

SERMON UPON DEUTERONOMY XXXII. 51.

Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.—
DEUT. XXXII. 51.

I SHALL give you some strictures or short notes on this scripture. The words contain a reason why Moses and Aaron were shut out of Canaan; because of their sin at Meribah-Kadesh, or the waters of strife. Their sin is doubly expressed here—(1.) 'Ye trespassed against me;' (2.) 'Ye sanctified me not.'

The one expression seemeth to imply a sin of commission, 'Ye trespassed against me,' that is, disobeyed God. The other a sin of omission, 'Ye sanctified me not in the eyes of the children of Israel.' Or rather, the one is a more general expression, it was a trespass; the other more particular, showing what sort of trespass it was, not sanctifying God.

For the first, this sin is called, Num. xxvii. 14, 'A rebellion against the commandment of the Lord.' In the text, a trespass or a transgression.

For the second, more particularly, not sanctifying God is a transgression with a scandal annexed to it. To sanctify God is to carry ourselves to him as to a God of such glory and power, to fear him above all, and to love him and trust him above all. In short, to do that which God commandeth, depending upon his word and promise, by which we ascribe to him the glory of his truth, goodness, and power, as counting him worthy to be feared and trusted, whatever temptations we have to the contrary. Thus, Isa. viii. 13, 'Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread;' 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' There was a scandal annexed; for it is said in the text, 'Among the children of Israel, and in the midst of the children of Israel;' and elsewhere, 'in the eyes of the children of Israel.' They publicly dishonoured God before all the people. Moses used like words of unbelief when the people lusted for flesh at Taberah, as now he did at Meribah when they murmured for

want of water: Num. xi. 21, 22, 'And Moses said, The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass to thee or not.' Unbelief will be always urging difficulties against God's promises. But there was no threatening then; that unbelief was only professed in secret, only before the Lord; but this was before all Israel. And both Moses and Aaron are charged with this sin; and being both partners in the transgression, they are both concerned in the chastisement; both are shut out of Canaan, and died, the one at Mount Hor, the other at Mount Nebo.

Doct. That the sins even of God's children may cost them dear here in this world.

1. I shall reflect on the instance in the text.
2. Give you general reasons.

I. To give you some reflections on the instance in the text. The history of it you have, Num. xx. The people, when the water failed, gather together against Moses and Aaron to chide, ver. 3; that is, to resist, or speak with bitter and reproachful words. They menaced, and therefore Moses and Aaron withdrew for fear of them, and because of their outrages, they fell upon their faces, praying in the door of the sanctuary, ver. 6; and it is said, 'The glory of the Lord appeared to them;' that is, in the cloud, as a sign that he heard their prayer and would save them. And the Lord biddeth Moses, ver. 8, to take his rod, and he and Aaron to speak to the rock to give out water enough for all Israel, for them and their beasts; and this speaking to the rock was to be done in the sight and hearing of all the people. Upon this Moses and Aaron 'gather all the congregation together before the rock,' ver. 10, 11, and then he said, 'Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water for you out of this rock? And he lift up his hand, and with his rod smote the rock twice; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.' This is the account of the history. The question now is, Wherein was Moses' sin in all this? Some think in that Moses smote the rock, and spake to the people. It is not said that he 'spake to the rock, as he is commanded by God; he should only have spoken to the rock, not have smitten it. But when God biddeth him take his rod, it is most probable to imagine that he intended he should smite the rock with it, as was before done at Rephidim: Exod. xvii. 6, 'Thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.' But here there is no command of smiting, therefore some think he should only have lifted up his rod in the eyes of the people, as the signal of former miracles. Others think his error was in smiting twice, when once had been enough to declare their faith and reliance on God's promise. But the scripture doth seem to refer us to another cause, their disobedience and unbelief, not manifested in his smiting so much as in his speaking: Ps. cvi. 32, 33, 'They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes; because they provoked his spirit,

so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.' Therefore the sin was impatience mingled with diffidence, and this in the sight of all the people.

1. He was in a great passion, more than was usual with him at other times, as appeareth by the manner of his speaking, 'Ye rebels;' and also the doubling of his stroke showeth the heat of his anger. Now, 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,' James i. 20. The passion was in itself a fault, but withal it disturbed him so that he could not discharge that duty which was incumbent upon him in the manner that he ought to do it, with faith and affiance in God, or so as he might set out his goodness, power, and truth. He spake in a provocation, not as became a meek and faithful servant of the Lord, that desired to glorify him in the eyes of the people.

2. There was unbelief and distrust in it, 'Must we fetch you water out of this rock?' A speech that savoured of doubting, which needed not, considering what an express promise they had from God. Therefore God saith, Num. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed me not.' They spake as if it were impossible to fetch water out of the rock, when God had assured them of the contrary; or at least such an abundance for them all as might be sufficient for all the multitude with their beasts and cattle. Or if their faith in God's power was clear, they might doubt of his mercy, that God would do such a thing for a murmuring and unthankful people.

3. There was scandal in it. In this they did not endeavour as they ought to set forth God's glory and power in the eyes of all the people. They should have charged the rock to yield forth water, and have given the people a good example of believing and obeying God's words in their greatest straits: ver. 12, 'Ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel;' that is, they did not publicly before the people show affiance in God, as became them. Therefore the words are to be noted: ver. 13, 'This is the water of Meribah, because the children of Israel strove with the Lord, and he was sanctified in them.' Though Moses and Aaron sanctified him not by faith and obedience, yet God sanctified himself.

[1.] Among the people, by giving water for their thirst. So it is said, Isa. xlvi. 21, 'When he led them through the deserts, he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed forth.' And as for them, so for their cattle; yea, the wild beasts of the wilderness had benefit by this mercy of God to his people. So Isa. xliii. 20, 'The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls; because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.'

[2.] He was sanctified in Moses and Aaron by punishing their disobedience. Thus it is taken, Ezek. xxxviii. 16, 'That the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes;' that is, by punishing them for their sins, for thereby God makes himself known to be a holy and powerful God. So Lev. x. 3, 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh unto me, and before all the people I will be glorified;' either by doing good to them that serve him aright, or by punishing them that transgress his precepts.

This is the history. Now observe it in three things—

First, The state and quality of the persons.

(1.) Moses was an eminent servant of the Lord, faithful in all his house, Deut. xxxiv. 5, 'So Moses the servant of the Lord died.' Though men be holy for the main, yet it doth not justify their failings or excuse their evil actions, as if they were not sins, nor hinder God's wrath from breaking out upon them temporally, though they be exempted from eternal condemnation; for God is no respecter of persons: 'Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner,' Prov. xi. 31. If the faults of the righteous, whom God loveth with a fatherly love in Christ, be not without chastisement, surely the wicked cannot escape. Their sins are not by design, but by surprise, not committed with a strong will, but out of frailty; and being committed, they are retracted by repentance. As Moses often mentioned this sin, and at his death maketh here an acknowledgment of God's justice against him for it, that his example might be a warning to all people not to disobey God's commandments or disbelieve his word. Yet God will be known to be a holy God by the notable inconveniences God's people often bring upon themselves here in the world. This truth is ushered in with an *Eccce*, 'Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth;' that is, observe the just and most wise government of our supreme Lord. Behold it! it is a certain truth, and deserveth our most solemn consideration. Many miseries we may have in our pilgrimage, for they are recompensed upon earth, and our chastisements are confined only to the present life.

(2.) He was a very meek man: Num. xii. 3, 'Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth.' This commendation the Spirit of God giveth to Moses, though by Moses' own pen. Now meekness is a virtue which keepeth a mean in anger and avenging ourselves when we are offended, wronged, and contemned; yet this meek man could be thus angry: Ps. cvi. 32, 'They angered him also at the waters of strife;' and ver. 33, 'They provoked his spirit.' In the holiest men there are relics of sin unmortified, and such weakness as they may readily fall into sin in the hour of temptation, and such sin as may cost them dear. Who would have thought his spirit should be so grieved and embittered? It is a dangerous sin to mingle our passions with God's public service, or to go about the work that he sets us to do with any carnal perturbation. Therefore we had need watch over ourselves.

(3.) He was a man greatly provoked, yet this doth not exempt him from blame and correction. Though men are to be pitied who are provoked to sin, yet the provocation excuses not the sinner. Moses had led them by God's direction to this place, and there they murmured against him when they wanted water, and to such a height that he was fain to take shelter in the sanctuary to avoid their fury. But this doth not excuse Moses: Ps. cvi. 32, 'They angered him at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes.' Their peevishness provoked him, yet because he commanded not his passion, he was punished with an exclusion out of Canaan. Aaron upon another occasion thought to excuse himself: Exod. xxxii. 22, 'Let not the anger of my Lord wax hot; thou knowest this people, that they are set on mischief,' &c. But Aaron's sin was so great that God was very

angry with him, and thought to have destroyed him, if Moses had not prayed for him; as you may see, Deut. ix. 20, 'The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.' Alas! these excuses are frivolous; it is along of others, and consider the great injuries I received. Every man is to answer for his own actions, and cannot be hurt by others without his own consent.

(4.) Both the persons were in public offices, the magistracy and the ministry, and the highest and most eminent of their rank; the one chief governor of Israel, the other high priest. God will spare none; yea, the higher they are, the greater are their offences, because of the influence of their example; and therefore their lot will be the harder; God will reckon with them when he passes by others. If any, the duty of whose place obliges them to be eminent in faith and holiness, miscarry, the provocation is the greater. As David's sin is aggravated by his office: 'I anointed thee king over Israel,' 2 Sam. xii. 7; and the priests are sorely threatened: Mal. ii. 7, 8, 'The priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way, ye have caused many to stumble at the law, ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.' Their negligence and errors are greater than others; they should be 'Examples to the flock,' 1 Peter v. 3.

Secondly, The nature of the crime.

(1.) It was a spiritual one. They did not sanctify God in obeying and depending upon his word before the eyes of the people. We only look to outward gross sins, but spiritual sins we take no notice of. There are sins *in genere moris*, and *in genere fidei*—sins against our moral duty, and sins against the rule of faith. There are *peccata majoris infamæ*, and *peccata majoris reatus*—sins of greater infamy, and more publicly hateful, and sins of greater guilt. Of the first sort are murder, adultery, theft, &c. Natural light puts a brand upon these: ἔργα σαρκὸς φανερά, Gal. v. 19, 'The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.' These smell rank in nature's nostrils, every one knoweth them to be great sins, and a child of God doth hardly fall into these sensual villanies. But there are other sins of a more spiritual nature, such as want of love to God, and faith in Christ, and hope of eternal life; or such necessary degrees of either as may enable us to honour him in the world. Few take notice of these, but God judgeth not as man judgeth; these may be more dangerous, as being not only against our duty, but our remedy. Few think distrustful thoughts, or distracting cares, or sinful fears, or immoderate sorrow are such grievous distempers as they afterwards prove to be, till they cherish them so long that they find the grievousness of the sin in the greatness of the punishment.

(2.) It was a sudden occasional passion, or fit of impatience. But by that we may give place to Satan, and grieve the Spirit of God: Eph. iv. 26, 27, 'Let not the sun go down on your wrath, neither give place to the devil;' and ver. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' Therefore we should watch against the sudden disorders of our passions and affections, otherwise we may do that in a moment the effects of which will not

be altogether blotted out by a long repentance. If we give way to excessive anger, we open a door to Satan, and give him an advantage to excite us to more evil, and the work of grace may be so darkened in us that we may long miss of comfort. If we once let the fire be kindled, it will presently send up a black smoke, whereby we dishonour our profession and provoke God. And whatever just cause of provocation we have, we are to overcome and bridle the exorbitancies of our passions; for though we be provoked, we must not provoke God.

(3.) The sin consisted in this, that the exemplariness of their faith and obedience was somewhat obscured. We should look to this, to have a faith that will not only save ourselves, but tend to the glory of God: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'We pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him.' We may not be guilty of other men's sins. We must have grace, not only for our own private benefit, that we may be saved, but for a more public good, that God may be glorified and others edified by our example. Many make a hard shift to go to heaven; they may have grace enough for their own salvation, but yet have not grace enough for the honour and exaltation of God in the world. Now it is a great fault, especially in the eminent, if they neglect the glorifying of God in the eyes of others. Noah was raised up in his age to condemn the world: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world;' that is, of their security and contempt of God's warnings. Thus Moses and Aaron should have condemned the Israelites by their own faith and ready obedience. And if we do not mind this in ourselves, we are the more culpable before God: 1 Peter ii. 12, 'Having your conversation honest among the gentiles that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation;' that is, in the day when he shall please to visit them by his saving grace, otherwise we are accountable for those sins we draw others into; and so a man may sin after he is dead, as his example outliveth him. In short, God is severe upon his scandalous children; though he may pardon their faults as to eternal punishment, yet they smart for it in this world.

Thirdly, The kind of the punishment. It was not exclusion out of heaven, but out of Canaan; they might not go into the promised land. This chastisement was grievous to Moses; he looked upon it as a notable inconvenience, and besought the Lord that he might go over: Deut. iii. 23, 25, 'I besought the Lord at that time, saying, I pray thee, let me go over and see that good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.' But, ver. 26, 'The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.' Nay, Deut. iv. 21, 'The Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.' Thus you see, with all his prayer and entreaty, Moses could not get the sentence reversed;

all the favour he could obtain was to get it mitigated. He was permitted to get to the top of Pisgah and see it with his eyes: Deut. iii. 27, 'Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes; but thou shalt not go over this Jordan.' This was not vouchsafed to Aaron, for he died at Mount Hor; but Moses brought the people to the very borders, and thence had a prospect of the land of Canaan on every side. Thus God may wear away an unthankful generation by sundry calamities, and some good men that live among them may be also taken off before God produce and bring forth his beautiful work, which is the sum of all their hopes and the fruit of their pain and sorrow. Only they have the privilege of believers, to see the promises afar off, and to 'be persuaded of them, and embrace them,' Heb. xi. 13, which was some comfort to Moses.

II. The general reasons. The sins of the professing or really godly are most provoking.

1. They sin against a nearer relation, which is more than if a stranger did these things. As David heightens the injuries done to him: Ps. lv. 12, 13, 'It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I could have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance.' So 2 Sam. xii. 11, 'I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.' By proportion we may judge in this case, for our relation is urged to quicken our duty: 1 Peter i. 14, 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.' And if we do otherwise, we increase our punishment: Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.' They were his peculiar and chosen people, and though he would not altogether spare others, yet he will certainly and more severely chastise them. So Deut. xxxii. 19, 'And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters;' that is, those that were his children by a gracious calling.

2. They sin against greater helps and advantages than others do. Such as have more knowledge of their duty: James iv. 17, 'To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' Experience of the evil of sin, they have tasted of the bitter waters, and felt more of the sting of sin in the conviction of their consciences, and are scarce yet whole of the old wounds: Josh. xxii. 17, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed to this day, though there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord?' Once more, they sin against a principle of life within, and so offer violence not only to the law of God but their own new nature: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God.'

3. They sin against greater obligations. Partly from the mercies of God, and so there is more unkindness and ingratitude in their sins: John vi. 67, 'Will ye go away also?' If the rotten multitude do desert him, yet will his disciples be prejudiced and weaken the confidence of others? The more proofs of God's love we have received, he taketh it the worse at our hands. So also there is an obligation, partly

from their own profession of a strict obedience: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.' God hath distinguished them from others, and therefore they should distinguish themselves by eminence of holiness and obedience: Neh. v. 9, 'Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?' Partly there is a special obligation from their covenant vow. Now a people in covenant with God are faster bound to him than others, therefore their transgressions are the more heinous; as adultery is a greater crime than single fornication, because of the marriage-covenant, and sacrilege than theft, because it is a devouring what is holy, or alienating what is dedicated to God. Now God will avenge the quarrel of his covenant: Lev. xxvi. 25, 'I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant.'

4. Because of the effects of their sins.

[1.] Partly as they dishonour God more than others: 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die;' though God hath pardoned his sin. The scandalous sins of professors give great advantage to the enemies of the truth, who will be sure to make a wicked and evil use thereof. Therefore we should walk the more circumspectly and holily, lest through our sides our profession itself be wounded as well as our souls, and the Lord's holy name be blasphemed. The honour of God is not so much concerned in the actions of the ungodly as it is in the example of great men, or of those that are eminently godly.

[2.] As they harden and justify the wicked: Ezek. xvi. 51, 'Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins, but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.' They do with the more pretence live in their sins, when they see the lapses and falls of the godly themselves.

5. There are special reasons why God should correct them for their sins here in the world.

[1.] To keep up the honour of his government, lest he should by forbearance seem to approve their sin, who are so near to him, and dignified with so many privileges. God is the impartial judge of the world, therefore he will do right; the disorders of his people are not passed by without some mark of his displeasure, for a warning to others, and that he may be known to be an holy and righteous God: Ezek. xxxviii. 23, 'Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord;' that is, by his judgments he will show that he is the ruler of the world, and ruleth with equity.

[2.] The other special reason is to show his love to his people; because they are his people, he will reclaim them, and will not altogether lose them, whereas he lets others walk in their own ways. That sharp afflictions may proceed from love appeareth from that of the apostle: Heb. xii. 6, 'Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.' And that it is to reclaim them appeareth by that, 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'But when we are judged, we

are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world; that being amended by our stripes, we may be kept from those punishments which shall light on the wicked to all eternity. So that it is an argument of his paternal love to his children and servants, when, to promote their repentance, he dealeth thus sharply with them, permitting them to be persecuted and troubled in the world.

Use 1. It informs us that God may be angry with his people. He was so with Moses: Deut. iv. 21, 'The Lord was angry with me for your sakes.' With David: 1 Chron. xxi. 7, 'And was displeased with this thing, therefore he smote Israel.' The Lord was displeased with David for numbering the people. So again, 2 Sam. xi. 27, 'But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.' God's anger is the offence taken, and his will to punish. Their sins are a great offence to him, a greater in some respects than the sins of others. If the ignorant world, who know him not, and are strangers to him and his grace, dishonour his name and transgress his laws, they do but according to their kind. He expecteth better things from you, whom he hath owned and adopted into his family, and embraced with the bowels of his tenderest mercies. Others run blindfold against God; you with open eyes strike at him, therefore it is a greater offence to him, and grief to his Spirit. His anger also implieth his will to punish. Though you be not vessels of wrath, as the reprobate, nor children of wrath, as all were in their unregenerate condition, yet you may be children under wrath. And it is a dreadful thing to be under God's anger; it is dreadful in itself, and it is dreadful in the effects. It may cost you dear here in this world; you may lose much of the comfort of your pilgrimage and sweetness of your service by your folly; for God will make you know 'what an evil and a bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord,' Jer. ii. 19, that the smart of the correction may teach you more wisdom.

2. It teacheth us a lesson of circumspection and watchfulness, that we fall not into God's displeasure. Good men may profane and pollute their best engagements for God with such excesses of passion as may be very provoking to him. Therefore christians had need always live with the yoke of Christ upon their necks, and his bridle in their mouths. Such a strict course may be tedious at first, but use and the pleasure of holiness maketh it easy. You are in danger, not only of obvious temptations, but sins that we little think of; therefore we need always to stand upon our guard, lest the faults of an hour may cost you many days' mourning. Well, then, let your eyes be in your head, and look right on: Prov. iv. 25, 26, 'Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee: ponder the path of thy feet, and let thy ways be established.' As he that would not stumble had need look to his way. Our end and our rule must always be before us. You are in apparent danger when your passions will not allow you season to deliberate, and reason to consider what you are a-doing; nay, sin already hath too much surprised the heart.

3. It teacheth us a lesson of self-reflection. When God denieth you many privileges and favours which are useful to your service, is it not because of some sin of yours which hath brought this evil upon you? Have you borne the name of God up and down in the world with

honour, and sanctified him in the eyes of the people, as you ought to do? Lam. iii. 39, 40, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord.' Surely we have no cause to complain of God, since all the evils we suffer we procure to ourselves; it is sin hath exposed us to manifold annoyances and afflictions. There is a cause, and a narrow search will show us for what cause, and then our affliction will not be so bitter as repentance will be sweet and lovely to us.

4. It teacheth us a lesson of patience and humble submission. We should look up to the hand of God in all punishments, corrections, and trials, as David did on Shimei's cursing: 2 Sam. xvi. 11, 'Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.' He looked upon God as the supreme cause, correcting him for his sins, against whom he was not to repine; not that Shimei had any command from God so to do, but was only permitted by his providence. We must not look to the stone, but to the hand that casts it; and this should breed humility and patience in us. If we had not provoked God to anger, to cast us into these troubles, they would never have come. Therefore we must accept the punishment of our iniquity: Micah vii. 9, 'I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.' When God is angry, we must humbly stoop under his afflicting hand without repining.

5. It teacheth us a lesson of prayer. We must not give over the cause as hopeless, for we have to do with a good God, who aimeth not at our ruin, but the righting of his own glory. Moses prayeth to reverse the sentence, but in this case God would not do that, to preserve the harmony of his providence; for Moses was only to lead them to the borders, but Joshua to bring them into Canaan, who was therein a type of Jesus Christ, who leadeth his people into the land of rest. But yet God gave him a sight, though not leave to enter; there is a mitigation. And David prayeth, Ps. vi. 1, 'O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.' It is a mercy, if the judgment break not out in all extremity against us.

6. It teaches us a lesson of thankfulness, because eternal mercies are sure; whatever liberty God taketh in the disposal of our temporal interests, we may still bless God for Christ and heaven. Ay! you will say, if we could do so. I answer—Where God giveth a penitent and submissive spirit, it is a sign we shall not be condemned with the world.
