

A FAST SERMON.

But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.—ISA. xliii. 22.

IN the front of the text there is an exceptive particle which referreth to the context—*But*. Now, if you consider the context before or after it, it containeth promises of mercy, of God's forming them into a state and people ; of forgiving their iniquities for his name's sake, &c. 'But' God promiseth mercy, though they had deserved judgment. The Lord was resolved for once, to make use of his prerogative, and to save them out of the mere and free motion of his own grace. Thus doth God sometimes work out of order and course, and show mercy when the state of a people is most sinful. He promiseth to restore Israel when they had neglected him, and were ready to cast him off. Such instances we have in like cases, 1 Cor. xi. 25. In the very night in which Christ was betrayed, he instituted the Lord's Supper ; he was consigning to the Church the food of life, when the world was designing and plotting against him a cruel death. So God was giving the law in the mount, while the people were worshipping the calf in the valley. Whilst Paul was persecuting the church, Christ appeareth from heaven to convert him, and make him an apostle, Acts ix. Free grace doth often step out of the way and beaten road to meet sinners in their wanderings. So here, God promiseth them great mercies ; yet he chargeth them with their sin and shameful neglect of him : 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob ; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.'

For the verse, there are two distinct charges—

1. A neglect of prayer.
2. Growing weary of God.

I shall now insist upon the former, though not excluding the latter also. The point is this—

Doct. People are at a dangerous pass when they begin to neglect prayer.

Eliphaz layeth it as an heavy charge upon Job, chap. xv. 4, 'Surely thou restrainest prayer before God.' When conscience is clamorous, wants pressing, and yet men cannot find the heart to go to God, it is a sad case. Restraint noteth the keeping in of a thing that would fain break out. So the heathen are described to be the families that all not upon his name, Jer. x. 25 ; that is, that do not acknowledge and worship him. So Ps. xiv. 4, 'The workers of iniquity,' of what

religion soever they profess themselves to be, 'they call not upon the Lord.' The evil of this will appear if we consider—

1. The ends why this duty was appointed.

2. The causes why this is neglected.

First, Why the duty was appointed. God's command is reason enough for the practice of any duty. There needeth no other argument to a gracious heart than this is the will of the Lord concerning you; but all God's institutions are full of reason, and in a condescension to us; he requireth nothing by way of mere task. The duties of religion are not a task, but a means to do us good; so is this among the rest.

1. It is a notable part of God's worship, or a serious calling to mind his presence and attributes. It is a sin, not only to deny God, but to forget him, Ps. ix. 17. Now we are apt to forget God, who is an invisible being, though we have all things from him, and he be necessary to us continually. Therefore in prayer we present ourselves before him that we may solemnly remember God, and inure ourselves to a reverence of his majesty. Therefore they that neglect prayer said to forget God: Jer. ii. 31, 32, 'We are lords, we will come more unto thee. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.' They carry themselves as if they had no need of God's support; they do not regard him, nor preserve any reverence of him in their minds. To withdraw from prayer is to withdraw from God; and to be unwilling to pray is to be unwilling to draw nigh to God, or to have any serious thoughts of his being and attributes.

2. It is a profession of our dependence. We do not enjoy our mercies by chance, or by good fortune (as we speak), but by the indulgence and gift of God. Now, that we may not be ignorant of the nature of our tenure, God will have us pray, that we may acknowledge his right and grant in all that we possess and enjoy. Thus, Mat. vi., God biddeth us ask 'our daily bread;' the bread you eat is not your own, but God's. You entrench upon his prerogative when you use it without his leave; as when we take anything that is our neighbour's, without asking his leave, we are thieves and robbers. To use the creatures without prayer is robbery; and without praise, is sacrilege: therefore it is said, 1 Tim. iv. 5, 'That every creature is sanctified by the word and prayer.' In the word we know our liberty; in prayer we ask God's leave and blessing; therein we acknowledge the donor of all we have and hope for: Ps. lxii. 8, 'Trust in the Lord at all times, pour out your heart before him.' If we depend upon God, we must pray to him, and seek for a relief in all our troubles. Those that depend upon his relief will earnestly beg it of him, and apply themselves to him by prayer.

3. It is a duty wherein the mysteries of our most holy faith are reduced to practice. There are two great mysteries in the christian religion—the doctrine of the trinity, and the mediation of the Son of God. We have the comfort of both in prayer; and we never practically and experimentally discern the benefit of it so much as there. (1.) The mystery of the trinity. It seemeth a profound speculation, till we find the use of it in our addresses to God: Eph. ii. 18,

'Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.' The mystery is unriddled when a poor soul cometh to God through Christ by the Spirit. When a needy and guilty soul would have any gift and benefit from God, he is discouraged till he reflect upon the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, and put his cause into his hands; and yet he knoweth not whether Christ will tender his suit, or regard it yea or no, until he be encouraged by the Spirit. The whole process of soul affairs, or the workings of a needy guilty soul towards God, may be put into this short issue: God, as a lawgiver and judge, which is our first apprehension of him, by the spirit of bondage driveth us to Christ as mediator; Christ, as mediator, by the spirit of adoption bringeth us back again to God as a father, or one that is able and willing to show mercy. When we first think of God, his terror and majesty oppress our hearts with fears; but we must have grace, or we are undone for ever; but there is no grace, no salvation, in any other but Jesus Christ, who hath procured us welcome and audience. He giveth us leave to come to God, having opened the door by his merit and intercession; and the spirit and heart to come. (2.) The mediation of Jesus Christ. He died to bring us to God, 1 Peter iii. 18; and our great duty is coming to God by him, Heb. vii. 25. But where do we so sensibly find this as in the duty of prayer, wherein we have experience how Christ bringeth us to God? He doth, in effect, there take us by the hand, and lead us to God, and hideth our sins, and procureth our acceptance, and presenteth us amiable to his Father, having justified and sanctified us, and cleansed us from those pollutions which rendered us loathsome and abominable in his sight. Do you know, christians, what you neglect, when you neglect prayer, one of the most concerning acts of your religion? If you omit it wholly, you do not deserve the name of christians; if you perform it rarely and unfrequently, you are not serious christians; or if you put off God with a few frozen and heartless words, you are not lively christians.

4. One special end of prayer is to nourish communion and familiarity between God and us; for it is the converse of a loving soul with God, between whom there is a mutual complacency. God delighteth in us, and we delight in God; it is the nearest familiarity that man in flesh can have with God, and therefore called 'an acquainting ourselves with God:' Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and good shall come unto thee.' Acquaintance among men groweth by frequent commerce and intercourse, when they often meet and speak one to another; so by this holy commerce with God we grow acquainted with him. So a visit of God: Isa. xxvi. 16, 'In trouble have they visited thee.' In prayer we give God a visit. Well then, when you neglect prayer, you neglect to give God a visit, or to preserve an acquaintance between him and you; and it is as if a man were weary of the presence of his dearest friend. Should we stand off from this work, or go to it as a bear to the stake, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, or an ox to the yoke? Now this familiarity is the more to be prized, because it is said, that 'thereby good shall come unto us;' and that upon a double account. (1.) Partly, as it giveth boldness in our present distresses. When God and you are grown strange, you cannot come with that

freedom and sweetness; as to a familiar friend we are wont to pour out our complaints into his bosom upon all occasions. Men are soon weary of their friends out of satiety or penury, their stock is soon spent, they waste by giving: Prov. xxv. 17, 'Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.' But it is not so with our heavenly friend, the oftener we come to him, the welcomer. He bids us pray continually, 1 Thes. v. 17. Now though mere love should put us upon this commerce with God, yet—(2.) There is another advantage which accrueeth to us. A man that hath been frequently entertained by God, and accepted with him, and had his prayers heard and granted, hath a great encouragement in the hour of death to go to him for help. It is a dreadful thing for a man to go out of the world who hath had no comfortable knowledge of God, no skill to pray to him, no encouragement to expect acceptance from him; to appear before a God whom they never heartily loved, nor ever were acquainted with as to any intimate communion. I leave it to consider what the condition of a man is who, in the greatest distress, must have recourse to an unknown friend, to whose favour he can pretend no merit and title; or of whose kindness he hath never had experience; yea, into whose presence he is forced against his will. Alas, how soon will the time come upon us, when those that despise prayer will betake themselves to it when it is too late; that will cry, Lord, Lord, when anguish and terror seize upon them; when prayer that should be the fruit of faith, love, and hope, shall be only the product of despair and horror! When we shall challenge acquaintance with Christ; but he shall say, 'I know ye not, ye are workers of iniquity.'

5. Prayer is required to preserve in us a sense of our duty, and to keep the heart in better frame. They had need be careful who come often into God's presence: 1 Peter i. 17, 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every one according to his works, pass the time of your sojourning in godly fear;' and Lev. x. 3, 'I will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto me.' So 2 Tim. ii. 22, 'Whosoever nameth the name of Christ, let him depart from iniquity.' We that so often draw nigh to God should be afraid to offend him; as men are afraid to offend those upon whom they depend, and into whose presence they must often come; or, as those who minister in the presence of princes must be seemly clad, and always appear in neat and comely apparel. Communion between God and us is interrupted by wilful sin: 1 Peter iii. 7, 'That your prayers be not hindered.' A christian is still to take heed that his access to God be not spoiled; either broken off, or carried on carelessly and formally. God will stand at a distance from us, or the heart will stand at a distance from God; God is provoked to withdraw by our disorderly walking; or else the heart will grow shy of God; as Adam hid himself when he had sinned. If we give way to pride, and passion, and lust, and worldly-mindedness, how shall we pray at night, and look God in the face with any confidence? 1 John iii. 21. How wilt thou keep his favour, when thou hast grieved his Spirit? who would distemper himself with drink that is to plead his cause in a case of life and death? By constant prayer God layeth an obligation upon us to be strict and holy.

6. To engage our affections to heavenly things. We wrestle with

God to catch an heat ourselves. God needeth not importunity; our heavenly Father knoweth what we have need of; he is not moved with the charms of rhetoric, why then doth God require striving and arguing in prayer? Partly to increase our faith. Every argument which we use in prayer is a new ground of hope drawn forth in the view of conscience. Partly to engage our desires and affections. The more earnestly we beg anything of God, the more zealously we are engaged to seek after it; for God will warn us of our duty by our own requests. We present our desires before God, and plead them with him. Now these desires are either pretended or real. If pretended, then our prayer is no prayer, but a mockery, and formal and customary devotion; and God will not be mocked, it will cost us dear to personate and act a part in his presence, and to complain of burdens that we feel not, or express desires which we have not. If real, then they are actuated and animated by the apprehensions of his observing presence; so that in speaking to God, we speak to ourselves; our prayers are so many exhortations to the fear and love of God, and the forsaking of sin, and to seek the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the church, or whatever the request be. Nay, not only an exhortation, but a kind of engagement, an implicit vow; we bind ourselves to our duty by our requests. When we desire that his name may be hallowed, or his will be done, we are bound to do what in us lieth to glorify his name, to promote his kingdom, to subject ourselves to his will, honestly to seek our daily bread in our vocation and calling, and to take the appointed course to obtain the pardon of our sins, and strength against temptations. It is not only a sermon preached to ourselves in God's hearing, but a solemn vow and engagement to use all the appointed means whereby we may obtain these blessings; and if we falter we are the more criminal, because we neglect, or turn away from that which we profess to be our desire and happiness.

7. To be a means of comfort and spiritual refreshing. The soul is disburdened of trouble by this kind of vent and utterance. To pour out our complaints into a friend's bosom, who will only pity us, though we do not expect succour and redress from him, will give us some ease; much more to open our hearts to one who is able and willing to help us: Job xvi. 20, 'My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God.' To bring our complaint and request before the throne of grace, must needs yield comfort and solace to the soul. Certainly none ever made conscience of prayer but he carried away some comfort with him. There is a pacifying virtue in this duty, as the opening of a vein cooleth the blood. Many of David's psalms begin with anguish and bitter complaints, and end with assurance and rejoicing; as if in the midst of prayer his affairs were altered, and one had brought him news, and all things went according to his own heart and mind. The very conferring with God bringeth some refreshment, your burden is cast off, and devolved upon the Lord: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast your care upon God,' saith the apostle, 'for he careth for you.' How do we cast our care upon God? Another place will inform you: Phil. iv. 6, 7, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.' &c. It is no more dishonour for God to bear our cares than it was for Christ

to bear our sins ; and what is the effect ? ‘ The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ,’ &c. Look, as when the air is imprisoned in the earth, there are shakings, and convulsions, and earthquakes, till it get a vent, but then all is quiet ; so the soul is tossed and turmoiled with many tormenting thoughts, till we acquaint God with the matter, then all is quiet. When Hannah had commended her suit to God she went away, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 8. How often do the children of God come away with triumph from the throne of grace, and leave their sorrows and their fears behind them ! Well, then, thou that neglectest prayer, neglectest the comfortablest and sweetest part of God’s worship, a duty that is not burdensome, but pleasant, and conduceth to the comfort, and quiet, and ease of the soul, as well as to God’s honour ; a duty wherein you have liberty to beg the greatest mercies, to deprecate his most grievous judgment, to treat with him about the most important business in the world, which is the saving of your own souls. Surely it is no tedious task for a needy soul to beg of God, who is so ready to relieve him, and show him grace and favour.

Secondly, The causes why men neglect it.

1. Out of atheism, that is at the root. When men neglect prayer, either they believe there is no God, or no providence ; for did we believe that there was a God who made all things, and doth sustain all things, and that we do depend upon his goodness for all that we are and have, we would be more frequent in prayer ; for necessity compelleth us to worship him whom we take to be God ; and to implore his help who giveth all manner of blessings, and ordereth all things which fall out in the world. The pagan mariners in a storm called every man upon his God : Jonah i. 6. *Jure venit cultus ad sibi quisque deos.* The gentiles that acknowledge a God, have also acknowledged a necessity of prayer and supplication to him. Plato and Proclus have written books *περὶ προσευχῆς*, concerning prayer, and have given directions how to pray, though they were heathens. Certainly whatever profession men make, they are not better than atheists, who do not make conscience of prayer, public in assemblies, private in families, personal and secret in closets. When the eyes of all things look to him for a supply of their wants, should not we own him and acknowledge him ? Eliphaz chargeth Job deeply : Job xv. 4, ‘ Thou castest off fear, thou restrainest prayer before God.’ As if the restraint of prayer did argue a casting away of all reverence and fear of God. Many content themselves with public worship, are never with God in private. Have they any sense of providence, any fear and respect of God ? David maketh the not calling upon God to be the special character of an atheist : Ps. xiv. 1, ‘ The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.’ How doth he prove it ? ver. 4, ‘ They call not upon the Lord,’ they do not seek after him. This sign is sure, and will not fail. Thou hast need to suspect thyself when thou neglectest to pray in thy family, in thy closet ; thou dost not think God is there.

2. Security. The creature’s address to God beginneth in a sense of his own wants ; for surely they that are deeply affected with their own wants, and persuaded of God’s readiness to supply them, will pray ;

but men slight God when they do not need him : Jer. ii. 31, 'We are lords, and will not come at thee.' In sickness or extreme danger, hypocrites will pray : Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty ? will he always call upon God ?' The sincere cannot be long away from God ; for they delight in his company ; and they look not to things seen, but to God's invisible conduct, upon which all their happiness dependeth ; and are sensible of their own weakness and frailty, and therefore their commerce with God is constant. They need daily pardon, daily grace, as well as daily bread. But hypocrites never care for prayer, till extreme necessity put them upon it. At other times they are secure and careless. Their duties are forced from them, like water out of a still, not like water out of a fountain : Isa. xxvi. 16, 'In trouble they will visit thee, they will pour out a prayer when distress is upon them.' In their straits, then they howl ; when God visits them, then they visit God. A drop of prayer is much at other times ; then they pour it out by buckets : as where water is precious, they spare it not to quench a fire : Hosea v. 16, 'In their afflictions they will seek me early ;' at other times they turn back upon the mercy-seat. Carnal men use their duties, as we do strong waters, not for a constant drink or diet, but to help in a pang, after long neglects, or upon some great trouble. But a gracious heart is sensible of its constant necessity ; and they that are carried on with a constant delight in God, do not run to him, as men do to a tree in a storm, which otherwise they would pass by and take no notice of. Surely those that have felt the weight, and smart, and sting of sin, will cry for mercy and healing. They know that the soul is a tender thing, like the eye, soon offended and out of order ; they know it is more exposed to danger than the body, though generally it be less cared for. Though man's body be never so strong, and of such an athletic constitution, yet no man will follow his labour so as to omit to take his necessary food, or necessary rest, that he may keep it in good plight. So whatever good estate the soul is in, we must not omit to pray, to keep the soul in good plight.

3. Out of coldness in religion, and weariness of God, as in the latter clause ; and then his service groweth burdensome. Man is an unstable creature, and loveth shift and change ; for a while zealous, but when his first heats are spent, falleth off ; and religion is laid by : closet duties are thrown out of doors, family duties go next after, and then public duties are little regarded, or used only for custom and fashion's sake. They lose their first love, and then leave off their first works, Rev. iii. 3, 4. It is base ingratitude, since God gives us so little cause for it : Jer. ii. 5, 'What iniquity did you find in me ?' What hurt did the worship of God do you and your families ? So Micah vi. 3. But men are of another spirit, and so God is neglected. Certain it is, carnal pleasures will make men weary of prayer, or prayer will make men weary of carnal pleasures. They take the worse choice.

4. Want of peace breeds loathness and backwardness, as David hung off, Ps. xxxii. 3, till he had recovered his peace. Men have no comfort in God when they come to him as an angry judge rather than a gracious father, 1 John iii. 27. Every duty is a new arraignment, a very

penance, and a reviving of their fears. Certainly you should have more comfortable thoughts of God. Get a conscience better established; improve the death and intercession of Christ more, that you may come with boldness, Heb. iv. 16, and x. 19.

5. Want of spiritual strength. He that hath lame joints cannot delight in exercise, which is a pleasure to them that are strong and healthy. Prayer groweth a burden to men of weak and wandering thoughts, lean and barren understandings, and dead affections. You should get the distemper removed, but not neglect the duty. God hath provided help for prayer, and fitness cometh by use. You should rouse up yourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that calleth upon thy name that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' If you will not stir up yourselves, this dulness, deadness, and barrenness will increase upon you.

Use. Oh! then, let us begin to bethink ourselves. It is a dangerous case when men begin to slacken in prayer, and this daily commerce with God, when there is less frequency and less complacency in this work. Time was when thou couldst not be content until thou hadst given God a visit, and must consult with him upon all occasions; but now thou beginnest to lose thy tenderness, thou art a stranger to thyself, and therefore grown a stranger to thy God, as it thou hadst no business with him. Thou wert wont to keep a continual correspondence with the God of heaven, and to maintain a sweet intercourse between him and thy soul. How came these fervours to be spent? 'Ye ran well, who hindered you?' Have you found any discouragement in God that your delight in him is lessened, and your care of duty lost? Many do it out of carnal affection—their affections leak out to the world; others out of rotten, corrupt, and base principles. As for instance—

1. Some think they need not pray, they cannot alter God. So Maximus Tyrinus, the Platonist, reasoned, God hath set the course of his counsels, importunity will not prevail with him to alter them. I answer—Though we can make no change and alteration in God, yet it bettereth our hearts and increaseth our trust. Rev. xxii., 'I come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Ehas knew God would give rain, then setteth himself a praying. We pray not that God's will may be altered, but accomplished in his own way. God will have it brought about by this means that he may do a people good upon his own terms, in the way of entreaty and supplication: Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 'I know the thoughts which I think towards you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and go and pray to me, and I will hearken.' So Ezek. xxxvi. 37, 'I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.' So when Daniel understood by books—Dan. ix. 3, 'I set my face unto the Lord God by prayer and supplication,'—Daniel goeth to work in good earnest.

2. Others think they are above prayer; look upon it as an inferior duty for men of their standing and growth. I answer—Surely on this side eternity we must be always praying. God's children are called his 'supplicants,' Zeph. v. 10; 'the generation of them that seek him,' Ps. xxiv. 2. Here are necessities of the church, yea, and personal necessities of our own, to put us upon it. Jesus Christ himself was

frequent in the practice of it, and chose places of solitude and retirement, spent whole nights in prayer, see Mat. xiv. 23, 24. When the disciples go to sea, Christ goeth unto the mountain to pray. If he that had the fulness of grace prayed to the Father with such fervour, should we think ourselves above prayer that are poor indigent creatures, and have nothing but what we receive by begging?

3. Some will not pray but when the Spirit moveth them, not in a constant stated course. I answer—This is as if we should never come to God but when he doth expressly send for us. But the suspension of the Spirit's influence is often a punishment of our neglect in this kind. He withholdeth grace because we do not seek it in his own way. We are to stir up the grace received, 1 Tim. i. 6; indisposition doth not excuse us. Though I find nothing but deadness in my heart, yet I am to pray, because my weakness and impotency doth not dissolve my obligation to duty. And God hath promised to be with us when we are up and doing. The influence of grace is not the rule of duty, but the help. God's command is the reason and rule of duty. 'Howbeit at his command,' &c., Luke v. 5. Whether disposed or indisposed, we are bound to obey. God may do what he pleaseth, we must do what he hath commanded. Our impotency is sinful; a drunken servant is a servant still. The outward act of a duty is under a command, though we do it not so spiritually. 'Take with you words,' Hosea xiv. 2.

4. Others think there is no need of such frequent praying. They use it as physic, not as a diet. *Ans.* The hours of duty are not determined; but the expressions wherein they are enjoined are large and comprehensive: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' There must be a constant correspondence between us and God. When there are such gaps between duty and duty we lose ground in the spiritual life; we must be frequent in it if fervent: a key seldom turned rusteth in the lock; a man gaineth fitness by degrees. A gracious heart seeth reason enough to be much and often with God.

5. Some say it is in vain to serve the Lord and attend upon his worship; as Mal. iii. 14; and then everything is begrudged: Mal. i. 13, 'What a weariness is it!' But these are not acquainted with God who rewardeth perfunctory services, much more those which are real, as Ahab's counterfeit humiliation. These are drowned in sense, and therefore observe not what cometh from above, and reckon not of prayer, because they question the being of God and his providence, Ps. xv. 2. Surely his people can give you many experiences of God's hearing and answering their prayers.

Here is the second charge—'But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' To be weary of God, is to be weary of his worship and service.

Doct. That it is as sad a character as can be given, either of persons, or of a people, to say that they are weary of God.

To represent this to you I shall show—

1. The nature of the sin.
2. That it is incident sometimes to a people considered in their community; sometimes to persons considered in their single capacity.
3. The causes of it.
4. The effects.

5. What a sad charge this is.

First, The nature of the sin—To be weary of God. Weariness in the body noteth a deficiency of strength, no more mind to work; in the soul a falling from God, and we have no mind to his service, which is either partial or total.

1. Partial. When the heart is more alienated from God than before, and all our respects to him grow burdensome and grievous, and the heart begins to repine at everything we do for him: Mal. i. 13, 'Ye said also, What a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought also that which was torn, and lame, and sick: thus ye brought an offering. Should I accept this at your hands, saith the Lord of hosts?' There is a tediousness and irksomeness in God's service, be it never so slight. They that brought a sickly lamb for an offering, yet puffed as if they were tired with some great burden and labour: Amos viii. 5, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn, and the sabbath that we may set forth wheat?' As if all were lost that were laid out upon God. And so he is neglected and begrudged as an unwelcome guest.

2. Total. When not only the power of religion is abated, but the very profession of it is cast off; and so, being weary of God, is a plain revolt or departure from him, and the obedience we owe to him: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.' The evil is departing from God by a formal and direct apostasy, or denying and forsaking that which they formerly professed; and the cause of it is the evil heart of unbelief, expecting no good by that way. It is an evil heart, because the heart which inclineth to this apostasy hath a malignant quality in it, not infirmity only, but malignity and unbelief in the cause of it, or a doubt of the happiness offered by Christ.

Secondly, That it is incident sometimes to persons considered in their single capacity; sometimes to a people considered in their community.

1. To persons considered apart and in their single capacity. A more common sin it is than we are aware of, for all by nature are inclined to it.

[1.] Partly out of natural adverseness to God: Rom. viii. 7, 'The wisdom of the flesh is enmity to God;' and Col. i. 21, 'Enemies by your minds in evil works.' This enmity manifesteth itself by a backwardness to that which is good, by a proneness to that which is evil. And it is enmity against God because of his law. It is not subject, nor can it be. In the law there is a precept and a sanction. The precept sheweth what is due from us to God: and the sanction what is due from God to us, the *debitum pœnæ*—what punishment is due to us; for reward we can expect none, having faulted in our duty. Now both breed a strangeness and enmity between us and God. We hate him as a lawgiver, and we fear him as an avenger, Isa. lix. 2. We are as shy of God as God hath reason to loathe us. Ever since Adam first sinned, and then ran to the bushes, this disposition remaineth in us. Our forefather was first a fugitive, and then an exile. This is the disposition of all his posterity. We will not come to God,

or not keep with him. The natural aversion from our duty is hardly cured, we having temptations of sense to feed it. Jam. i. 14. And our legal bondage, because of the sanction and curse, breedeth in us a shyness of God, Genesis iii. 10. And after we have seemed to consent to the invitations of his grace, yet it is hard to settle in a thorough love in his majesty, and delight in him.

[2.] Partly because of the fickleness and changeableness of man, who is unstable as water : a restless creature that loveth to shiit and change. In his comforts, the very delights of nature by continuance grow burdensome to us, and pleasures need to be relieved and reished by other pleasures. In his opinions and notions about religion, light chaff is taken up by every wind, Eph. iv. 14. In his affections : John v. 35, 'Ye rejoiced in his light for a season.' And curiosity, an adulterous affection to truth, loveth it while new. The frame of our hearts is soon changed ; sometimes we are zealous, anon cold and flat ; now humble, then proud ; now devout, anon vain ; now meek, and soon after passionate. In the choice and course of our lives no creature so unlike itself as man is. When our first heats are spent we flag and grow weary : Gal. v. 7, 'Ye did run well ; who did hinder you, that you should not obey the truth ?' Sometimes they show great forwardness in embracing the truth ; and though they have no satisfying reason for their defection from it ; yet mere levity diverts their affection and zeal, and they grow cold and careless in it, yea, quite alter the course of their religion and profession, and their former zeal and sufferings tend to no other effect but the disgrace of the gospel. Jehu's pace for a while often endeth in Demas' choice. 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world' So versatile and fickle is man's heart.

But more distinctly ; particular persons may be ranged under two heads.

(1.) Common and ordinary professors ; and there is little doubt of them, but that they who are only acquainted with the toil of religion, and never knew the comfort of it, that they will put themselves into all shapes and forms as their affections and interest lead them. Therefore no question the love and zeal of hypocrites may miscarry and vanish, and though they seem to be carried on with great fervour and affection in the ways of God for a while, yet afterward fall quite away ; partly because their love to God was built upon foreign motives, the favour of the times, the awe of education, the advantage of good company. Jesus is not loved for Jesus' sake. If he be the object of their respect, yet not the reason ; and then it is no wonder to see hirelings prove changelings ; and those that loved a Christ triumphing, to forsake and hate a Christ crucified. All artificial motions cease, when the poise is down by which they are moved. And meteors vanish and disappear when the matter that feedeth them is spent ; when in the meantime the stars, those constant fires of heaven, shine with a durable light and brightness. Partly because that love and zeal which they had for God was not so rooted as to subdue contrary affections. A taste they had of the goodness of God in offering pardon and life by Christ, and but a taste, Heb. vi. 4-6. Such as is easily choked by the cares of this world and voluptuous living.

Therefore we are warned : Heb. iii. 6, 14, 'To hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' Well, then, growing weary of God is the ordinary sin of the carnal professor who never was thorough in the practice of godliness.

(2.) God's own people may abate much of their vigour in religion. Their love to God decayeth, and their sense of things eternal is lessened, and they grow cold in prayer, dead and uncomfortable in their duty, and so live as if they were weary of God, and weary of well-doing. And therefore are such often quickened in the scripture : Gal. vi. 9, 'Let us not be weary in well-doing.' And 2 Thes. iii. 13, 'But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing.' They lose all, if they persist not. And we have an instance, Rev. ii. 4. They that were commended for their labour in the Lord's work, zeal against hypocrites, patience in adversity, yet have this charged upon them, that they left their first love. Though they make not a total defection, yet they may suffer much loss in the degree of grace ; and the acts and fruits of it may be much intermitted, which is a great evil ; because the highest degree of love doth not considerably answer the love of Christ, nor the duty of the regenerate, who are called by him from such a depth of misery, and to such an height of happiness, and who are to love him with all their soul, heart, and might. And because to come short, not only of the rule, but our former practice, is the more culpable ; for it seemeth to be a kind of condemning of our former practice, as if we had been too hot and earnest before, and done more than we needed. And lastly, because as love and zeal decayeth, so doth our work, Rev. ii. 4, 5 ; either it is wholly remitted, or else performed in a perfunctory, slight manner ; such as argueth a neglect and contempt of God, rather than a due esteem and sense of his majesty. They dare not utterly give over the service of God, or quite abandon it ; yet lay not to heart their slight and perfunctory dealings with him. Thus you see it is a common sin which all should take heed of.

2. It is incident to a people considered in their community ; yea, nothing is more usual than for nations to grow weary of God ; for the whole followeth the reason and manner of the parts.

[1.] For the church of God in general. We in our times, who live in the dregs of christianity, may soon perceive a manifest difference between the early days of the gospel, and those corruptions which now obtain ; when the faith of the gospel is turned into dead opinions, and questions, and vain janglings ; and the worship of the gospel into a theatrical pomp, and the pageantry of empty ceremonies, which eclipse the majesty and splendour of it ; and the discipline of Christ into a temporal domination ; and all is carried in the christian world by sides and interests ; so that christianity looketh like another thing, a design calculated for the present world, rather than a serious preparation for the world to come. In the first days we read, Acts iv. 33, 'That with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.' Christianity shineth more by its native lustre than meretricious ornaments ; and Acts xix. 20, 'That the word grew mightily.' But in the latter times, atheists and scoffers abound, and are more rife than serious worshippers : 2 Peter iii. 3, 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.' The church of God is troubled, not only

with furious persecutors, subtle deceivers, but also profane scoffers. At the first promulgation of the gospel, truths were new, and the exercises of the christian religion lively, and there was great concord and seriousness among the professors of the gospel. Before men's senses were benumbed with the customary use of religious duties, the notions of God and salvation by Christ were fresh and active upon their hearts; but when the profession of christianity grew into a form and national interest, and men became christians rather by the chance of their birth than their own choice and rational conviction, and the world was turned into the church, and the ancient severity and strictness was much lost, and the memory of those miracles and wonderful effects by which our religion was confirmed almost worn out; and so the truth of it questioned and impugned by men of subtle wits and a prostituted conscience,—we seem to grow weary of the name of Christ; and in the fag-end of time mockers and atheistical spirits swarm everywhere; and the holy, meek, sober, humble, heavenly spirit seemeth to be banished out of the christian world, but that a few broken-hearted christians keep it up. And partialities, and sidings, and sects are countenanced, while unquestionable duties are little regarded, except by those few who have the courage to live in a counter-motion to the practices of a loose age, by their holiness and charity, and serious regard to the hopes of another world.

[2.] In every nation. What ups and downs are there in religion? Now the interest of God is in great request, and anon neglected, scorned, and trampled upon. You have Israel's story, Ps. lxxviii. and still the burden is, ver. 37, 'Their hearts were not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.' Sometimes all afloat for God, but presently quite becalmed. Usually religion is changed in a nation upon two grounds, change of persons, and change of interests. (1.) Change of persons. When good old zealous men are gone, the stage is shifted, and there cometh on a new scene of acts and actors; one generation passeth, and another cometh. As we are told of Egypt, there arose a generation that knew not Joseph, a new family reigned in Egypt, though we have no account of it in scripture; so here a new generation rise, that will scarce own their father's God, at least grow weary of him; and being never pope-bitten, nor acquainted with the former bondage from which their ancestors were freed by the mighty power of God, grow cold in religion, ready to give up all which was retrieved out of former corruptions with so much ado. It is hot work for a while, but afterward it runneth into formality, and religion groweth dead and flat. A new sort of persons arise that forget the old God: Josh. xxiv. 31, 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, which had known all the works of the Lord, and what he had done for Israel.' For a while there is a zealous generation; but they decay and die away, and religion decays with them. And the survivors lose their zeal for God and the interests of his kingdom. Salvian compareth religion to a river, which loseth in depth what it getteth in breadth; to a body, which, as it groweth larger and bigger, groweth less active; to a mother, that is the weaker for every birth. *Multiplicatis fidei populis, fides diminuta est.* (2.) By the change of interests. When it

is for their interest to own God, men think they can never bind themselves fast enough to him ; but when the posture of interest is changed, God is laid aside, they grow weary of God ; they deal treacherously with the Lord, and walk willingly after the commandment, Hosea v. 7, 11. And then though they be broken in judgment, all their matters go backward, and not forward, they will not be reclaimed. Jehu drove on furiously, while interest and reason of state carried him to pull down Baal, but still kept up the calves at Dan and Bethel. There he showed himself weary of God. Therefore you see what changes there are in the world.

Now it is a very great evil, sorely resented by God, when his people cast him off : Ps. lxxxi. 11, 'Israel would none of me.' God had chosen them above all nations, but they would not stick close to God. They had seen his miracles, enjoyed his worship ; but by degrees their respect to God was cooled, and they must have the gods of the nations round about them. So God threateneth to resist them that were turned back from the Lord, Zeph. i. 6. In the days of Joshua (in whose time that prophet prophesied), they had professed a great reformation, but soon revolted ; therefore God would be quick and severe upon them. So Jer. ii. 12, 'Be astonished, O ye heavens,' &c. The Lord speaketh as if the sun should be struck blind with astonishment, and the spheres should hurl out their stars, and the lights of heaven look pale upon such a wickedness, that a people should grow weary of their God, and change their God for that which is no God !

Thirdly, The causes why a people grow weary of God. Besides those general causes, as to persons and nations, mentioned before, these may be added—

1. Want of love to God. For love is the life and heart of all other duties. As that decayeth, other things decay with it. If the first love be gone, the first works will be gone also ; at least are not carried on with that life, seriousness and complacency, as they should be, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Love is the great principle of our duties ; and therefore it concerneth christians to keep it up in strength. Nothing is hard and grievous to him that loveth God ; he is never weary of serving and glorifying God, 1 John v. 3. Therefore the sense of our obligation to Christ, who hath done such great things for us, should never be worn out.

2. We are too much led by sense ; and if we have not present satisfaction, we soon grow weary of religion, as if all this while we had gone upon a wrong scent : Mal. iii. 14, 'Ye say, It is in vain to serve the Lord ; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances ?' Isa. lviii. 3, 'Wherefore have we fasted, and he seeth not ?' &c. People are carried on with great fervour and vigour for a while ; but if they meet not with sensible benefit, tire and grow weary of religion, and attendance upon the duties thereof. But this should not move us ; for God doth not govern the world by sense, but by faith, 2 Cor. v. 7 ; and our eternal reward is sure, 1 Cor. xv. 58. If we faint and give over, we miss of it. And besides, you do not serve God, but tempt and take an essay of him. If you forego religion, because you find not at first what you hope for, you do not make the adventure of faith, but only try conclusions and experiments, and look for such sensible proofs, which God will not always vouchsafe to you.

3. It argueth too much love of the world, which by long importunity prevaileth with us to forsake God, and grow dead and cold in religion, 2 Tim. iv. 10. When we are well at ease, the world draweth us off from the love of God and heavenly things: 1 John ii. 15, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And where there is not love there is no delight; and where there is no delight there will soon be a weariness or backwardness to his service.

4. It comes from indulgence to the ease of the flesh. As bodily weariness is most incident to the lazy, so is spiritual weariness to those who do not rouse up themselves: Rom. xii. 11, 'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.' If we will not take pains to keep grace alive, we soon tire and flag in the ways of godliness. We must stir up ourselves: Isa. lxiv. 7, 'There is none that calleth upon thy name, none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.' So we by prayer and diligent meditation must keep up the fervour of our spirits; and take heed of a remiss will, which is easily discouraged. There is in the saints an habit of doing good, which is kept up by influence on God's part and diligence on ours. Now he that works by an habit, worketh with delight, is never weary of doing good. There is infused in regeneration an inclination to spiritual and heavenly things, Heb. viii. 10, and Ps. xl. 8. Now this inclination is strengthened into a preparation or readiness, 2 Tim. ii. 21. The inclination is the remote power, the readiness is the next and immediate power; the inclination is from the seed of grace, the readiness from growth and strength of grace. Now next to this readiness, an earnest impulsion, a zeal for the service, when our hearts within us make us willing. And this is continually strengthened in us by God's influence perfecting the habits of grace, Heb. xiii. 21; and by ourselves, Rev. iii. 2; by our watchfulness and diligence.

5. Impatience of troubles, and the manifold discouragements we meet with in the way to heaven: Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him who endured such a contradiction of sinners, that ye may not wax weary and faint in your minds.' The tediousness of afflictions doth make the mind weary. Elijah speaketh like a man quite tired and spent, 'Take away my life, I am not better than my fathers.' The best christians may be tired and out of breath in bad times: Mat. xxiv. 12, 'Because iniquity doth abound, the love of many waxeth cold.' It is not taken in a general sense, that when there is a deluge of wickedness, sin, by being common, groweth less odious; but in a limited sense, taking iniquity for persecutions, it is at least a damage to zeal.

Fourthly, The effects. I shall not mention the gross effect, total apostasy from God, or wholly giving over religion, which doth sufficiently discover itself; but the effects of that partial deficiency or weariness I mentioned. Three things I will name—

1. Boldness in sinning. When men begin to lose their tenderness and strictness, have not such a deep awe upon their hearts, but let loose the reins, and allow themselves to sin freely in thought, sometimes foully in word and act, the heart is not watched, the tongue is not bridled, nor the life regulated with that circumspection and care which becometh saints—the heart is suffered to remain full of envy, pride, and worldliness, and other evil affections; the tongue overfloweth with

idle, if not rotten and unsavoury speeches. In their lives men become vain and careless, more bold and venturous upon temptations and snares. Certainly then men grow weary of the restraints of religion; while they have any love to God, they have a lively hatred of sin, Ps. xcvii. 10. They deny the motions of sin with more resolution; bewail the commission of it with more tenderness, Luke vii. 47; yea, bemoan themselves because of the relics of corruption, Rom. vii. 24. But when men lose their conscientious tenderness, wallow in sin without remorse, cast off their former strictness, not their fond scrupulosity, and enlarge themselves to all manner of vanity, they are grown weary of that exactness which religion calleth for.

2. More coldness in duties of worship. Either it is omitted, or performed perfunctorily, and in a careless, stupid manner. (1.) It is less frequent, as if they could live without God, Jer. ii. 31, 32, Job xxvii. 10; and need not such frequent converse with him, scarce keep an holy acquaintance. Usually this evil groweth upon us by degrees; as the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel did remove not all at once, but by certain steps, from the holy place, the altar of burnt-offering, the outward court, the city, then rested on one of the hills which encompassed the city, as loath to be gone. So men grow cold towards God by degrees. God is first cast out of the heart, then out of the closet, then out of the family, then more indifferent to public duties; then sin begins to manifest itself, till the sinner appear in his own colours. Therefore observe how this weariness and satiety grows upon you, when you seldom think or speak of God, Ps. x. 3, seldom converse with him, grow more strange to him, begin less to love and prize the ordinances and means of grace. God is neglected; you have no mind to meet with him, as formerly you had. Ps. lxxiii. 2, David prayeth, 'That I may see thee, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' (2.) When there is less complacency and seriousness in worship. It is more tedious and irksome, and we do not keep up a delightful communion with him, neither in the word nor prayer, nor is meditation of God so sweet as it was wont to be, but more grievous and troublesome. The word was the solace of your souls, 'sweeter than honey or the honeycomb,' Ps. cxix. 103; but now you are gospel-gluttled and Christ-gluttled; manna loseth its relish with you; prayer is looked upon as a task and a penance, rather than a privilege. The throne of grace, which was the porch of heaven, is now neglected; and though you were glad to meet together and call upon the name of God, now it is an heavy bondage to be tied to accustomed opportunities of meeting with God. You could say, as David, Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will rejoice in the Lord.' Now thoughts of God rush into the mind like unwelcome guests; you like not to retain them in your minds.

3. Less care and study to please God. Surely they who value and esteem his favour above all things make it their business and work to please him, Col. i. 10, Isa. lvi. 4, 1 Thes. iv. 1, 2 Cor. v. 9. Now when it is a more indifferent thing to you whether God be pleased or displeased, this is not so greatly minded; our intention is less sincere, and we more mind the pleasing of ourselves and the pleasing of men. We are grown weary of him. They that keep up that high esteem of him can be content to do anything and suffer anything rather than dis-

please God and lose his favour. His love is their life, his displeasure as formidable as death itself to them, Gen. xxxix. 9. So also they are willing to suffer anything, Phil. iii. 8-10.

Fifthly, What a sad estate of soul it is appeareth—(1.) By the heinousness of the sin; (2.) Terribleness of the judgment.

1. The heinousness of the sin.

[1.] It is an horrible contempt of God, after trial, to fall off from God, and return to our carnal pleasures and satisfactions again. Those that never chose him sin less than those that grow weary of him after choice; for the apostle saith, 2 Peter ii. 21, 'Better they had never known the way of righteousness.' For they do in effect pronounce, after some trial and experience, that the world is better than God, or proclaim to the world that there is not in God what they expected in him.

[2.] It is a very senseless and unreasonable sin. God never gave you cause or occasion to grow weary of him. He challengeth Israel: Micah vi. 3, 'O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me;' Jer. ii. 5, what is it maketh you weary of God? His commands? They are not grievous, but all holy, just, and good. His trials are not severe, nor above measure, nor beyond strength. His rewards are not doubtful or questionable, but sure, if we had but the patience to wait for them. 'Many good works have I done among you; for which of those do you stone me?' Much good he hath done us; what is it makes us weary?

[3.] There is much ingratitude in it. He hath given much cause to the contrary. There is none begin with God but they have an invitation to go on—in God himself a new inviting sweetness to keep up our affections fresh and lively, 1 Peter ii. 3, Ps. xxxviii. 8. In his ways much serenity and peace, Gal. vi. 16; yea, strength if we be sincere with him, Prov. x. 29; besides a promise of supply. It is not only matter of usual experience, but secured by promise: Isa. xl. 30, 31, 'The youths shall faint and be weary, but they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.' Look, as in heaven God is always to the blessed spirits new and fresh every morning; so in the church, when we taste anything it doth not cloy—there is more to be had in God, still greater things than these. In carnal and earthly things, the more we try them the imperfections which formerly lay hid are discovered upon fruition; therefore, all these things are less in enjoyment than they were in expectation. But it is not so in these spiritual things; every taste should provoke appetite.

2. The terribleness of the judgment.

[1.] On nations. When men have opened the doors to the king of glory, and then throw him out again, or bid him depart out of their coasts for temporal reasons, as the Gadarenes did Christ, God taketh it heinously: 2 Chron. xii. 8, 'They shall know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries;' that is, they should see what a difference there was between serving God and serving enemies.

[2.] On churches. Rev. ii. 5, 'Behold I will come against thee quickly.' When their zeal of christianity was abated, he threateneth a removal of their candlestick. If a people grow weary of Christ, they that would not acknowledge his worth shall know the want of him to

their bitter cost. God would unchurch them, by removing his ordinances from them, and give them over to those errors and delusions they affected and lingered after.

[3.] For particular persons, it layeth them open to God's severe correction, Hosea v. 15. The great use of afflictions is to quicken us; if God's discipline smart, we may thank ourselves for it. God maketh them the sharper, that we may not dote upon the world, and neglect him, and grow cold in his service, and to awaken a lively sense of religion in us.

[4.] For total defection. There is dreadful vengeance appointed for them that prefer the creature before God, bodies before souls, and earth before heaven: Heb. x. 9, 10, 'They draw back to perdition.'

Use. Take heed of growing weary of God.

1. Man is a very changeable creature, and the course of temptations may be altered, 1 Kings ii. 28, and 1 Kings xiii. 4-19.

2. There is a cursed satiety. Our affections are deadened to things to which we are accustomed. Manna is loathed by the Israelites: Nothing but this manna. The full stomach loatheth the honeycomb. When first acquainted with religion, we are more affected with it, but afterwards glutted. Certainly we more admire grace, and are more affected with it, when first called out of darkness into light, 1 Peter ii. 9. In a deep thirst our taste is more lively; but yet the sense of this wonderful mercy should never be forgotten by us, nor should we ever lose our gospel relish.

3. When we grow weary of God, we take little notice of it. The generality of professors, if they do not wholly cast off religion, are satisfied though their love to God be exceedingly cold; and as long as they do a few outward things for God, which they had rather leave undone than do them, do not take notice of the decay of their principle, which is faith working by love. But God noteth this; for he weigheth the spirits, and all is but tithing, mint, and cummin, if we pass over judgment and the love of God, Luke xi. 42.

4. The issue of this distemper of mind is so dreadful, that we cannot sufficiently watch against the first declinings, for these are the cause of all the rest. When you begin to grow careless, strike in effectually and rouse up thyself, 2 Tim. i. 6, *ἀναζωοποιεῖν*, as the priests were to keep in their holy fire of the altar. Otherwise when the evil heart beginneth to draw us from God, we shall be hardened in it, Heb. iii. 12, 13. It was a delight to me to think of God, to speak of him, or to him; how is it that my heart is gone off from these things? God is as lovely as ever, and sin as odious.

5. Worldly lusts must be mortified; for if our love be pre-engaged, God will be defrauded. As when the pipe breaketh out, the water cannot go forwards. It is an inordinate affection to other things that deadeneth our hearts to God.