

SERMON UPON HEBREWS XIII. 5.

For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
HEB. xiii. 5.

IN the former part of the verse the apostle dissuadeth from covetousness, and persuadeth to contentment. The motive to enforce the one and the other is God's promise. Many of our distempers would have no more place if we did oftener study the promises. 'He saith,' that is, God; that He whose voice should only be heard in the church. The Pythagoreans would use to say in their school, *αὐτὸς ἔφη*. He hath said. It should much more be reason enough with christians, *αὐτὸς γὰρ εἶρηκε*, 'For he said.'

But where doth the force of the inference lie? Apply it to the first part, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness; for he hath said.'

I answer—Covetousness is rooted in a diffidence and fear of want. Now that fear is irrational, if we regard what he hath said. God will maintain us as long as he hath work for us to do. He that is persuaded that God will not leave him will not be much troubled.

Apply it now to the second branch, 'Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee.' And how is that inferred?

I answer—The comfort of our condition doth not depend on outward provisions so much as in God's promises; therefore, though you have little, be content. If God denieth the creature, he will vouchsafe his own presence; and what need we care for the want of a candle when we have the sun?

Once more, the connection between the dissuasive and exhortation and the promise is to be observed: 'Be not covetous; be content; for he hath said, I will never leave thee;' and men would have less trouble if they could learn to cast themselves upon God's allowance; if we could depend more, we should crave less. The promise well applied would not only allay our fears but moderate our desires. Lust is ravenous, and therefore suspicious. If we believe his word, we shall have enough to glorify God, enough for that condition wherein God will make use of us. Fixing upon carnal hopes doth but make trouble for yourselves. Carnal affections prescribe God a task which he will never perform: Ps. lxxviii. 18, 'They ask meat for their lusts.' Not meat for their necessities, but meat for their lusts. God never

undertook to maintain us at such a rate, to give us so much by the year, such portions for our children. The sheep must be left to the shepherd to choose their pastures, bare or better grown. Be content, and then faith will be more easy. We may pray for a competency, and are bound to submit to an extremity.

‘He hath said.’ Where hath he said it? Everywhere in the word, more especially to Joshua in particular: Josh. i. 5, ‘As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’ To all his people in general: Deut. xxxi. 6, 8, ‘Be strong, and of a good courage; fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’ David bids Solomon be confident of it: 1 Chron. xxviii. 20, ‘David said to Solomon his son, Be strong, and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.’ So Jacob: Gen. xxviii. 15, ‘I will not leave thee till I have done all that I have spoken to thee of.’ It is pleaded by Solomon: 1 Kings viii. 57, ‘The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers; let him not leave us nor forsake us.’ You see it is a known truth, and to be made use of upon all occasions of trial. It was spoken to Joshua when he was to fight the Lord’s battles; to Israel when they had not as yet a foot of land to possess; to Jacob when to pass through many services; to Solomon when to go about a costly work. And God having said it so often, delights to be challenged upon his word, and to have this promise put in suit.

Before I come to show you the full purport and drift of this promise, let me observe—

1. Though the promises were made upon a particular occasion, to some of God’s people, yet they are of a general use. Well, then, promises made to one saint concern another also. Why?

[1.] Because God is alike affected to all his children; he beareth them the same love. His saints now are as dear to him as ever; therefore, as he would not leave Joshua, or Jacob, or Solomon, so he will not leave others that trust in him: ‘This honour have all his saints,’ Ps. cxlix. 9.

[2.] They have the same covenant. It is a common charter: Acts ii. 39, ‘For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.’

[3.] They have the same Redeemer: 1 Cor. i. 2, ‘Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours.’ Rich and poor gave the same ransom: Exod. xxx. 15, ‘Half a shekel.’ One has not a more worthy Christ than another: Rom. iii. 22, ‘Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.’

[4.] The faith of the one is as acceptable to God as the other: 2 Peter i. 1, ‘Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’ The same for kind, though not for degree, *ισότιμον πίστιν*. A jewel held by a child’s hand is a jewel, as well as that held by a man’s.

Well, then, the expressions of God’s love to his people of old have

their use for the establishment of our comfort and hope: Rom. xv. 4, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope;' Rom. iv. 23, 'It was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also.' As judgments on the wicked are for our admonition: 1 Cor. x. 6, 'These things were our examples;' so promises are for our consolation. The word is not only a history, but a book of precedents. As a painter hangeth forth his masterpieces to draw custom, so here God's kindnesses to his people are advantageous to us; only let us take heed that we have the same Spirit.

2. I observe, that it is a capacious promise, applicable to several purposes. To Joshua, to embolden him against dangers; to Jacob, to make him patient under crosses; to Solomon, to quicken him against coldness in God's service; to Israel, to hearten them against enemies; to all believers, to support them under family wants and straits. One promise hath several uses; it is good for wants, good for wars. This one promise well observed will teach us to live well and die well, for still God is with us; to live without carking, for then God is with us; and to die without discomfort, for then we are with God. If one promise yield so much comfort, what will all? it is *κοινὸν ἰατρεῖον*, a common remedy for every disease. As the scripture saith in another case, 'Mark well her bulwarks, tell her towers.' There is no case to which God hath not spoken, no blessing but it is adopted into the covenant.

3. I observe, that it is a promise emphatically delivered.

[1.] For the matter, 'I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee;' that is, I will be so far from forsaking or casting thee off, that I will not so much as leave thee for a time. It is such another as that, Ps. cxxi. 4, 'Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' There is no time that his people are left to shift for themselves, but they are under the care of his providence continually.

[2.] For the form, *ὄυ μὴ σε ἀνῶ οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σε ἐγκαταλίτω*. 'I will not not leave thee, neither not not forsake thee.' Five negatives. He will not, yea, he will not; surely he will not forsake his servants, or neglect them, and withdraw his presence and providence from them.

[3.] For the duplication, 'I will not leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Joseph told Pharaoh the dream was doubled, because it was established by God, Gen. xli. 32.

All this is to show how dull and stupid we are in conceiving of God's promises: 'O ye fools, and slow of heart to believe!' Luke xxiv. 21. We are backward to everything, but especially to faith, or dependence on God for something that lieth not in our own power. Before we are serious and put to trial, nothing seemeth more easy than dependence upon God; but when it cometh to the push, it is evinced. Now it is God's condescension that he will press these things again and again, that we may not lose the comfort of the promise. The expression is universal, to awaken our attention, to engage our hearts to believe that he will not forsake us in our straits.

4. I observe, that it is a promise that every one must particularly apply to his own case. God doth not say, 'I will not leave you, nor forsake you,' as speaking to his people collectively, but distributively,

'thee;' and that not only to Joshua, but to Israel: Deut. xxxi. 6, 8, 'Be strong, and of a good courage; fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.' As in the decalogue, that every one might look upon himself as concerned, God speaketh in the singular number to every individual person, 'Thou shalt have no other gods;' so here, 'thou,' as if spoken to by name, Thou, Peter, Andrew, Thomas, 'I will not forsake thee.' Oh, that we had this spirit of application, and could read our names in Christ's testament! *Omnis operatio fit per contactum*—'The closer the touch upon our hearts, the greater the efficacy. Break out your own portion of the bread of life: Job v. 27, 'Lo! this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.' Christian! how many promises dost thou know for thy good? Canst thou say, Here is my portion; blessed be God for this comfortable promise to me?

Doct. That God never utterly forsaketh or leaveth his people destitute to utter and insupportable difficulties. Why?

1. The tenderness of his love will not permit it: Isa. xlix. 15, 'Can a woman forget her sucking-child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.' There is no such affection as God hath to his children. The mother, if she leave her sucking-child, she doth not utterly forsake him, but runneth to the cry. So will God. He is unchangeable: Mal. iii. 6, 'I am the Lord; I change not.' He is immutable in his grace, and constant in his promise as well as his being. He needs no after-thoughts; his purpose of love stands firm; he willeth a change, but changeth not his will. Though he uses various contrary means, yet his love altereth not, as our condition altereth. We are full of inconstancy, but not he. Death doth not make void Christ's interest, nor cause his affection to cease when we are rotting in the grave. Where God has once fixed his dwelling-place, he will never leave it again: Ps. xxxvii. 28, 'The Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints.' By judgment is meant righteousness or holiness, the rule; for conformity to the rule, that is the ground. His truth is plighted in his promises. God hath ever stood upon his credit, especially when his promise hath drawn forth the faith of his people: Ps. cxi. 5, 'God will ever be mindful of his covenant;' Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.' To disappoint a trust is accounted disingenuous among men. No age can give an instance of this in God.

Object. But his people complain of being forsaken: Isa. xlix. 14, 'But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' Yea, Christ himself cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. xxvii. 46.

Ans. 1. Many times the saints complain without a cause. Sense maketh lies of God: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications.' But there was no such matter: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'This is my infirmity.' The Lord may seem to a perplexed heart to cast off a man, and to suspend the course of his wonted favour, so as they may seem to be without all hope and comfort of the promises when there is no such matter.

2. Though a child of God may be forsaken for a while, yet not forsaken for ever: Isa. liv. 7, 8, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee: in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.' There may be some short interruptions of a christian's comfort. All things here are subject to changes; there will be ebbs and flows, nights and days, in our condition. There will be changes, but it is but for a moment. Mercy will not come out of season, though carnal hopes may be spent: Isa. xli. 17, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.'

3. There are three kinds of forsaking—

[1.] As to our outward and inward condition. Outwardly God may reduce his people to great straits, and yet not forsake them. Every condition is sweet where God is, and he is with us in dangers and afflictions: Isa. xliii. 2, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the fire kindle upon thee.' God preserves not only from fire and water, but in fire and water. He may exercise his people with trouble, but he will not withdraw himself from them in trouble, but will stay with them, and bear them company. Our worldly comforts may be gone, but God stayeth behind; we may be forsaken outwardly, but are preserved inwardly: 'persecuted but not forsaken,' 2 Cor. iv. 9. He giveth support still: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.' God affords sweet refreshings to his people: 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' And gracious visits and experiences: Rom. v. 3-5, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.'

[2.] Inward desertion is either in point of comfort or in point of grace. Comfort may be withdrawn for the increase of grace. Rain is necessary, as well as sunshine. We need many times our thorn in the flesh. Grace is the main thing we should desire, though comfort should not be despised. We should be rather more humble and more diligent in a doubtful condition than in a settled.

[3.] In point of grace, there is a total desertion and a partial desertion. God's people may be deserted really, but not utterly. There is a seed remaineth in them, 1 John iii. 9, though they may lose much of their liveliness and alacrity in God's service: 'My loving-kindness I will not take from them.' David had brutish thoughts, yet some sustentation: Ps. lxxiii. 23, 'Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by thy right hand.' He was kept from being utterly overcome by the temptation. They have a secret power to uphold them, as long as they have any tenderness left, with desires of former enjoyments, and sensibleness of their present inconvenience. The degrees of grace may be lost when the habit remaineth.

God's degrees of presence with us should be observed as well as his degrees of absence. David bewaileth his folly, acknowledges sustentation.

4. The ends of this forsaking. There are three—

[1.] Sometimes to show us ourselves to ourselves: 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, 'Howbeit, in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.' While God is present, comforting, quickening, and guiding us, we do not know what pride and passion lieth hidden in our hearts. God doth show the folly of our wisdom, the weakness of our strength, and the imperfection of our graces by his forsaking us.

[2.] How ready he is to help in an extremity: Ps. xciv. 18, 19, 'When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O Lord, held me up: in the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' When we are at the brink of danger, and full of perplexities and dark thoughts, then doth help appear.

[3.] To quicken us to look after him, and to draw us to nearer communion with himself: Hosea v. 15, 'I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.' When afflictions press hard, it puts an edge upon our affections. Surely God hath left something behind them when our affections draw to him: Dan. ix. 3, 'All this evil is come upon us, yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God.' To be dead and stupid then is a bad sign that we are deserted in point of sensible comfort and duty too.

The use is to press you—

1. To believe this promise. You see how emphatically it is proposed. The flesh, that loveth its own ease, will contradict, and carnal sense will bring arguments against it; therefore lay it up the more firmly. Surely God will not forsake his people; he hath such tender bowels, such unchangeable love. He that made the new creature will not forsake it. Will the dam forsake her young ones and let them perish? Christians! he will let all the world perish rather than his saints perish. God may hide himself, but never forsake them utterly. It is a rare case to see them utterly destitute as to outward things: Ps. xxxvii. 25, 'I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' David aged, a man of much observation, a great student of providence, yet never saw it. Ask the beasts, fowls, or fishes: Job xii. 7, 8, 'Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.'

2. Apply this promise; God will not forsake me nor mine. Let not truths be eyed only in the general, but particularly applied to thyself, thus: Lord, thou hast ever been my God, provided for me hitherto. Take these promises to live upon them, and say, 'Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever,' Ps. cxix. v. 111.

3. Improve it.

[1.] To moderate your desires of earthly things, that your conversation may be without covetousness; for the more our desires abound,

the more our fears about them abound also Why should we be carried after them with such a greedy thirst ?

(1.) Man's happiness lieth not in worldly abundance, but in the presence of God with him, and his providence over him : Luke xii. 15, 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' If you do not think so, you set up another god, the creature, instead of God. Sometimes God giveth abundance to his people, sometimes he keepeth them low and bare ; they do but live from hand to mouth, because God will keep the purse in his own hand, and train them to live by faith, and not by sense, and to take all their comforts immediately from him. Now, are christians any whit the worse provided for ? No ; God hath ways enough to provide for his people, and to satisfy sober and moderate desires : 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing ; as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' There is more mischief than you are aware of in this thought, that you are not well enough provided for, unless your supplies be ready at hand and visible ; for it is a sign you depend more upon the presence of the creature than the favour of God, and will trust God no further than you can see him ; and this is the cause of all repinings against providence, heartless dejections ; yea, apostasy, unlawful means, racking and vexing ourselves with immoderate cares and labours. It is next to atheism and plain infidelity to ascribe to God only a common providence ; that he doth in the general furnish the world, and store it with sufficiency, leaving us to our own industry, to catch what we can catch and make it our own. No ; faith sees God near at hand, and with us ; placing him not only in the circle of the heaven, only beholding men scattered on the face of the earth, and foraging for themselves. No ; his providence and care reacheth to each single person ; he hath his eye opened, his ear bowed down, his hand stretched out, to every one that seeketh to him ; we are all at his finding. In common plenty, he can punish single persons with personal scarcity, as he did the prince of Samaria ; in general scarcity, he can furnish with personal plenty, as Elijah did the widow of Sarepta. Many allow God a general inspection, think he upholds the pillars of the earth, but perceive not that God taketh care of particulars, and so resolve to live by their wits, and shift for themselves. But a good christian seeth him at home, believeth God will take care of him ; and so casts himself into the arms of his providence, and looketh upon every comfort as reached out from heaven by God's immediate hand to him in particular.

(2.) That the presence of God may be continued with us, though we be cast into deep afflictions : 'As persecuted, but not forsaken,' 2 Cor. iv. 9. He is miserable indeed who is forsaken of God, but not he who is persecuted by man. *Celestis ira quos premit miseris facit humana nullos*—God's anger makes those miserable upon whom it lights, but not man's. They may be miserable that live in pomp, jollity, and ease, and they may be happy that live in straits and pressures. Christ was 'a man of sorrows,' yet God was with him : John xvi. 32, 'I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' Had Christ anything less of the presence of God for his troubles ? Sins separate, afflictions do not : Ps. xci. 13, 'I will be with him in trouble.' In the body of man, if

any member be hurt, presently the blood and the humours run thither, and the man is wholly taken up about that part which is hurt; his eyes, his hands, his tongue, as if he forgot all the rest: his speech is about the hurt part, his eye is directed thither, his hand thither. In a family, if one of the children be sick, all the mother's care is about that child, to tend him, to take care of him, to blandish him, insomuch that the rest do many times even envy his sickness. If nature do thus, will not the God of nature do more? If an earthly parent be so careful of a sick child, will not an heavenly Father, whose love is far more tender, take care of the hurt part of Christ's mystical body? The sick child is most looked after. This is the difference between God and the world; the world looketh after the happy, the flourishing, but leaveth those who are in want and affliction. As all waters run to the sea, where there is enough already, so do the respects of the world to the happy and the mighty. But God goeth another way to work, he visits them that are in tribulation, comforts them that are mourners in Zion.

(3.) Those that are rightly qualified are sure to have the presence of God with them.

(1st.) They that fear God, and make it their business to please him: Ps. cxv. 5, 'He hath given meat to them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant;' John viii. 29, 'The Father hath not left me alone, for I do always the things that please him.'

(2d.) Those that moderate their desires to earthly things, and do first seek heavenly: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.' By so doing you drive on both cares at once. There needeth not so much ado about the world; you may desire and have in spirituals; yea, and other things cast into the bargain.

(3d.) Those that depend on his providence. They that do not trust God cannot be long true to him. Uprightness is founded in a belief of God's all-sufficiency: Gen. xvii. 1, 'When Abraham was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' They that will not depend on God's providence seek by lies, violence, and neglect of godliness to make their worldly portion great. One great mischief introduced by the fall was that man would be his own carver; we would have our portion and stock in our own hands, would have the care of ourselves devolved wholly upon ourselves, or else we grow distrustful of God: Gen. iii. 22, 'The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil.' Our business at first was to please our creator, and not to take care and thought for ourselves. It was our Father's part to preserve us and provide for us, to bestow good and keep off the evil; but every man since would have life, and his comfort, and his safety in his own hands, and so much of temporal happiness as he seeth good. There is no way to rectify it but to return to our innocency; to mind our duty, and cast our burden on the Lord, commending success and events to him: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you;' and Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God;' upon con-

fidence that his hand and providence will not neglect us, or any of our concernments.

(4.) Those that are contented with what their Father alloweth. When God giveth sufficient to supply our necessities, we seek to satisfy our lusts; when God hath done enough, and more than enough, to evidence his power, justice, truth, and care of our welfare, yet we will not rest on him, unless he will subject his providence to our will and carnal affections. As the Israelites, when miraculously fed, miraculously clothed; God kept a market for them, gave them their supplies, not out of earth, but out of the clouds, yet 'tempted God in their hearts, asking meat for their lusts,' Ps. lxxviii. 19. Yea, it is said, Ps. cvi. 13, 14, 'They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness:' they made haste, they forgot his works; so it is in the Hebrew. Carnal desires greatly transport; they must have festival diet in the wilderness, or they will no longer believe his power and serve him. Thus when men take the ruling of themselves into their own hands, they will not stay till God provide for them, but must have their carnal desires presently satisfied: Mat. v. 5, 'The meek shall inherit the earth.' But who are meek? They that quietly submit to God's providence, and so they have food and raiment, and have any time to glorify God, and seek his kingdom, and the salvation of their souls. Let others live in pomp and ease; it is enough for them to be as God will have them be. They are not over-desirous to have worldly things, or too much dejected and cast down through the want of them. But those that are greedy and earnest, and covet more than God seeth meet to bestow upon them, as they forfeit the blessing of God's presence, so, by enlarging their desires, they make way for their own discontent when they are not satisfied, and so fall into murmuring against God, and so into all disquiet of mind about earthly things.

[2.] Improve this point to moderate and allay your distrustful and distracting cares; and so cometh in the apostle's exhortation, 'Be content with such things as you have.' Content is a quiet temper of mind, relying on God's merciful providence and gracious promises for such things as are necessary for us during our pilgrimage and passage to heaven. Sometimes it is opposed to murmuring; but I take it here as opposed to distrustful cares; because we have little in a time of troubles, and are like to have less; and therefore are full of anxious thoughts, what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on. Consider, 'God will not leave you, nor forsake you.' What cannot his wisdom and mercy and power do for you? He hath deeply and strongly engaged himself to his people; and therefore it should quiet our minds in all necessities and straits. See Christ's arguments: Mat. vi. 25, 26, 32, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?'

(1.) They had life from God without any thought of theirs, therefore he would provide the conveniences of life. God has given life, and framed the body, which was a far greater act of power and mercy, than giving food and providing raiment.

(2.) Other creatures are provided for without any solicitude of theirs

both as to food and raiment : ver. 26, 'Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ?' God, that provideth for birds and fowls, will provide for his children. Men may look for it more than they, having ordinary means of reaping and sowing, and other trades and ways of living, which the fowls have not, and so are merely cast on the care of Providence. Man is a more considerable creature, so more liable to God's care and providence.

(3.) It is a pagan practice to be thoughtful : ver. 32, 'After all these things do the gentiles seek.'

[3.] Improve it to remove our fears of danger, so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper ; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' They are David's words, Ps. cxviii. 6. If God be with us, he will help us ; therefore, as faith prevaieth, fear ceaseth : Ps. xvi. 7, 'I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel ; my reins also instruct me in the night season.' If our hearts misgive us, God is our second ; he will afford protection when necessary for his glory and our good. The fear of man is an ordinary temptation to divert the godly from their duty, or discourage them in it. You may be confident upon such a promise : Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' Man can do much ; he can fine, imprison, banish, reduce to a morsel of bread, yea, torture, put to death ; yet as long as God is with us, and standeth for us, we may boldly say, 'I will not fear what man can do.' Why ? because God will not see them utterly perish. He can give us joy in sorrow, life in death. A christian is not afraid, because he can set God against man, temporal things against eternal, covenant against providence.

(1.) God against man : Isa. li. 12, 13, 'I, even I, am he that comforteth you,' &c. God can change their hearts : Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.' He can weaken their power : Job xii. 21, 'He weakeneth the strength of the mighty ;' Mark xii. 41, 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and can do no more.'

(2.) Eternal things against temporal : 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Our light affliction for a moment, worketh for us an eternal weight of glory.'

(3.) The covenant against providence : Ps. lxxiii. 17, 'Till I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I their end.'