is done to us, but in sinning the offence is done to God; and what are we to God? It is nothing to offend and weary men; but to offend God, and weary God, that is the highest aggravation: Isa. vii. 13, 'It is a small thing to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?' All injuries receive a value from the person against whom they are committed. Now sin is an injury to God, and affliction is only an infringement of our outward happiness. We are not masters of our own interests; to affect a dominion over ourselves is a usurpation upon God's right. Now to break the law of God is to lift up ourselves against God, and to jostle him out of the throne. Better that all creatures should perish, than God should suffer any wrong; better that we and ours be wholly destroyed, rather than there should be an offence done to God. Therefore, because sin is an offence to God, a gracious soul would rather endure the greatest affliction than meddle with the least sin.

2. Sin separates us from God, but suffering and affliction doth not, and therefore the greatest affliction is to be chosen before the least sin. Certainly that is an evil which separates us from the chiefest good; now God is the chiefest good, and sin separates us from God: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' But affliction doth not separate us from God, but is a means to make us draw nigh to God. Many there are who have been chosen in the fire; and so the time of affliction is to them the time of loves,—a time to bring God and man acquainted, that they are brought nearer to God than ever they were before; and therefore surely sin in a gracious eye is worse than affliction. Let a man be never so poor, blind, and lame, and roughcast with sores, let him be never so outwardly loathsome, yet the Lord loves him, and takes pleasure in him if he be in a state of grace; he is near and dear to God, and God kisses him with the kisses of his mouth. Nothing makes us loathsome to God but sin. God is at a distance from us, and we are at a distance from God; he cannot look upon us without loathing, and we cannot think of him without horror, and dare not come into his presence.

3. Sin is evil in itself, whether we feel it or no; but affliction is only evil in our sense and feeling: Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.' Though it smart, it is a wholesome thing to the children of God; it is smarting only to our sense. Sense is a lying thing. A bitter medicine is wholesome; in itself it is a medicine against sin; it is no pain to a benumbed

joint to be scourged. But now sin is evil whether we feel it or no ; nay, it is worse when we feel it not. To be 'past feeling' is a heavy judgment, Eph. iv. 19. Sin ceaseth not to be evil, whether we feel it or no.

[4.] Affliction brings inconvenience upon the body only, and the concerns of the body ; but sin brings inconvenience upon the soul. There are soul-afflictions indeed, but they come from God, and they are to be reckoned amongst the fruits of sin ; but affliction concerns the body, and as long as the soul is whole, all is whole. Afflictions themselves cannot reach the soul, they hurt only the body—'The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities,' Prov. xviii. 14 ;—if the body be weak, as long as the heart is whole, a man can endure it ;—'but a wounded spirit,' when conscience is filled with the terrors of the Lord, 'who can bear?' Persecutions they cannot reach the inward man. Blindness, lameness, tortures bring an inconvenience only to the body, they cannot reach the soul. But now sin brings an inconvenience upon the soul. The body, that is but the sheath ; as, Dan. vii. 15, 'Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body ;' we render, it in the middle of my body ; in the margin it is, in the middle of my sheath. It was the saying of a philosopher You may batter the case to pieces, but you cannot reach my jewel. Persecution may come at the body, but they cannot hurt the soul, nor infringe our comforts in the Lord.

5. An afflicted state may consist with the love of God, but a sinful state cannot. Afflictions come from the love of God—'Whom the Lord loves he chastens,' Heb. xii. 6 ; and their design is love ; God's aim is to give his people a greater proof of his love. But now sins are permitted to befall to thee in hatred ; it is a sign of God's dreadful displeasure when he gives us up to sin, it is to hasten our own ruin and everlasting destruction : Prov. xxiii. 27, 'A whore is a deep ditch ; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein.'

6. Affliction may be good, but sin is never good, the nature of it cannot be altered : Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God ;' so Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' It is a medicine to the godly. But we cannot say, It is good for me that I have sinned against thee ; but 'Woe unto us, for we have sinned,' Lam. v. 16. A man may rejoice in his troubles because they may be good, and tend to good, but he cannot rejoice in his sins. New creatures have approved of afflictions, but they never approved of their sins ; the children of God have ever groaned bitterly under their sins ; as Paul : Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from this body of death ?' If any man had cause to complain of affliction, Paul had ; he was in perils often, in hunger, thirst, and nakedness ; he was whipped, imprisoned, &c. But Paul doth not cry out, When shall I get rid of my affliction ? but, Oh ! when shall I get rid of this body of death ? His lust troubled him more than his scourging ; and his captivity to the law of sin was worse to him than a prison.

7. There is nothing that debaseth a man more than sin. It degradeth him from the dignity of his nature, which afflictions do not. 1 Cor. x. 13, the apostle speaking of affliction saith, 'No temptation hath taken us but what is common to man ;' but he that sins, he is

as 'a beast that perisheth,' Ps. xlix. 20; and Ps. lxxiii. 22, 'I was as a beast before thee.' It was not so bad for Daniel to be put into the lion's den, nor such a judgment for Nebuchadnezzar to have the heart of a beast, and be turned out among beasts. Here was no degrading of his nature; and therefore to be wicked is more than to be afflicted. Natural evils are less than moral: there is a violence offered to a principle of reason by sin, the nature of man is altered by it; our outward interest is only infringed by affliction.

8. Afflictions come from God, but sins from the devil. Afflictions are God's penal dispensations, the act of his justice; but sin is the devil's work; therefore it is said, Christ came 'to destroy,' or to dissolve, 'the works of the devil,' that is, the sins of men; and they are called his lusts: John viii. 44, 'Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.' Affliction comes from the Lord, it springs not out of the dust: Amos iii. 6, 'Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?' This comes from a holy and just God; and the other from our naughty heart, and from the temptations of Satan. One are the acts of God's justice, and so they are good; the other are the acts of a sinful creature.

9. Affliction is sent to prevent sin; but sin must not be committed to prevent affliction. The use and intent of God in affliction is to purge away sin: Isa. xxvii. 9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.' The Lord thrasheth us that our husk may go off.

10. The evil of suffering is but for a moment: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment,' &c.; but the evil of sin is for ever. Affliction, like pain, dries up of its own accord; within a little while *nubecula est, cito transitura*, it is like a cloud or storm that is soon blown over. The evil of suffering is but for the present: Isa. liv. 8, 'In a little wrath have I hid my face from thee for a moment;' Ps. xxx. 5, 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' If it should continue throughout our lives, it is but a little moment in comparison of eternity: Gen. xlvii. 9, 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' If they are evil, it is a great comfort they are but few, and do not last long. Men will endure a little pain, to have their flesh torn and cut, to be rid of a lasting torment. *Hic ure, hic seca, Domine, modo parcas in eternum*; Lord, burn me here, cut me here, that I may not be punished for ever. 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.' Better endure a little affliction than lie under the evil of sin for ever. The evil of sin is for ever, the delight passeth, but sin remaineth; though the act be over, yet the guilt and punishment still remains for ever in the conscience. We read of 'a worm that doth never die, and of fire that never is quenched,' Mark ix. 44. The fuel abides for ever, and the breath of the Lord that kindles it. At the best, affliction is but during our abode in the world; and therefore it cannot be so great an evil as the least sin, that in itself renders us obnoxious to the wrath of God.

11. We lose nothing so much by suffering as we do by sin. In sufferings and persecutions we lose the favour of men, but by sins we lose the favour of God; and that is a sad purchase to buy the favour

of men with the offence of God, to lose heaven, to undergo the wrath of God. Look what difference there is between man and God, between this life and eternity ; so much difference is there between the evil of an afflicted state, and the evil of a sinful state. Shall I hazard the love of an infinite God for the pleasure of a finite comfort ? Shall I hazard eternity for a moment ?

12. To suffer is not in our choice, we shall not be responsible for that ; but to sin, that is in our choice whether we will or no. Afflictions are laid upon us, we are not active but passive only so far as in bearing them we submit to the will of God, but the Lord lays affliction upon us ; but we never sin but by our own consent. Afflictions are inflicted, sins are committed, and they will be required of us because they are our own voluntary acts.

13. Sin is the cause of affliction, therefore it is worse. There is more in the cause than in the effect. Sin is worse than hell, because it made hell ; and if there were no sin, there would be no hell. And you know the speech of him, *Si hic inferni horrorem, illic peccati pudorem*, &c. ; if here I should set the horror of hell, and there the filthiness of sin, I would rather be damned than endure the filthiness of sin. We are not put to the choice ; however, it is a clear argument that because sin is the cause of affliction, therefore it is worse, for afflictions are but a part of the curse that was introduced by sin.

14. An afflicted man may die cheerfully, but a sinner cannot. Every man when he comes to die would choose this side : Num. xxiii. 10, ' Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.' But the sinner ' at his end shall be a fool,' Acts xvii. 11 ; when they come to die, they discern their own folly.

15. Sin is contrary to the new nature, to the noblest being ; but affliction is only contrary to the old nature. It is the flesh that complains of affliction, but the spirit of sin. Paul was buffeted, scourged, and in prison often, yet Paul never groans for his affliction, but groans mightily for his sins. If any had cause to complain of affliction Paul had,—in perils often, in nakedness, in watchings, in fastings, 2 Cor. xi. 25–27. But he complains not of them, but of sin : Rom. vii. 24, ' O wretched man ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ' Sin is the greatest offence to the noblest being on this side heaven, to the new nature infused into the soul.

16. When you deliberately choose sin, it will within a little while bring greater affliction ; it will bring the curse of God along with it on all you have : Deut. xxviii. 17, 18, ' Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store,' &c. He is not cursed in the want of an estate, but in his basket and store, and in his increase ; and the more estate he has, the greater is his curse. And therefore you have not your choice, for you have both sin and affliction too. So much for the first question.

Secondly, Why the people of God make such a choice as this is. They cannot be gracious unless they do so.

1. The great work of grace is to choose God for our God. This is the first article of the covenant, ' Thou shalt have no other gods but me.' What is it to choose God for our God ? To give him the pre-eminence and uppermost place in the heart ; to glorify him as God. God hath not the glory of a god unless we honour him thus. As a

prince hath not the honour of a prince if he be respected only as a common man; so if God have not the uppermost place in the heart, we do not glorify him as God. Now God cannot have the uppermost place till his favour be valued above all things, and we stand in dread of breaking with God above all things; we have not till then consented to the articles of the covenant. As long as we can break with God to preserve any worldly interest of ours, we prefer that interest before God; as when a man can be content to offend God rather than displease his parents: Mat. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.' So when to advance and prefer our children we displease God: 1 Sam. ii. 29, 'Thou honourest thy sons above me.' Eli was the high priest and the magistrate, and he should put his sons by the priesthood when they were scandalous; but for the advancement and honour of his family, he continues them. So when out of love to carnal pleasures we break with God, we love pleasure more than God: 2 Tim. iii. 4, 'Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;' when we can break a law to save an interest, when willingly and with full consent we sin against God; therefore it is impossible you can be gracious.

2. We can do nothing in the spiritual life till we take up such a resolution, and really be of such a disposition of heart. We are often put to such a choice; it is not a rare case, but such as falls out in every day's experience, whether we will choose sin or some inconvenience. Many times duty and danger come together, and they are offered to our choice; if we discharge our conscience, it will be dangerous; but if not, there will be sin. Sin and pleasure often come together, and the trial is whether you will renounce pleasure or satisfy your lust. Here I shall content myself, gratify my lust and interest, and there I shall offend my God. Therefore Christ draws up the indenture, Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.' It is in vain to put our hands to the plough, except we are resolved to go on whatever we meet with. There is sin, and pleasure, and profit; here is duty and affliction, poverty, meanness, and a low estate. This often falls out; now which do you choose?

3. Such a disposition of heart is a necessary fruit of grace, for when God works grace, surely this will be wrought. These three things are necessary to this: a clear understanding, a tender heart, and a zealous respect and love to God. There cannot be grace but it must be so, and all these concur to this resolution. Grace gives a clear understanding, that we may know the will of God and like it; and it gives a tender heart, to smite when we decline from it; and it gives a zealous love and a respect to God, so that we dare not offend him. It gives a clear understanding, to judge in such cases; faith opens the eye of the soul; it is a spiritual prudence, it is good at choosing, for it sees what is good and evil, and how much we are concerned in the choice. Others may have higher speculations, but the good understanding is the fruit of grace: Ps. cxi. 10, 'A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.' So the gracious man is the only wise man. Faith is opposed to ignorance as well as folly. Vint-

ners have more wine in their cellars than housekeepers, but it is for sale, not for use. Then grace gives a tender heart, therefore they dare not offend God, though to get never so much by it. Broken bones are very tender. So when the heart is broken and made tender by grace, it will startle at small sins. David's heart smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment. And grace gives a zealous respect to God that will interpose when we are tempted to sin - Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' A godly man will rather wrong himself a thousand times over, and hazard all his interest, than wrong the Lord. An honest man would not wrong a friend. God must not be offended whatever it cost; how can I break with my gracious God? Love is shown by a care to please and a fear to offend; when this is in the heart, it comes to this result and issue, that there is such a tender disposition in their souls that they will rather choose great inconveniences in the world than to sin in the least manner.

Use 1. First, it shows how evil they are that cannot deny themselves, even when their very sin proves an affliction to them, and an inconvenience. The children of God can choose affliction rather than sin, though they had comfort and profit by it. Now you have no profit and comfort by it, but your very sin is your affliction, and yet your hearts run out to it. Alas! to many it is meat and drink to commit sin; and though it be with loss to themselves, not only with loss of heaven, and exposing them to the wrath of God, but with temporal inconveniences; though they hazard life, health, credit, profit, trading by it. Thus will a sinner break through all restraints; not only when an angel stands in the way, but when afflictions stand in the way, still they break through, and are martyrs to their own lusts. Many times some are maimed by their uncleanness, others brought to rags by their drunkenness, riot, and voluptuousness. How often do you see sin's martyrs walk up and down the streets! It is comfortable for God's martyrs to be afflicted for a good conscience; but to bear the marks of sin, to be maimed by lust, to be brought to rags by riot, and voluptuous living, and negligence; this shows men's hearts are set upon their sins.

Use 2. Have we such a temper of soul as this is, as to choose the greatest affliction rather than the least sin? We may say so and judge so out of the temptation, but how is it upon the trial, when there is a worldly convenience, and a spiritual inconvenience? what do we when we are put upon the choice? A man is known by his choice. Many men are of a Gadarene spirit, they can part with Christ rather than their swine; part with peace of conscience and favour of God, and all their communion with God, rather than not give satisfaction to their lusts. They are of Esau's spirit, can sell the birthright for a mess of pottage, Heb. xii. 15. But now a child of God riseth up in indignation against such offers as these. Look, as when there was an offer made in Jotham's parable to the trees of the field to reign, saith the vine, 'Shall I leave my sweetness?' and the olive-tree, 'Shall I leave my fatness,' to rule over the trees? So doth the heart of a child of God rise up in indignation upon such a trial, Shall I hazard peace of conscience, the favour of God, and all communion with God, for a little temporal profit and temporal conveniences?

Therefore how is it upon the trial? Were you ever acquainted with self-denial in this case? or do you decline duty to avoid a danger? or do evil to get a little profit, and so yield upon that occasion? Are not you discouraged in the ways of God, or from the ways of God, because of inconveniences you have cheapened? but you will not go through with the price, you will not buy. Are you not turned out of the way because of reproach, and shame, and hatred of friends? and have you not often withdrawn from God, when the devil makes a proffer to you? Can you venture upon duty in the face of danger, and say, 'If I perish, I perish,' as Esther? How is it upon a trial? And if this be not sensible enough to give you farther light into your own heart, then let me ask you concerning some concomitant dispositions that will go along with this disposition.

(1.) If you be of such a temper as to choose the greatest affliction rather than the least sin, then it will be seen by this which is your greatest grief, sin or misery? what troubles you most, that you suffer loss in the world, or that you have displeased God? what pains and grieves you most, sin or affliction? Surely godly sorrow should come behind no sorrow: Zech. xii. 10, 'They shall look up to him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in bitterness for his first-born.' Therefore how is it with you? Many are complaining of poverty, of the toothache, the headache, and never complain of sin, and of the body of death. What puts you upon most bitter complaints? To be carnal is worse than to be miserable. To wallow in ease and pleasure is a more cursed estate than to suffer nakedness, cold, hunger, and thirst. I confess that sensitive sorrow is more violent in the expressions of it; as sorrow for the loss of a child or any outward comfort may be more violent in outward expressions, because nature and grace run in one channel; as the flood was mightily increased when the windows of heaven were opened from above, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up from below. A worldly loss may cause a more lively stirring of grief; but for a cordial hatred, real resistance, and deep trouble of heart, that will be more about sin and corruptions than about worldly losses. Look, as in another affection we laugh more at a trifle than we do when we receive solid benefit, the act of joy is more lively; so here, grief may be more sensibly stirred upon an outward loss; but serious and deep trouble of heart will be about corruption. Drawing of a tooth is more painful, and extorts greater roaring from us, than the decays of a consumption that are dangerous and deadly; yet this afflicts more inwardly, and begets a more deep, constant, lasting grief; so the children of God, above all evils they will bewail the evil of sin. If you be of such a temper to choose the greatest affliction rather than the least sin, you will be troubled more for sin than for affliction, and grieve because you can mourn no more for sin.

2. When you are afflicted, what do you desire most, to have affliction sanctified or removed? You will find it by your behaviour in such an estate: if you murmur under the affliction, and would fain have it gone, and be rid of the troublesome physic, but care not whether the affliction hath its due effect upon thee yea or no, then

surely you hate the affliction more than the sin. Job was censured for this: Job xxxvi. 21, 'Take heed, regard not iniquity, for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.' When men are troubled more with what is painful and a damage to their interest, and smart to sense and feeling, than they are for what is offensive and contrary to God, and do not look to the working out of sin by their afflictions, they hate the affliction more than the sin. The saints do not conceive prayers out of interest, but out of the new nature. To be freed from the trouble and affliction is a common mercy, but to have the affliction sanctified is a special mercy; therefore they that have gracious hearts aim at this, to have it sanctified and improved. Carnal men may be without affliction, but they cannot have the experience of grace. Therefore mere deliverance from affliction is no sign of special love; a child of God cannot be content with that, he would not only be delivered from the grave, but 'be loved from the grave,' as Hezekiah saith, Isa. xxxviii. 17. Paul at first was all to have the thorn in the flesh gone. The expression seems to import that it was some torture of the stone or gout, or racking pain in the body, and he would have it removed; but God tells him, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' What then? 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,' 2 Cor. xii. 7-9. His heart seems to be contented with the experiences of grace, and he was glad of this trouble which had occasioned such sweet experience of God. So 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, 'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion,' he hath delivered me, and taken me out of affliction. 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and he will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.' Paul pitcheth chiefly upon that, he is more solicitous in trouble to be freed from sin than from trouble. Salvation is God's great work in us, to be kept safe to the heavenly kingdom, and to be fitted for heaven, and therefore our greatest design should be for that; so the main care be cared for, we need not care what becomes of us here. In general, it is a mark of grace if we can with patience bear the evil of punishment that we may escape the evil of sin, which of all evils is the worst.

3. What is your care? to be great or good? Which way doth your ambition run? To excel in grace, or to grow great in the world? What would you ask of God if you were put to Solomon's choice? Wisdom or riches? Or, in your daily prayers, what do you beg of God every day? Lord, for outward things do with me what thou wilt, but keep me from sin, let me be anything rather than a sinful creature? As David, in Ps. cxli. 4, 'Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with them that work iniquity, and let me not eat of their dainties.' As if he should say, Ah, Lord! for dainties I do not desire to taste of them at such a rate, but keep me from sin. Do you refer yourselves to God for other things, but are constant and earnest every morning to be kept from sin? Good you would be, but you are content to be high or low, as God shall cast you. No matter how mean you be, so you may enjoy his favour, peace of conscience, and live under the guidance of his Spirit.

4. What do you most watch against, strive against, and pray against? Sin or trouble? A man is not to bring trouble upon himself; no, he

is to keep it off by lawful means. But what is your main care? that you may avoid trouble or sin? Is this your business, that you may not dishonour God in any condition? It is no matter what becomes of you else, so you may be obedient, you refer that to God.

5. How do you make use of Christ? to save you from trouble, sorrow, sickness, or from sin? The great thing Christ came to save us from was sin: Mat. i. 21, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.' Now how would you make use of him? to save you only from the evil after sin, or the evil of sin? A true broken heart is not only troubled for the guilt of sin, but for the power of it. They would not only be saved from hell and the horrors of a wounded conscience, but would be freed from the tyranny of sin; they would have sin subdued as well as pardoned, and not only be eased from the smart of it. Therefore the prophet admires God upon this account, both for the pardoning and subduing of sin: Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity? . . . He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea.' They would fain be acquainted with mortification as well as pardon. A loose desire of happiness is but natural: John vi. 34, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread!' All would be happy.

6. What makes you most to desire heaven? afflictions or sins? A beast will forsake the place where it can find neither meat nor rest. And therefore to desire heaven only because it keeps off affliction and trouble, that may be but a natural act. Men usually make heaven a reserve and a retreat; when they are beaten out of the world, they then fly to heaven. But now when we are troubled, we are here in this world conflicting with and complaining of sin, while others are glorifying God above, freed from all sin; we groan for heaven not out of a burden of afflictions, but out of the longings of the new nature, we have had a taste of some beginnings of grace, and would fain have it perfected; this discovers a right temper of spirit: Rom. vii. 23, 'We which have the first-fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of our bodies;' when the corruptions we have here make us groan for heaven: Rom. vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

SERMON LXI.

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.
—HEB. xi. 26.

IN the constellation of worthies represented in this chapter, Moses shineth forth as a star of the first magnitude, and his faith is commended to us for vanquishing all sorts of temptations. We are assaulted both on the right hand and on the left with the delights of sense and the terrors of sense; *per blanda et aspera*, by rough encounters, and by the softer