

SERMON UPON ISAIAH L. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.—ISAIAH 1. 10.

IN the words there are three propositions—

1. God's people may sometimes be in such a condition as to walk in darkness and see no light.

2. In the most sinking and dark times their great duty is to trust in the Lord.

3. They that fear God and obey him are most encouraged to trust in him.

For the first point, that God's people may sometimes be in such a condition as to walk in darkness and see no light.

First, I will open this helpless and hopeless condition, which is here expressed by 'walking in darkness,' and 'seeing no light.'

1. In the general, it noteth great afflictions and dangers, which light upon the church and people of God; as Lam. iii. 2, 'He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light;' that is, into a very afflicted condition.

2. It noteth the continuance and increase of affliction, when our night still groweth darker, and all means of relief are utterly invisible to us: Isa. lix. 9, 'We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.' It doth not only overtake them, but they had waited long for a change of condition.

3. When we are perplexed and embrangled in our troubles, and miss the true way of support under them. We are said to walk in darkness when we want either the light of direction or consolation.

[1.] The light of direction; and this with respect either to the understanding of our outward and common affairs, or with respect to our duty towards God under such afflictions.

(1.) As to the understanding or right management of our common affairs; being troubled and amazed, we are not able to take any good counsel and advice: Isa. lix. 10, 'We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes; we stumble at noon-day as in the night.' So Job v. 14, 'They met with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night.' It is a great judgment of God upon a people when counsel is perished from them, and they have not

the judgment of ordinary men. It is threatened as a punishment on the disobedient: Deut. xxviii. 29, 'Thou shalt grope at noon-day as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways, and thou shalt only be oppressed and spoiled evermore, and none shall save thee.' Now thus it often befalleth the people of God for their disobedience; they know not what course to take for their common safety.

(2.) The next is a greater evil, when we understand not our duty towards God, and the reason of our troubles. It is some comfort to a child of God when he knoweth his duty under such a condition; a speaking rod, though it be smart, is more comfortable than a dumb rod: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest him out of thy law.' Our advantage cometh not by being afflicted, but by being instructed in our afflictions, when the rod maketh us tractable and pliable to God's counsel: Job xxxvi. 10, 'He openeth their ears to discipline;' and ver. 15, 'He openeth their ears in oppression.' It is the property of beasts to feel the smart of the rod, but men especially. Good men should know the use of the rod. Our condition is not altogether dark when God hath humbled and instructed his people under his chastenings, that they may get good by their chastenings; but when they are still in the dark as to the reason and end of their troubles, it is the more grievous.

[2.] When we want the light of consolation, and that two ways—either by present experience of God's love, or hopes of future deliverance.

(1.) As to present experience of God's love: 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.' It is promised to the upright that light shall arise to them in obscurity: Ps. cxii. 4, 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.' Now it is very sad and afflicting to them when they cannot get a comfortable and satisfactory sight of God's love to them, or presence with them, or mindfulness of them in their afflictions, but he hideth himself from them. This is the bitterest ingredient in their sorrows, that God hideth his face from them; they should not else resent so much other sorrows. The favour of God is the godly man's choice: Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increased.' And their life: Ps. xxx. 5, 'In his favour is life;' and therefore they cannot but be most affected with the sense of the want of it. This is the trouble of their trouble, and maketh their darkness to become thick darkness.

(2.) As to future deliverance, when they cannot look through the cloud of present trouble with any hope of relief, or have not any probable appearance of any good issue: Ps. lxxiv. 9, 'We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.' This is very sad. Troubles that have an end are the better borne; but when we are altogether puzzled when we think of a remedy and an escape, then we are overwhelmed, like a

man shipwrecked and swimming for life in the vast ocean, and sees no banks or land near.

Secondly, The reasons why this may befall the people of God. There are reasons on man's part, and on God's part.

First, On man's part.

1. The astonishing power of sore troubles: Ps. lx. 3, 'Thou hast showed thy people hard things, thou hast made us to drink of the wine of astonishment.' They are amazed with afflictions, like unto a man that hath drunk some intoxicating drink which had put him beside himself. They are in the dark about God's mind in such dispensations, and wonder why God suffereth his people, whom he hath chosen and loved, to go to ruin, especially by the malignity of instruments more wicked than themselves: 'When the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he,' Hab. ii. 13.

2. From that weakness, bondage, and legal dejection which yet remaineth upon their spirits, so that they are not able to look beyond their present condition; and if it be evil, they make it worse by their own apprehensions and diffidence. It is dark now, and therefore they think it will never be day; they see not God for the present, and therefore they conclude they shall not see him. As in prosperity God's children are apt to promise themselves too great a stability and continuance: Ps. xxx. 6, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved;' so in adversity they are no less ready to heighten their trouble by fearful apprehensions of the perpetuity thereof: Ps. lxxvii. 7-9, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgot to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' Trouble of our own making breedeth the greatest dejection. They mistake God's dispensation, and make their present condition sadder and worse than indeed it is. It would ease us of our greatest pressures if we would look off a little from the present, and consider how God can work contrary to our probabilities and fears. Contrary to our probabilities: Zech. viii. 6, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes, saith the Lord of hosts?' And contrary to our fears: Isa. li. 12, 13, 'I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?'

Secondly, On God's part; he bringeth us into such a condition—

1. To show his sovereignty, and that he is Lord both of light and darkness: Job xxxiv. 29, 'When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.' Our weal and woe is in his hand: Isa. xlv. 7, 'I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.' All is at God's disposing, to give it to whom he will. Sometimes he giveth light and peace, nor will a dog move the tongue. So

long as he pleaseth, neither policy nor power will be able to make his gift void, either as to nations or persons. He hath a negative voice : men would trouble, devils would trouble, but if God say, No, all is quiet in kingdoms, families, or souls. If he justifieth, who can condemn? So when, for the punishment of sin or trial of faith, he lets out trouble, who can help it? So he may desert nations, and leave them without counsel or strength. So when God deserts a person, all his comfort and quietness is gone. Men under trouble are in a sad and hopeless plight as to any help, till God help them ; and if he hide his face, who shall ease them of their trouble, till God himself shine through that cloud? All the favour of men will not do it till God appear.

2. To check our curiosity. We look to events rather than duties ; we would be lazy, not labour, if we knew our succeeding mercies ; or we should be overwhelmed with grief if we had a foresight of all our trials which are to come. Therefore God puts a veil upon his providence, and will not let us look to the end of his designs : Isa. xlviii. 7, 'Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them.' Therefore we are in the dark, know not the particular issues and events of things, and can scarce support ourselves with the general promises ; and so walk in darkness and see no light.

Thirdly, That God may thereby promote the ends of his providence, which is to humble his people, and try them, and to do them good.

1. For the greater humiliation. When Christ was humbled for our sins he was at a *non plus*, as if he knew not what to say or do : John xii. 27, 'Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?' So to humble his people thoroughly, he driveth them to an utter exigence ; all their hopes and probabilities are spent, and they know not what to do or say ; as in Jehoshaphat's instance : 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'We know not what to do, but our eyes are unto thee.' God's children may be shut up on all hands from any imaginable hope of a good issue, yea, or any sight of God and token of his love.

2. To try them, their faith, and love, and patience. Their faith, which is never put to a sound trial till all their common probabilities be spent. 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen,' Heb. xi. 1. When God is out of sight, and comfort is out of sight, and deliverance is out of sight, then is a time to depend upon God : Micah vii. 8, 'When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.' Dependence upon an unseen God, resolute adherence to a withdrawn God, is the flower and glory of faith. When we are left to a naked faith, and a naked word or promise of God, yet then to adhere to him, and wait upon him for what is contradicted by sense, this is to believe in hope against hope. So for the trial of our love ; to run to him when he seemeth to cast us off ; to fear him for his mercies : Hosea iii. 5, 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days ;' and praise him for his judgments : Isa. xxvi. 8, 'In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, we have waited for thee ; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee ;' to rejoice in him when he maketh all things desolate about us : Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off

from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' To own him as a good God when we are under his strokes, and as a gracious father when he frowneth as well as when he smileth, here is faith indeed. So our patience is never tried in a twilight so much as in utter darkness: James i. 4, 'Let patience have *ἔργον τέλειον*, its perfect work. Patience is not tried as long as we have worldly supports to bear us up; but in great, long, and sharp afflictions it is patience indeed. While we can make up ourselves another way, our submission to God is not fully tried.

3. To do us good, God would reach our corruptions so as to purge them out: Isa. xxvii. 9, 'By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.' We would have no trial but that which should touch none of our sins and corruptions; for we would not have the flesh displeased, or, if it be, yet but a little. Now trial will not do us good unless it vex our corruptions. A sound purge will carry away our pride, sensuality, worldliness; a light purge doth but gently move it. When the vexing trials come, then we are 'like a wild bull in a net,' Isa. li. 20. Till we see no way to escape, we overlook our case. Yea, God's children are not humbled for their spiritual pride till trouble be so confounding that God is missed, and they left in the dark in their distress. Now, to be so far misted as to lose a sight of God under trouble, that is an humbling dispensation indeed.

Use 1. If God's people may be in such a condition, let us bless God that he dealeth more gently with us. If our natural comforts be lessened, yet they are not wholly gone. Let us bless God that in the midst of judgment he remembereth mercy: Hab. ii. 3, 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.' That he measureth our burdens by our strength and ability to bear them: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.' That he refresheth our souls with his love when his chastenings are upon us: 2 Cor. i. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.' That he smileth when the world frowneth; that it is not an evil, and an only evil, but there are strange intermixtures of blessings with our crosses; that he doth not forsake us utterly: Job xx. 26, 'All darkness shall be hid in his secret places,' speaking of the wicked; that it is not wholly and altogether darkness, without any light, or comfort, or counsel for the present, or hope of issue for the future.

Use 2. Let us prepare for such a time; for none of us can promise ourselves a total exemption from such kind of providences.

But what preparations must we make?

I answer—Stock the heart with some maxims or holy truths, which may be a support to you.

1. That in our darkest condition God seeth us, though we do not see him. So the psalmist found by experience: Ps. lxxiii. 22, 23, 'So

foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee: nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by the right hand.' David could not see God, for he had brutish thoughts of providence, as he acknowledgeth there; that God was indifferent to good and evil, did no more care for the one than for the other; yet God took care of him, and held him in the arms of his providence when he questioned it. So Job xxiii. 8-10, 'Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.' Job had lost the sight of God, but God had not lost the sight of Job, for he knew his sincerity, and would in time clear it to his comfort. So that many times we are like the blind man; though he could not see Christ, yet he never left calling upon the Son of David, till he answered to his name, and came and cured him.

2. That in our distresses we are apt to foster groundless mistakes about God's love, and so darken our own estate more than needeth. Sense maketh lies of God, and our hearts will be made to recant what they say in their haste, as David often found in his experience: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou hearest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.' God looketh not after me, but leaveth me to inevitable ruin; and at that very time God was about to give him audience: Ps. cxvi. 10-12, 'I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?' He referreth to the messages brought him from godly Samuel, and Nathan, and other prophets; and being far from the effects of them, he began to suspect the truth of them. Thus do our calamities transport us with fears and irregular thoughts and apprehensions of God's dealings with us: but we must not judge of our condition by our temptations, but God's promises; and faith must shut our eyes against whatsoever would breed mistakes and quarrels against God's providence.

3. That a dark hour is many times the forerunner of a comfortable morning, and great and growing difficulties may be made means of a greater good to us. For God loveth to bring light out of darkness, and to give the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and to give meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong, and to bring about his people's mercies by means very improbable and contrary, that he may train us up to hope against hope. Deliverance, when it is a-coming, it is not always in sight; rather all appearances are contrary. He will call for water when he intendeth to give wine, and rebuke her as a dog whom he meaneth to treat as a daughter of Abraham: Isa. xlv. 15, 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the saviour.' Though a saviour, yet he hideth himself under a cloud and veil of difficulties and contrary appearances.

4. That however matters go, it will certainly be well with them that fear God, even because they fear him, were there no other evidence and proof of it, as it will be ill with the wicked, even though they prosper: Eccles. viii. 11, 12, 'Because sentence against an evil

work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him;’ Isa. iii. 10, 11, ‘Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.’ If this be believed, we need fear nothing, if we keep the way of the Lord, and do continue waiting and depending upon him. We cannot absolutely promise you temporal deliverance, nor all those spiritual things which you desire, as to the degree; but this we can promise you, it shall be well with them that fear God, and well with the righteous. Temporal things are not of that moment that we should be much troubled about them; we have an hope above them, and our happiness lieth not at stake when they are in danger. If God will bring us safe to glory, as he will those that continue with patience in well-doing, it is enough; nothing can go amiss to him that is found in the way of his duty: though the way be foul and narrow, if it leadeth unto glory, it is enough; it will be well in the issue.

5. That we must not dote upon sensible consolation. The merciful nature of God should be a support to us, though we see nothing of the effects of it in the course of his dealings with us; and we should believe his love when we do not actually feel it: Job x. 13, ‘And these things hast thou hid in thine heart; I know that this is with thee.’ He speaketh of his favourable inclination to show pity to his creatures. We are not able always to reconcile his present dispensations with his gracious nature, nor our former experience of his goodness; yet faith must not quit its holdfast, but we must see what is hid in God’s heart, and comfort ourselves with concealed favour and mercy, when we cannot comfort ourselves with felt favour and mercy. Though mercies be not visible and obvious to sense, yet the disposition and inclination is ever in God unchangeable and sure. A withdrawn God is a merciful God still.

6. That God can draw light out of darkness, and give light in darkness, and turn darkness into light. God can draw light out of darkness: Gen. i. 2, 3, ‘The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, Let there be light, and there was light.’ He can give light in darkness: Exod. x. 22, 23, ‘And there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days; and they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings;’ Ps. xviii. 28, ‘For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.’ And he can turn darkness into light, that is, change and alter our condition: Isa. ix. 2, ‘The people that have walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined;’ Eph. v. 8, ‘Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.’

7. When you cannot interpret the promises of God by his providential dealing with you, you must interpret his dealing by his promises: Ps. lxxiii. 16, 17, ‘When I thought to know this, it was too painful

for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.' His promises are as the light part of the cloud, his providential dealings as the dark part of the cloud.

8. You must distinguish between a part of God's work and the whole entire frame of it. The taking of a watch asunder to mend it, an unskilful man, when he seeth every pin and wheel taken out, will think this is undoing; but the skilful artist knoweth this is mending and repairing: Zech. xiv. 7, 'But it shall be one day, which shall be known unto the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light.' After the longest suspense there is comfort at the end.

9. That is not best for us which we think best: Mat. xvii. 4, 'It is good for us to be here.' We think it best to be at the top, and have an inspection over affairs, in ease, and in an uninterrupted prosperity. Peter was upon Mount Tabor, but Christ saw it fit to bring him thence, and expose him to the winnowings of Satan, and to penitential weeping, that is wholesome to the soul; and afterwards to employ him in the labours of the gospel, and then to die a cruel death. Paul thought it best to be rid of the thorn in the flesh, but God thought not so: 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' When we are lowest, we are most humble. God's thoughts are not as our thoughts.

10. That God's greatest severity to his people is consistent with his covenant love: Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, 'Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' There is no contradiction between covenant kindness and hard dispensations; they may be easily reconciled.

For the second point, that in dark and gloomy times our great duty is to trust in the Lord. This is prescribed here, and in other places commended to us: Isa. viii. 17, 'I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.' We should not give over seeking for a withdrawn God, but seek, and wait, and look for him. If you keep his place warm in your hearts by your estimation and affection, he will come again: Job xxxv. 14, 'Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.' Times may come when the saints may say they do not see, yea, they shall not see him; yet they must resolve to lie at God's door till relief come. Trust then in him: Job xiii. 15, 'Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.' Though they be under sad dispensations already, and look for sadder, yet they resolve to keep up their dependence, and will not be beaten off from God by any rebukes of providence. No trouble, how great soever, is a warrant to quit our faith. Faith must not quit God when he seemeth to quit us, but must take him for a friend, and put a good construction upon his dealings when he showeth himself an enemy; so that in a sinking, helpless, and hopeless condition this is a great remedy.

The reasons are taken from the act and the object. The act is trusting and staying; the object is God, or the name of God. The benefit we have by this act, the encouragement we have from this object.

1. The utility and profit of trusting: 2 Chron. xx. 20, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall you be established.' If you would be delivered or supported, trust and stay upon the Lord. This allayeth our fears: Ps. lvi. 3, 'At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee;' Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' A christian is, or may be, immovable in all changes of condition. It overcometh our sorrows. There was a storm in David's spirit, how doth he calm it? Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance;' and ver. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' He is at it again and again. It keepeth us from fretting: Ps. xxxvii. 7, 'Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.' It preserveth us from fainting: Ps. xxvii. 13, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' Yea, from defection and apostasy: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' They that cannot trust God cannot be long true to him.

2. There is much in the name of God to encourage trust: Ps. ix. 10, 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.' The name of God is anything by which he is made known. It compriseth two things—what God is in himself, and what he will be to his people.

[1.] What he is in himself; a wise, powerful, and holy being: his three grand attributes are wisdom, goodness, and power. Now nothing can be amiss that is done by a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; and what may here not be expected from him? He that can do all things can do whatever you stand in need of; he that knoweth all things can never be at a loss, either in preventing evil or bestowing good; he that is so good will not be backward to pity and help us. Our choicest consolations are fetched out of God's nature; in his works we see much of him, but in his nature we see an infinite sea of all perfections.

[2.] Consider what God will be to his people, in his providence, in his covenant.

(1.) In his providence. In his works he discovereth his nature. As he is a powerful God, so nothing can be done but his leave and hand is in it, and it is governed by his counsel and will. Your persecutors cannot stir or move or breathe without him. The saints are in his hand: Deut. xxxiii. 3, 'Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand.' We are in a friend's hand: John vi. 20, 'It is I, be not afraid.' His goodness: God is concerned in the condition of his people as well if not more than themselves; they do not suffer but he sympathiseth: Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old;' Zech. ii. 8, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple

of his eye.' In short, he is full of tenderness and moderation. His wisdom : we may trust his wisdom in carving out a portion for us, better than our own understanding : 'Should it be according to thy mind ?' Job xxxiv. 33. Men would have all things done according to their own will : no, better let God alone with it ; for he is a God of judgment, and guideth all things with great moderation and equity : Job xxxiv. 23, 'For he will not lay upon man more than right, that he should enter into judgment with God.' He will not afflict above deserving : Ezra ix. 13, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve.' We are in captivity ; we might have been in hell. Nor beyond strength : 1 Cor. x. 13, 'Who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able.' Above what he hath given, or is ready to give ; nor more than to do them good by it : Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' Now, which is most just, that we should have the disposal of ourselves, or God ? He will do what he pleaseth, whether we be pleased or displeased.

(2.) In his covenant, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ, and the benefits offered there are pardon of sin and eternal life. Pardon of sin is a cure for our greatest and deepest trouble. Eternal life answereth all our desires ; this light affliction is not comparable to it : 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

Use. Well, then—

1. Trust in the Lord against carnal reason, when carnal reason doth not befriend your trust. They that trust God no farther than they can see him, they do not trust God, but their outward probabilities. God hath only the name. Yea, when carnal reason contradicts your trust and checketh all hope : 'Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him,' Job xiii. 15.

2. Trust God against carnal affection ; trust his wise and holy government. We would fain interpose to save our lusts, which sometimes need a sharp cure. God's quarrel is not against your persons, but your sins ; he desireth not your destruction, but your humiliation and reformation. The dearest loss is your sin, and are you loath to spare that ? There is nothing so sad which befalleth the people of God but it tendeth to prevent something which is sadder, which would otherwise befall them : 1 Cor. xi. 32, 'But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world ;' Ps. xciv. 12, 13, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.'

3. Trust him upon his gospel assurance, even against the terms of his own law. We may change courts : Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand ? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared ;' Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.'

For the third point, they that fear God and obey him are most encouraged to trust God.

1. Because precepts and promises go hand in hand, so must our trust and obedience: Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy;' Ps. cxix. 166, 'Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.'

2. Sincerity giveth confidence and boldness, and helpeth our trust. They can delight in the Almighty, and lift up their face to God: 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.'

3. The controversy is taken up when we desire to keep the way of obedience. Sin is the thorn in our sore which caused the first pain: Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?' God hath no quarrel with them, but about their sins.

Use. Then, if we would trust ourselves with God's holy government, let us fear his name, and obey the voice of his servant, and return to the obedience we owe to our creator, and put ourselves into the hands of our redeemer.
