

must deny your comforts, and your estate. Men will venture much for their lusts and for their sensuality ; there must be a great deal of charge to feed this humour, to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh ; it is costly to be an epicure. Worldliness wastes the spirits, racks the brain. For ambition, how many hazards do men run for their greatness in the world ? how many men sacrifice their lives upon the point of honour, for revenge, and for a little vainglory ! Now, if a man will take pains to go to hell, shall he not take pains to go to heaven ? When men will be at such costs for lusts as to deny conscience and slight many of the comforts of the present world for lust's sake, shall we take no pains and exercise no self-denial for heaven ?

[3.] If we be at a little labour it will not be in vain in the Lord : 1 Cor. xv. 58, ' Be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' Whether you consider your vales or wages, your labour is not in vain. Your vales : Christ's servants have a great deal of comfort and sweetness : Prov. iii. 17, ' Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' And for the world to come there is a full and sure reward ; therefore do not stick at a little pains ; though it be difficult, yet remember it is for salvation.

4. Let us look to our own selves ; how is it with us ? are we in the way to hell or heaven ? Let us look to our own standing ; do we leave the boat to the stream ? do we give up ourselves to the sway of our corrupt and carnal affections ? or else do we row against the stream and current of flesh and blood ? It is no easy matter to be saved. I do not ask now what will become of those that never minded salvation, that never busied their thoughts about it, but even in effect say, Let them take heaven that list ; but I ask, what will become of those slothful perfunctory christians that count a little slight and formal religion enough, which is without any life, alacrity, and power ? Will this do the deed ? Such will fall short of heaven.

## SERMON XIV.

*And Jesus, looking upon them, saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God ; for with God all things are possible.*—MARK x. 27.

WE have seen the disciples' wonder returning. Christ, that is never wanting to his in their trouble and astonishment, graciously looketh upon them, and in words full of comfort giveth a solution of that which was such a riddle to them, ' And Jesus, looking upon them, saith,' &c. Here we have—

1. Christ's gesture, ' Jesus looked upon them.'

2. Christ's answer, by a distinction how it is impossible and how not. In the first part of the distinction there is a concession, ' That with men it is impossible.' In the second branch there is a correction, ' But not with God.' This latter branch is confirmed by a general reason, ' For with God all things are possible.' In this text three

things are asserted—(1.) The impotency of nature ; (2.) The sovereign efficacy of grace ; (3.) The general truth upon which it is grounded, and that is the omnipotency of God. Accordingly the points are three—

1. That it is impossible for mere man by his own natural strength to get to heaven.

2. Men that are discouraged with the sense of their own impotency should consider the power of God.

3. That this power of God is all-sufficient, and can do all things.

*Doct.* 1. That it is impossible for mere man by his own natural strength to get to heaven.

Two things will evidence that—

1. There is *legalis exclusio* ; we are all excluded by the sentence of God's law, and therefore it is impossible for any mere man to get to heaven. The law knows no way of justifying a sinner, but only of saving a creature holy and innocent ; and if we be not holy and innocent, there is a sentence in force against us. That scripture expresses the tenor of the law : Gal. iii. 10, ' For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse ; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' An innocent nature is presupposed, for the person must *continue*, it doth not say *now begin*. The law doth not treat with man as lapsed or fallen, or as having already broken with God, but as in a good and sound estate ; and therefore, since by the fall we are sinners, we are also under the curse by nature : Eph. ii. 3, ' And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others ;' liable to the stroke of God's vindictive wrath. Well, now, ' with man it is impossible.' God hath placed a cherub with a flaming sword that keeps the passage into paradise. Heaven's gates are shut against us now. No mere man can appease an angry God, or redeem his soul from the curse that keeps him out of heaven. We are weak and without strength : Rom. v. 6, ' For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.' Weakness or without strength there beareth the same sense with unworthiness. We are unable to perform the work or duty through the curse of the first covenant, and when we were altogether sinful and unworthy, then Christ died for us, and therefore it is impossible in regard of his legal exclusion ; for suppose we could obey perfectly for the future, yet the paying of new debts doth not quit old scores. We are without strength, because we cannot expiate former transgressions, and so the law is become impossible through the weakness of our flesh : Rom. viii. 3, ' For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.'

2. There is *evangelica difficultas* ; there are difficulties by the gospel which mere man cannot overcome. Though the gospel giveth hopes of entrance into heaven, or reversing the strict conditions of the law, yet upon such terms as we must be beholden to grace for them. Christ, that requires the conditions of the gospel, must also give them to us : Acts v. 31, ' Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' He is not only a prince and lawgiver, but also a saviour, or the author and fountain of grace. He doth not only give the privilege, remission ;

but he gives the condition, repentance. If you conceive of Christ that he doth give the privilege, and require the conditions, and no more, you legalise Christ, as the Samaritans had a temple without an ark and a mercy-seat; so to speak of a law without grace, or if you separate the law of the gospel from the grace of the gospel, it is impossible.

Why is it thus impossible with man upon gospel terms? The legal impossibility all will acknowledge, but whence is this evangelical difficulty? It ariseth from three things—there is *vitiosa contrarietas*, a corrupt nature; there are *externa impedimenta*, many outward snares; and there is *inimica oppositio*, a great deal of enmity and opposition; therefore with man it is impossible.

[1.] There is *vitiosa contrarietas*, a corrupt nature, inclined to evil and averse to good: Gen. vi. 5, ‘God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’ Man hath such a heart that, if left to itself, will always be minting evil thoughts and evil desires and carnal and inordinate motions. And as the heart of man is prone to evil, so it is averse to what is good, and so averse that it cannot do any of the great duties that God hath required of him. Look upon this averseness and impotency with respect to duties; he cannot know, believe, nor obey. He cannot know: 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.’ And he cannot believe: John vi. 44, ‘No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him;’ it is not said, he *doth not*, but he *cannot*. And he cannot obey: Rom. viii. 7, ‘The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.’ And consider this impotency with respect to our thoughts, words, and deeds. He cannot think a good thought: 2 Cor. iii. 5, ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves.’ He cannot speak a good word: Mat. xii. 34, ‘How can ye, being evil, speak good things?’ He cannot do any good thing: John xv. 5, ‘Without me ye can do nothing.’ He doth not say, *nihil magnum*, you can do no great thing, you cannot acquit yourselves in some eminent temptation with honour, or in some notable duty; but *nihil*, you can do nothing without me. Well, then, when we cannot know, nor believe, nor obey, nor think, nor speak, not do anything without grace, surely it is impossible man of himself should perform the conditions of the gospel; he is wholly impotent, and unable to help himself.

[2.] There are *externa impedimenta*, outward impediments. Man is impotent and corrupt naturally, and his corruption is fed and strengthened by worldly things, and so his outward condition proves a snare to him: 1 John ii. 16, ‘All that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.’ Lust or distempered appetite finds an answerable diet. There are sensible objects which to our souls as thus constituted prove shrewd and dangerous temptations and snares. If we will find the lust, the world will afford us the object. For ‘the lusts of the flesh,’ there are pleasures and carnal delights to beset our souls, to inveigle

and entice us from the strictness and severity of the christian profession. For 'the lusts of the eye' there are riches and all kinds of profits. For 'pride of life' there are dignities, and superiorities, and popular acclamations, and all sorts of preferments, or anything men are naturally proud of; so that a poor creature living in the midst of so many snares and temptations, may sadly cry out, as Bernard doth, Oh, woe is me! here are snares and temptations, and there is a sensual nature in us that is strongly drawn forth by all that is about us. It is true, riches, pleasures, and honours were not snares in their original institution or God's intention, but they prove so through our corrupt affection. God ordained them as *miseriæ necessitatibus solatia*, as Jerome tells us, to be helps and comforts in our mortal condition; but through the strong affection we bear to them they prove snares: 2 Peter i. 4, 'The corruptions that are in the world through lust.' It is from unmortified corruption and lustings after them. Here, then, is that which increaseth the difficulty; these sensible objects to which we have a great inclination by nature, and which are continually present with us, do enchant and divert the heart from God and heavenly things, so that we either sin in them or for them. In the use of them, or for the getting and keeping of them, we offend God many times, and cross the rule that is given unto us; so that besides the natural impotency that is in us to all things spiritual, the soul is further depraved and corrupted by evil habits, or particular inclinations to any of these sensible objects. This is a superadded impediment to our condition by nature, as a crooked stick by growing becomes more difficult to be made straight. It is impossible for any mere man to receive the things of the Spirit, but much more for one that is wedded to any of these sensible things; for here Christ puts the impossibility upon a carnal rich man, because he hath so much of the world to divert his heart from God and true happiness. There are degrees of impossibilities; as some have fewer lets and impediments, and some have more, so it is more or less impossible, as they need more or less of God's special and extraordinary grace. For let us consider any dispositions to these sensible objects. Let us consider any of the dispositions to these sensible things, be it riches, 'the lusts of the eye,' so he calls covetousness, or an inclination to riches, for by the eye the heart is wounded, and so the difficulty of salvation is increased. When once men set up this as their scope, and make it their business to be rich and great in the world, 'They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,' 1 Tim. vi. 9. Or be it an inclination to honour, either to popularity or esteem of the people; or to ambition, or an inordinate desire of preferment by the magistrates and potentates of the world, John v. 44, 'How can ye believe that receive honour one of another?' it makes the impotency the greater. Or if it be an inclination to pleasures, 'Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 4. But mostly doth our Lord here put the difficulty upon riches. Why? Because that is a complicate temptation, and that is the fuel of pleasure, and the means by which we get to honours and greatness in the world; therefore here is the greater difficulty for a rich man in his corrupt estate to enter into the kingdom of God.

[3.] There is *inimica oppositio* if we would go to heaven, there

are enemies to oppose. The devil: 1 Peter v. 8, 'Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' And wicked men: John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you;' and 'Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. iii. 12. But because the great opposition is from Satan, therefore I shall insist upon Eph. vi. 12, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' 'There is a more terrible and dangerous party against us than bodily and human power. Indeed we have bodily enemies, and they are great lets and great discouragements in the way of salvation, when the Lord lets loose their hands against us. These are but Satan's auxiliary forces whom he stirs up and employs; but the principal part of our conflict and wrestling is against devils and damned angels, enemies of great power and strength and influence upon the rulers of the darkness of this world; they have a mighty power upon the ignorant, carnal, and blind part of the world, and it is with these we contend and wrestle about the things which concern the honour of God, and the eternal welfare of our souls. Now this terrible opposition, how soon will it bear down a poor creature that stands merely by his own strength! Alas! set creature against creature, and Satan is too hard for us; he exceeds us in the rank of beings, and so we are no match for the devil. Our adversary is of a spiritual, immaterial substance, and so invisible both in his nature and approaches, and doth often reach us a deadly blow before we know it is he, and in the very simplicity of our hearts we run into the snare. And again, he is so restless in his assaults, so unwearied in his motions: 1 Peter v. 8, 'Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' The best christian will be surprised if there be not a greater than he to stand by him and for him. He is either weakening our comforts, or enticing us to sin, or making us weary of the ways of God. If he cannot pervert us, and draw us by some gross sin to dishonour God, he ceaseth not to vex us, and make our heavenly course uncomfortable to us. The devil never ceases to pursue his designs, but observes all our motions, all the postures of our spirits; when we are merry and when we are angry, when we are laughing and when we are mourning. He sees how the tree leans, and then joins his force to run us down. And he is of great power, one that can make terrible opposition, of great authority and influence over the carnal world, of great cunning and dexterity in setting our sins a-work. Certainly unless we 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,' there is no standing, Eph. vi. 10-12, compared.

But why hath God left it impossible to man, when he hath offered hopes by the new covenant?

(1.) That all the glory of the good that is in us may redound unto his grace: Eph. i. 6, 'To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.' That is God's end in the new covenant, that we might ever admire and highly esteem his glorious grace. And therefore it is not only grace that opens the door, that removes the flaming sword that is against us, that takes away the curse

of God, but in the whole business of salvation all is to be ascribed to grace: 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy,' Rom. ix. 16. The words *willeth* and *runneth* are considerable. The Lord, that brings us into this state, keeps us in this state.

(2) To keep the creature in a constant dependence upon him, and that he might often hear from us. As long as a man is sufficient to himself, he never comes to God: Jer. ii. 31, 'We are lords, and will no more come unto thee.' If a man had the dominion over his own spirit, and were sufficient to himself, God would never hear from him. The prodigal went away from his father when he had his portion in his own hands and he never thought of returning till he had spent all and began to be in want, Luke xv. 14. Thus should we do with God. Prayer and all trading with heaven would cease if we were sufficient of ourselves as to do anything; and therefore with man it is impossible.

Use 1. Take heed that you do not make a wrong use of this impossibility, namely, so as to be discouraged and throw off all, as if there were no hope. God hath left it so as that we may despair of our own strength, but not of his help. We should not be discouraged, since he worketh in us what he requireth of us.

1. God can overcome all this difficulty. He that made the heart is above it, and can frame it to himself. Evangelical difficulty lies in three things—the corruption of our nature, outward impediments, and Satan's opposition. Now the scripture represents God as able to do all for us. He can change our hearts, sanctify our condition, and help us to vanquish our temptations.

[1.] He can change our hearts by regeneration. Alas! we cannot change our natures or turn ourselves to God, and therefore we are apt to be cast down when we look upon God's holy ways and the strength of our own lusts. But God is able to change those hearts of ours, and take away their reluctancy; not by making a violent impression, as we force a stone upward, but by imprinting in our hearts the habits of grace, whereby we are carried out willingly in the ways of God, and so our business becomes easy: Titus iii. 4, 'According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;' 'No man can come unto me except the Father which hath sent me draw him,' John vi. 44; 'Draw me, and we will run after thee,' Cant. i. 4. He puts forth his mighty power upon the heart, and changeth the bent of our souls, and so we come in.

[2.] God can sanctify our condition, that it shall not be a snare. Christians, whatever you think of it, it is not easy to keep yourselves unspotted from the world, to live in the midst of so many temptations and to carry on an equal, holy, heavenly frame of heart, such as the apostle mentions, 1 Cor. vii. 29-31, 'It remains that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it.' This is our duty; but how shall we do to get such a weaned heart? With man it is impossible but not with God. He can give a rich man such grace as to condemn the world, to lay up treasures in heaven, and upon religious reasons to leave all for Christ's

sake. God taught Paul this holy weanedness: Phil. iv. 12, 'I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' And he can teach it you if you will wait upon him. Our own natural spirits indeed carrieth us quite another way: James iv. 5, 6, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy, but he giveth more grace.' Our natural spirit is all for temporal things; it envies the greatness of others, it designs for ourselves; but when lusts rage, he can bridle them; the Lord is able to give us a holy weanedness and moderation of our desires in the midst of all those baits and snares that we are compassed about withal.

[3.] To conquer temptations. It is God that rescues the prey, and plucked us at first by a strong hand out of Satan's power: Luke xi. 21, 22, 'When the strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.' God can bind Satan, and dispossess him, and 'recover you out of the snares of the devil, wherein you are taken captive by him at his will,' 2 Tim. ii. 26. And when we are once in a state of grace, he can preserve you in despite of men and devils. The world assaults the children of God with great force and power, and the devil is in the design; but, saith the apostle, 'Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world,' John iv. 4. God is greater in counsel, greater in strength, greater in his providence and watchfulness for the good of his people. Till this divine power interpose it can never be.

[4.] We have no reason to doubt of his will, for he hath promised to take away the heart of stone: Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.' There is nothing within the compass of our christian calling of which we have not a promise in the covenant. The precept and the promise go hand-in-hand; therefore the promise will be made good, and so we have no reason to despair, but humbly wait upon God in the use of means till these promises be accomplished.

2. What use shall we make of it then? Go to God for this power, and give God all the glory of any saving grace wrought in us by this power.

[1.] Go to God for this power when you are sensible of your impotency. In vain do we talk of power to men that are not sensible of weakness, and will not so much as essay whether they have power or no: 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' When creatures are helpless and shiftless, God takes pity upon them; therefore when you have been tugging and wrestling in the business of salvation, and it doth not come on kindly, but you find your weakness, then you may come to God for his power. Bewail your impotency, and say, as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'Lord, we have no might, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee;' or rather as Ephraim, Jer. xxxi. 18, 'Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned.' God's chastisement revived the sense of his duty, and think-

ing of his duty made him feel his impotency, and feeling his impotency that made him groan to God, and wait for his power. Oh ! it is well when practical experience convinceth us of our weakness and necessities, and our weakness and necessities lead us to the promises, and the promises to Christ, in whom they are 'Yea and amen ;' and Christ to God as the fountain of grace, and then we rest upon the power of God. And therefore, since it is impossible with man, go to God, and say, Lord, I confess the debt, I acknowledge my impotency, but thou hast forbidden me to despair, therefore I come to thee ; give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.

[2.] If it be impossible with men, let God have all the glory of any saving grace wrought in thee. Mark this, because there is a deceit. God must not only have some glory, but all the glory, for in the new covenant there is no glorying but in the Lord. All will acknowledge and count it a piece of religious manners to speak of some help of grace, but they do not give it its due praise. The pharisee could say, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men,' Luke xviii. 11. As, for instance, if a man should say, It is all from God indeed, but only in a Pelagian sense, as he is *author nature*, the author of nature, as he created us at first with a rational soul, and gave us an understanding and will, whereby he enableth us freely to choose that which is good ; here is God's power acknowledged, but at too remote a distance. The very heathens would acknowledge grace, as sacrilegious as they were in robbing God of his due. *Quod vivamus*, that we live, and that we had reasonable natures, that was the gift of the gods ; but *quod bene vivamus*, that we live well, that is of ourselves. This confounds nature and grace ; we sacrifice the wax to God, and keep the honey to ourselves. Again, we should acknowledge God not only in the grace of external revelation, revealing the object, that God hath given us an excellent religion, there is his grace, but in working upon the faculty. Here God is acknowledged, but at too low a rate, for we need not only the sunlight, but eyes : Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of your understanding being opened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' Or if we will go further, and acknowledge internal grace is necessary, but not absolutely necessary, but only for facilitation, to do it the more easily, for the work is very difficult if mere man were left to himself ; here God's power is acknowledged, but not enough ; grace is absolutely necessary, not as a horse to a journey, but as legs and feet. Again, if we should acknowledge it as absolutely necessary for God to excite and move us, but give the main stroke to our own will, this is not praise high enough ; it is God inclines the heart, it is God that gives us the will, the beginning and ending of all is from him ; with man it is impossible, therefore God must have all the glory.

*Doct. 2.* Those that have a deep sense of their sinful impotency and carnal distempers should seriously consider and encourage themselves by the sovereign power of God's grace.

Of the power of God as generally considered I shall speak by and by. Now I shall speak of it as it worketh in a way of grace, to bring us into a state of grace, and to preserve us therein.

1. The scripture speaks of this power that bringeth us into a state



of grace: Eph. i. 19, 'And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power.' Mark, there is a mighty glorious power that is seen in converting a sinner, and turning him from sin to holiness, even greater than the power by which God made the world. When God made the world, as there was nothing to help, so there was nothing to hinder; but such is the perverseness of man's nature within, such is the opposition from without, and so great an enemy is Satan, that nothing less than God's powerful grace can begin such a saving work in them: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.' There is a divine power that gives us life, or a gracious spirit within, and a divine power that helps us to walk in a course of godliness without. So Rom. xi. 23, 'God is able to graff them in again.' The Jews are of all people most obstinate and averse from God; they have no natural goodness of disposition in them; they 'please not God, and are contrary to all men;' and shall the Jews be converted? Yes; 'for God is able to graff them in again,' and bring them into a state of grace.

2. This power of grace is seen in preserving us in a state of grace, and carrying on this work in despite of men and devils, till grace be crowned in glory. Alas! if God did never so much for us at first, yet if he did not keep us, we should be made a prey, and be shipwrecked in the haven's mouth; therefore from first to last the power of God is seen—

[1.] In defending the habit of grace that is begun in the soul. When the apostle had told us that God 'of his abundant mercy had begotten us again unto a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3, presently he saith, ver. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' First we are begotten, then kept, heaven is kept for us, and we are kept for it; first the power of grace is a quickening power, and then a preserving power, defending the work God hath begun in us.

[2.] God actuates and quickens our graces in us: 'It is God which worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13, inspiring and breathing holy motions into us: 'Awake, O north wind; come, O south wind; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow forth,' Cant. iv. 16. And then strengthening those graces, and defending them in all assaults and temptations, and causing us to grow: Col. i. 11, 'According to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness;' and Eph. iii. 16, 'That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.' And thus he continueth to do till they be perfected and completely glorified. Thus the Lord puts forth his power in defending, quickening, and increasing the grace that he hath wrought in us. We have seen there is a power put forth in a way of grace.

Now this should be considered by them that have a deep sense of their impotency and carnal distempers, for these reasons—

(1.) Because it is a great relief and prop to the soul. Oh! what cannot the working of this mighty power do for us! It exceedeth all the contrary power, whether in sin, the world, or the devil, and so answers our doubts and fears. But you will say, How is the power of

God such a relief to the soul? We can easily grant that God is able, but how shall we know that he will put forth this mighty power for us? I answer—(1.) In agonies of conscience; it is not the fear of hell only that troubles us, but our rooted distempers. Indeed, fears of hell awaken us, but when we come to see our inveterate and rooted carnal distempers, this troubles us. A poor soul that is anything far gone in this preparative work cries out, It is impossible this blind heart of mine should ever be enlightened, this vain mind be made serious, this hard heart be softened, these bewitching lusts renounced. It is the difficulty of parting with sin troubleth the conscience; therefore it is a relief to represent God as able. So in the midst of assaults and temptations, when we are dangerously beset, and fear we shall never be able to hold out, think of the power of God: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;' Jude 24, 'Unto him that is able to keep you from falling.' Our great trouble is for want of power. (2.) Again, it must needs be a relief to the soul, because if we be persuaded of his power it gives us some hope of his will also; so that we may go to God, and say as the leper, Mat. viii. 2, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' Look, as beggars, if they see an ordinary man pass by, they do not use much clamour and importunity with him, but if they see a man well habited and well attended, they will follow after him, and plead hard for relief, and say, Sir, it is in the power of your hands to help us; so it doth encourage us to consider God is thus able, and can easily help, and do this for us. Nay (3.) God's power is engaged by promise, and therefore in many cases we may reason he is able to keep us, and therefore he will: Rom. xiv. 4, 'He shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand;' and Rom. xi. 23, 'They shall be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.' The two pillars of the temple were called Jachin and Boaz, strength and stability; he hath strength, and therefore he will establish, for he hath power enough to make good his word.

(2.) Difficulties are left for this very end, to drive us to the throne of grace, that we may set the power of God a-work, that where man leaves off, there God may begin, and when the creature hath spent its allowance, the Creator may show forth his strength. Look, as in the outward case, God promiseth to deliver his people, 'when he seeth that their power is gone,' Deut xxxii. 26, so in the inward case, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,' Isa. xl. 29.

Use 1. Let this support us in all the difficulties that we meet with in our way to heaven. When we are at a loss, God is not at a loss: Zech. viii. 6, 'If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in my eyes, saith the Lord.' God's power is not to be measured by our thoughts and by our scantling. Things may seem strange to us, but God can easily effect them. He that bringeth forth in the spring such beautiful flowers out of the earth, which looked with such a horrid and dismal face in the winter, what cannot he work in our souls? This is a great support to a fainting soul; it is easy with God to do what we count impossible. A stranger cannot charm a mastiff dog, when the master

of the house can with a word. The shepherd can call off the dog from the flock; so the Lord can easily rebuke Satan, when he finds him most violent, and he can subdue and quell the strongest lust.

2. When we are sensible of our weakness, let us observe the laws God hath set to the creatures. God will be attended upon, and waited for in the use of means. We must come to the throne of grace, and therefore our Lord, when he teacheth us to pray, he saith, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' We must come to God, if we would have his power exerted; and God will be believed in, and have his power rested upon and applied: Mark xv. 28, 'O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt;' John xi. 40, 'If thou wilt believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God;' that is, his power. If in desperate exigences we would have the power of God put forth, God must be sought to, and rested upon; and you must abstain from all sin. Sampson received strength no longer from God than he kept the law of his profession. When we entangle ourselves, and wilfully run into sin, and turn away from God, we discharge God from looking after us.

3. Observe what experience you have of the power of his grace; have you found it working in you? Mere reading and hearing will not evidence this truth so much as experience, that there is power put forth in a gracious way. Alas! otherwise we shall but speak of it as strangers to it, with cold notions; therefore can you say, 'I can do all things through Christ strengthening me?' Phil. iv. 13. And are you 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?' Eph. vi. 10. Have you learned this holy art of conquering your distempers and temptations by the power of God?

## SERMON XV.

*With God all things are possible.*—MARK X. 27.

DOCT. 3. I come to the general truth upon which this is grounded, that God is omnipotent, and can do all things. This I shall prove, explain, apply.

*First*, I shall prove by scripture and by reason.

1. By scripture, because it is an article of faith, and the scriptures that concern this point may be ranked thus: You will find the question propounded, Gen. xviii. 14, 'Is anything too hard for the Lord?' and this answered, Jer. xxxii. 17, 'There is nothing too hard for God.' The affirmative is in the text; and Mat. xix. 26, 'With God all things are possible;' and the negative, which binds it the more strongly, is in Luke i. 37, 'With God nothing shall be impossible.' The general is in the text, 'All things are possible with God;' and the particular is in Job xlii. 2, 'I know that thou canst do everything.' So that the power of God is not only propounded in the lump, but particularly parcelled out. Certainly God is almighty.

2. I shall prove it by reason.

[1.] The creation of the world shows it. The apostle tells us, Rom.

1. 20, 'That the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.' If you will know what God is, look upon his creatures. Every creature that hath passed his hand hath some prints and some stamp upon it, that may discover God, his godhead, and his power; that is the most visible thing seen in the creation. His wisdom and goodness is seen in the creation, but his power lies upward; and the most natural notion that we have of God is God Almighty. God made all the things that are seen, and more than are seen. He that made all things is omnipotent, and can do whatever is possible to be done. Creatures only can do what is possible to be done in their own kind. A man is one kind of creature, an angel is another; both have their essence limited. Man can do things belonging to a man, an angel can do all things belonging to an angel; but God made all things, and therefore he can do all things. In short, 'He that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,' Isa. xl. 22, he that handles the great ocean as a child newly come out of the womb, he that 'appointed the clouds a garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it,' Job xxxviii. 8, 9, 'He that hangs the earth upon nothing,' Job xxvi. 7, What cannot he do? The earth, that vast and ponderous body, has nothing to support it but the fluid air, that will not so much as support a pin or feather. It hangs like a ball in the midst of the heavens; where are the pillars and props that sustain this mighty mass? It is upheld by nothing but the power of God. And for the manner of making, how did he make all things? By his word. This great builder needed no instruments and tools: Heb. xi. 10, 'Whose builder and maker is God;' he commanded, and they were created,' Ps. xlviii. 5. What more easy than a word? One asks what is become of the tools and engines wherewith God made the world? Tully brings in a philosopher disputing against the creation of the world: With what spade did God dig the sea? where was the trowel wherewith he arched the heavens? and the line and plummet by which he laid forth the foundations of the earth? There was nothing but his word that brought all things out of the womb of nothing. This is the omnipotent, the glorious God, that can do all things. And then, *ex parte termini*, he brought all things out of nothing, which philosophers could not so much as conceive how it should be done. What a large stride and gap is there between being and not being! He that out of mere nothing brought forth all this world, certainly nothing can be too hard for him. A man cannot work without materials and preparations to his work, but God works when he hath nothing to work upon. As long as the creatures endure, as long as heaven and earth stands, which is a monument of God's power, we need not doubt of his all-sufficiency; and therefore in difficult and hazardous cases the scripture refers us to God as a creator: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.' Why as unto a creator? At that time they carried their lives in their hands; they had nothing to subsist upon, no visible interests to defend them. Well, go on cheerfully in well-doing, and commit yourselves to him that can work all things out of nothing;

your souls, that is your lives; put your lives into the Creator's hands. There may be something of love in the expression, He that created you will take care of you, and there is also something of power implied; they had but only from day to day, and then he bids them trust in God as a creator. So Ps. cxxiv. 8, 'Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.' Whilst you see heaven and earth, doubt not of God. He hath not lost nor spent his power. He that made heaven and earth is as ready and as able to work as he did at first. Though a potter (it is Basil's similitude) make a thousand vessels, his art is not lessened by the making, but increased rather; so whatever God doth, he doth not spend by giving; his power is the same, and his word is as mighty as ever: 'He spoke, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast;' Ps. xxxiii. 9, and that when there was nothing to work on. The will and the word of God, what mighty things can they do! He can do the greatest things without any visible means; things are done in the world, and nobody can tell how or by what. So the apostle tells us that he still acts according to his mighty power, which he wrought in the creation: 1 Cor. i. 28, 'God hath chosen τὰ μὴ ὄντα, things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.' God will ever triumph over human improbabilities, and will have no flesh to despair because of the smallness of the means, or to glory in his sight because of the greatness of them; for he doth all things, and that by his mighty power: Rom. iv. 17, his creating power is there again alluded to, 'He calleth those things that are not as though they were.' As when God created the world, he spoke light out of darkness; and so still when he finds nothing to work upon he 'calls things that are not as though they were;' speaking of fulfilling his promises to Abraham. So he works grace in the hearts of his people according to his creating power: 2 Cor. iv. 6, 'For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' So that nature well considered is a great help to grace; when we consider the creation, and busy our thoughts therein, it helps us more to enlarge the power of God in our apprehensions.

[2.] As creation, so providence shows it. Take it either for God's external or internal providence.

(1.) His external providence, preserving all things in their proper place, and for their proper use: Heb. i. 3, 'He upholdeth all things by the word of his power.' All things that are in the world are held up by God's hand; they do not subsist by their own nature so much as by divine manutency: 'He upholds all things.' It is an allusion to a weighty body that is held up by the hand of man, which if loosened, it falls to the ground; so the creature would fall to nothing if not kept up by God. Now what an almighty grasp hath he that holds up all things! He that feedeth so many mouths with the opening the hand of his bounty: Ps. cxlv. 15, 16, 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season: thou openest thy hands, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;' he that sustains and guides so many creatures, that preserves the confederacies of nature, that sets bounds to the sea, and makes decrees for the waves to obey, beyond which they shall not pass: Jer. v. 22, 'Which have placed

the sand for the bounds of the sea. by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it ; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail ; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it ;' he that holds the winds in his fist, is not he mighty and strong ? And therefore, if God should but loosen his hand, the world would soon fall into confusion and nothing. Thus his sustaining and preserving all things speaks him an all-powerful God.

(2.) His internal providence. The providence of God is chiefly seen in his power over the spirits of men that are voluntary agents. He hath such a power over them that they are not masters of their own affections and dispositions, but act contrary many times to their intended purposes : Prov. xxi. 1, 'The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of waters ; he turneth it whither soever he will.' Look, as a man by cutting a channel draws the water this way or that way, hither and thither, so doth God move the hearts of all men in the world, nay, even of kings and princes : Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' Strange thing that God can put a bridle upon the spirits of men, and they shall be at peace with him whom they hated ; their hearts are turned many times to what formerly they resolved against. Esau is an instance ; he had vowed Jacob's death, and meets him with purpose to destroy him, but when God brings them together, Esau falls embracing of Jacob : Gen. xxxiii. 4, 'And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' Egypt dismissed Israel with jewels. Balaam comes to curse, and he falls a blessing Israel. This bridling, turning, changing the hearts of men, it is a notable discovery of God's omnipotency. Look, as there is more power seen in governing a skittish horse than in rolling a stone, so in ruling those beings which have a principle of resistance doth the Lord show forth his power. Angels, men, and devils can do nothing but as God will, and as God gives them leave. The devils are fain to ask Christ's leave to enter into the herd of swine, Mat. viii. 31 ; and therefore how may the flock of Christ's sheep rest secure under the power of his providence, when those damned spirits are held in by the irresistible providence of God that they can do nothing but what God will ! As Tertullian said, If the bristles of swine be numbered, much more are the hairs of the saints. God hath such a mighty power, that not a creature can be troubled without his leave, even by those spirits that are most opposite to him ; so that his power over the affections and hearts of men shows he is a great and mighty God.

[3.] That God is almighty appears by the strength that is in creatures, which is an effect and shadow of the power of God. All the power that is in creatures is from God, and he wastes not by giving as we do. That expression suits to this case ; God took from the spirit of Moses, and put it upon the elders, and yet Moses had not the less because of their participation. We cannot communicate to others but we lessen ourselves, but God remaineth in an infinite fulness ; and therefore, if he hath given power to creatures, he hath more power himself. Now there is great power in creatures : Job xli. 8, Job tells us of great whales that have bones as brass, and strong as pieces of iron ; and David tells us of 'angels that excel in strength,' Ps.

xxxxiii. 20, so that one of them slew a hundred fourscore and five thousand in one night in Sennacherib's host. And if there be such strength in creatures, what is there in God from whom they have it? for nothing is in the effect but what was first in the cause.

*Secondly*, Let me come to explain this power of God by three distinctions—

1. God's power is twofold—either absolute or actual. (1.) His absolute power is that by which he can do that which he never will do. This is spoken of Mat. xxvi. 53, 'Thinkest thou not that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' Mat. iii. 9, 'God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham;' he can do more than ever he did or will do. He can do not only what men and angels conceive can be done, but what he himself conceiveth can be done. (2.) His actual power is that by which he doth whatever he will: Ps. cxv. 3, 'Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth;' and Ps. cxxxv. 6, 'Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.' Never shall anything be done but what God wills, and what God wills shall surely come to pass; which is a notable support in all accidents.

2. God's power is ordinary and extraordinary. (1.) Ordinary is that which is according to the course of second causes and law of nature, when he preserves the creatures, and works by them according to the order which he himself hath established: Ps. cxix. 91, 'They continue this day according to thine ordinance, for all are thy servants.' All the creatures, sun, moon, and stars, do keep the track and path which God hath set unto them, and God preserves the beings of all things, and keeps the 'covenant of night and day,' as it is called in the prophet. (2.) There is God's extraordinary power, by which he can suspend the whole course of nature, as he hath done sometimes upon eminent occasions; as when the sun stood still in the valley of Ajalom, Josh. x. 12, 13, or when the sun went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, 2 Kings xx. 11; his interdicting the Red Sea that it should not flow, Exod. xiv. 21, 22; his causing iron, which is a heavy body, to swim upon the top of the water at the prayer of Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 6; his suspending the burning of the fire when the three children were in the furnace, Dan. iii. 27, his shutting the mouths of the hungry lions when Daniel was in the den with them, Dan. vi. 22; his making the ravens, which are by nature birds of prey, to be caterers to Elijah, 1 Kings xvii. 6.

3. *Distinction.* There are *impossibilia naturæ*, and *impossibilia natura*, things impossible to nature, and things impossible by nature. Things impossible to nature God can do, but not things impossible by nature; he will do things above nature, and besides it, but nothing against it. Things impossible by nature are such as either respect the agent or the object. (1.) With respect to the agent, that which is repugnant to his own essential perfection. Thus God cannot lie: Titus i. 2, 'Which God, that cannot lie, hath promised;' Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong consolation.' God cannot deny himself: 2 Tim. ii. 13, 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot

deny himself;’ for these things imply weakness, and not power. God cannot die, God cannot sleep. It is no discredit to a wise man that he cannot play the fool, or to a valiant man that he cannot be a coward. God can do all things, so as that he is still God; those things that are repugnant to the perfection of his nature he cannot do. (2.) With respect to the object, such things as imply a contradiction; as that a thing should be, and not be, to make a creature finite and infinite, dependent and independent at the same time and in the same respect; limited to a place and yet in every place; to make the sun shine and not to shine at the same time; these are against the nature of the things themselves. These distinctions have their use in many controversies that are about religion.

*Use.* For exhortation. To press you to believe that God is almighty, and to improve it.

1. Believe it. Need we press men to that? It is a piece of natural divinity, a truth held forth to us, not only in the book of scripture, but of nature. That light which finds out a deity will discover him to be almighty; and therefore need we any great ado to persuade men to believe it? Yes, certainly; for this is the great thing that we question in cases of difficulty; we doubt more of the power of God than of his will. Our seeming doubts of his will are but pretences to cover our shameful and atheistical doubts of his power; that which works subtly and underground in us, and weakens our confidence in God, and hinders the rejoicing of our faith, is a doubt of his power. Surely God knows us better than we do ourselves; and the scripture shows all along that our doubts are about God’s power. When there was a promise brought from God that Sarah should conceive with child, she did not believe the promise: Gen. xviii. 13, 14, ‘And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ There was her doubt and difficulty. So Moses, the man of God, the Lord had told him face to face that he would feed his people, and give them flesh to eat, and he doubted of God’s power: Num. xi. 21, 23, ‘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 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?’ So when the prophet foretold there should be such plenty in Samaria, where there was great scarcity, saith the nobleman, 2 Kings vii. 2, ‘Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be?’ There was his doubt. So the Virgin Mary, when the angel comes with the message of the great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God, that he should be born of her, Luke i. 34, ‘Then said Mary unto the angel, How can this be, seeing I know not a man?’ At this rate still doth unbelief speak in the wilderness; as the children of Israel: Ps. lxxviii. 19, 20, ‘Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Behold he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?’ Certainly the scripture knows what is the special language of our hearts better than we ourselves. Now unbelief is still



represented as doubting of God's power. Besides, doubts haunt us only in times of difficulty, and when mercies expected are hard to come by. If we did doubt of God's will because of our unworthiness, why do we not doubt at other times, when things are easy? But these doubts surprise us only when the things we expect from God according to his promises are difficult and hard to come by. And the reason why we are so apt to doubt of God's power is the imperfection of our thoughts about God's being. We are inured to principles of sense, and converse with limited beings, and therefore confine God to a circle of our own making: Ps. lxxviii. 41, 'They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.' We confine God to the course of second causes, with which we wholly converse, and when there is difficulty, there our hearts fail; therefore there is need to press you to believe God's power.

2. Improve it to strengthen our faith and encourage our obedience.

[1.] To strengthen our faith, either in prayer or in waiting. In prayer: Oh! when you come to God, remember 'he is able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think,' Eph. iii. 20. How hard and difficult soever the thing be that we ask of God, he is able to do it. When our Lord taught us to pray, what are the encouragements he gives us? see the conclusion of the Lord's prayer, Mat. vi. 13, 'Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' As God hath a kingdom and authority to dispose of all things for his glory and our good, so he hath a power to back it; it is not an empty title. Pray for help with such cheerfulness and confidence as if it were the easiest thing in the world to be done. All those things that are so difficult to be obtained, either the sanctification of our souls, or the promotion of Christ's kingdom, or any of those things, 'Thine is the power;' there is that which holds up our hands in prayer, and gives us confidence towards God. So to strengthen our faith in waiting, touching the performance of all God's promises for ourselves and others. Abraham believed above hope and against hope. Why? 'Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform,' Rom. iv. 21. This is the great security of the soul, that confirms us in waiting upon God, when the accomplishment of his promises is unlikely to reason, 'God is able.' If you expect of God preservation in the midst of difficulties, such a fickle and such a changeable creature as man is, how can that be? 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' The power of God is engaged for our defence. So for temporal difficulties, when we see no means, no likelihood to escape, yet we are not thoughtful of this matter, for 'our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king,' Dan. iii. 17. In death, when we go to the grave, to moulder into dust and rottenness, then to look upon the morsels of worms as parcels of the resurrection, what shall uphold and support our hearts in waiting upon God for this? Phil. iii. 21, 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.' The scripture still refers us to the mighty power of God, whereby he can subdue and cause all to fall under him. The destruction of antichrist and enemies of the church, who are sup-

ported by great and strongly combined interests, how can that ever be hoped for? Rev. xviii. 8, 'Her plagues shall come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her;' and that is the greatest cordial of the soul. The life of faith lies in the belief of God's power and all-sufficiency. He can raise up the church from her low condition, and all without any means; when all is dry bones, then God can put life into his people.

[2.] To encourage us in obedience; it is good to believe and improve the power of God.

(1.) That we may carry it more humbly and more dutifully: 1 Peter v. 6, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God.' This is that which begets a deep awe and reverence of his majesty. Shall we not submit to that God that is able to crush us? Oh! therefore let us study to please him in all things. When you sin, you bid defiance to the Almighty, and enter into the lists with God, and provoke him to jealousy: 1 Cor. x. 22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Do you know what it is to dash against God and contest with God? He that is almighty is the most desirable friend or the most dreadful adversary, and therefore humble yourselves, and carry it dutifully towards him. Every one would be in with the Almighty. Be sure to keep in with the Lord: Deut. x. 17, 'For the Lord our God is a God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.' Will you provoke him and dare him to his face?

(2.) To keep us upright in obedience, without warping and using any carnal shifts: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' God alone is enough to you. The reason why we so often step out of the way is, because we do not believe God to be almighty, that he is more able to defend than man to hurt. Even God's own children may warp for want of a sound belief of this. Abraham saved himself by a lie, because he would not trust God with his preservation, Gen. xx. 11. Moses was backward to do the Lord's message, Exod. iv. 13, as if God could not bear him out before Pharaoh, and before the Egyptians. There was a promise Jacob should have the blessing, but Rebecca puts him upon using indirect means to obtain it, because she could not trust God's all-sufficiency to bring it about. He that will not trust God and rest upon his power cannot be long faithful to him; because they think there is not enough in God, they will seek elsewhere. All sincerity ariseth from these two things (and until you get your hearts into this frame you never will be sincere), submitting all things to God's will, and resting upon God's power. How desperate soever the case be, this will relieve you, and keep you sincere and comfortable, the Lord is a powerful God, and knows how to provide for his glory, and for your sustentation.

Now to quicken you thus to believe and improve the power of God, I will offer these considerations—

(1.) Consider the amplitude of God's power, which is not to be measured by our scantling and model. We can do something, but God can do all things; we must have matter prepared, but God works out of nothing; we do things difficultly, and must have time, but God can

do all things in a moment ; he needs no instruments or tools, no pattern or copy, but worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. We rust with age, and our strength is dried up, but 'the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save,' Isa. lix. 1. His strength is never wasted or dried up. When anything is to be done or expected from God, is it greater than making the world ? and God is where he was at first. Our knowledge of things is by effects, but God never had an effect adequate to his power ; he hath done great things, but he hath power to do greater : Mal. ii. 15, 'And did not he make one ? yet had he the residue of the Spirit.' When he created the world, he had the residue of the Spirit, he could have made more worlds. All created effects are finite, and therefore not fully answerable to the force of the cause. Let us be still enlarging in our thoughts of God's power. This is a power that needeth not the concurrence of visible means, but can work without them ; yea, opposite power is no hindrance to God. Rubs are plain ground to him : Isa. xxvii. 4, 'Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle ? I would go through them, I would burn them together.' What can briers and thorns do against a devouring flame ? they are fit fuel to increase the fire, but cannot hinder the burning. God works through all opposition : Isa. xliii. 13, 'I will work, and who shall let it.'

(2.) Consider this power is ready to be employed for our use, so far as it shall make for God's glory and our good. God is ours if we be in covenant with him ; and if so, all that is in God is ours also, *quantus, quantus est*. As great as he is, God makes over himself in covenant. I am yours, therefore almighty is yours, to be set a-work for you. And, as Aristotle said, *τῶν φίλων πάντα κοῖνα*, all things are common between friends and confederates : 1 Kings xxii. 4, 'Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.' Surely, being in covenant with God, it is a relation of friendship, and whatever is God's is ours ; and that is the reason of this expression, Eph. vi. 10, 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' In all our faintings and fears we should look upon God's almighty power as a guardian for our good. All that God hath is forthcoming for our use ; as all other things, so his almighty power and strength.

(3.) Whatever his will is, or whatever God hath determined to do concerning us, yet he would have us magnify his power, and with comfort cast ourselves upon it : Isa. viii. 12, 13, 'Fear not their fear, nor be afraid ; sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.' You should set power against power, that you may not be dismayed, Isa. l. 10. It is not meant spiritually only, but also in temporal cases : 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.' You should comfort yourselves in the power and all-sufficiency of God.

(4.) Consider how angry God hath been with his children for not resting upon his power. Nothing hath hindered the discovery of God's power and the manifestation of his love to them so much as distrust of his power : Mark vi. 5, 'He could there do no mighty work.' It is not said, he would not, but he could not do any mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Unbelief doth put a bar and rub in the way

of God's omnipotency ; and John xi. 40, 'If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God.' God doth not put forth himself because we do no more rest upon him and his all-sufficiency to help us. See how angry God hath been on this account with his own children and people ; with Moses and Aaron : Mat. xx. 12, 'Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.' The believing of God's power is not determining the success, but when we encourage ourselves to pray and wait, and to be sincere and faithful upon the account of God's power, that God is able. Many troubles and perplexities have befallen God's children for not believing his power. Zacharias, John's father, was struck dumb for not believing : Luke i. 20, 'Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.' And God let the nobleman live to see himself confuted, and then he was crushed to death : 2 Kings vii. 2, 'Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might this thing be ? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat thereof.'

(5.) Consider it is a notable argument in prayer to conjure the Lord by his power. As the leper comes to Christ, Mat. viii. 2, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean ;' do what thou wilt, but this I know, that thou canst, thou hast power enough. See how Moses insinuates : Num. xiv. 15, 16, 'Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness ;' as if he should say, Lord, thou wouldst have the glory of thy power seen in the eyes of the nations, that they may know thee as a mighty powerful God ; now they will say, The Lord was not able to bring them into Canaan.

(6.) All our courage, and all the strength of our comfort and obedience, and all the blessings of obedience, depends upon the belief and the improvement of God's power. Look into the book of God, and you shall see all the generous acts that worthy men have performed came from hence. Abraham, the father of the faithful, offered up his son, his only son, the son of the promise, and that freely ; and why ? 'Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure,' Heb. xi. 19. In such a trial, what would support and bear us out ? So when the fiery furnace was heated seven times hotter than ordinary, burning and flaming exceedingly, the three children ventured into it upon this principle, 'Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king,' Dan. iii. 17. What is the reason we are so cowardly and dastardly ? We look to things sensible and visible, and cannot set the power of God against it or above them, and consider how he can bring good out of evil, and so carnal fears and hopes draw us aside. Why are we discouraged, and turn from God in difficult cases rather than in easy cases, but that we do not believe that he can do all things ?

Paul believed, therefore in the face of opposition he goes on in his work unweariedly: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.' This made him in the midst of reproaches and all manner of difficulties to go on with courage.

(7.) When we run to carnal shifts because we cannot trust this power of God, then we engage his strength, that should be for us, against us, and it is just with God to blast us. Jonah runs from his work, and God sends a storm after him. Jonah was afraid of the Ninevites, but mischief will sooner or latter overtake them that run from their duty, and they have worse inconveniences by their own shifts. Jacob would get the blessing by a wile, but that cost him dear; he was banished from his father's house upon it, lest Esau should kill him. Indirect courses will certainly prove a loss; though you may obtain your purpose, yet you plunge yourselves into greater difficulties afterward, and obtain your desires with more trouble than if you had waited upon God.

(8.) If the thing be not done for us which we need and desire when we trust upon the power of God, it is because it is not best for us. He that trusts upon the power of God cannot miscarry. A cross is best, and a low estate is best, and troubles are best. It is not for want of power and love that we are afflicted of God; he will deliver us and support us, and turn it to the best: Ps. lxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield, he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Ps. xxxiv. 9, 'The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' If we want anything we would have, certainly it is not good for us.

(9.) The less power we have in ourselves, the more experience we have of God's power: Isa. xl. 29, 'He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.' So Deut. xxxii. 36, 'The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.' When human help begins to fail and is spent, then God's power is seen. The lean cheeks, and the faint voice, and the pale colour of a hunger-starved beggar moves more than all the canting entreaties of a sturdy one. When we are sufficiently humbled in the sense of our own unworthiness, and can entirely cast ourselves upon God, out of a confidence of his power, help will not be far off, for he really pities those that are indeed miserable, and have a sense of it, and sets his power on work for their relief.

(10.) We can never expect to be free from biting cares and perplexities about the various occurrences of this life until we can entirely cast ourselves upon God's all-sufficiency and power. Oh! but when you are once got upon the rock, then you will not be tossed with the uncertain waves: Isa. xxvi. 3, 4, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee: trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.' In the ebbings and flowings of the creature a man is safe and fixed, for he hath that which answers all things. A man that hath no lands, yet if he hath money, the wise man tells us, that answereth all things,

and he may do well enough ; so if a man hath nothing in the creature, yet if he hath the power of God, that answereth all things ; he can rejoice in God when creatures fail, Heb. iii. 17, 18 : ' As having nothing, yet possessing all things,' 2 Cor. vi. 10. The Almighty God carrieth the purse ; we have all things in God, and he will supply us as he seeth it to be best with respect to his own glory and their eternal condition ; and therefore, if you would be freed from all these floating uncertainties, and those tempestuous agitations of spirit by which you are tossed to and fro, you will never come to this till you encourage yourselves in the sense of God's power and all-sufficiency.

---