

PHIL. iv. 9. *Those things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do, and the God of peace shall be with you.*

WHAT the particular reason of my choice of this scripture this day is, if you compare my present station, with the intent of the apostle, in these words, you will easily understand.

These words of the apostle, being part of the close of his epistle to the Philippians, are his valediction or farewell to them : It is not unknown to you, that I must now be parted from you ; and I have pitched on this scripture, to be the close of my twenty years ministry among you.

God hath sent me among you to be a builder ; and I have chosen this text, to be a hammer to fasten, and drive home those nails of instruction and consolation, which I have been so long endeavouring to enter into you.

God hath sent me among you as a fisherman ; and I have chosen these words to be as the closing of the net. Behold ! once more the net is spread, and I am now making my last draught ; and oh that it might have the same good speed as Peter's last had, Luke v. 6. It would then pay the charges, though the net break.

God hath sent me among you as an husband-man, to plow and to sow ; and I am now come to cover what hath been sown.

What my aim is in preaching, let it be yours in hearing ; Oh that both preacher and hearers might heartily join in this desire ! This once more, God speed the plough.

In this desire and hope I drive on. In the text observe, a precept, a promise, an entail of the promise on the precept. In the precept we have, 1. An act ; ' do.' 2. An object : ' The things that you have learned, received, heard, and seen.'

The promise is in these words, ' the God of peace shall be with you.'

The entail of the promise on the precept, you have in the connective particle, ' and,' which knits them up together. Do the work, and have the reward ; obey the precept, and enjoy the promise ; ' do what you have received and heard, and the God of peace shall be with you.' Be careful of the former, and be not careful about the latter ; if the precept be performed, the promise shall be made good.

Doct. 2. Christians must be learners, before they can be doers. ' What you have learned, that do.'

Doct. 2. He hath learned well, that hath learned to do well.

Doct. 3. Christians eyes, as well as their ears, may help them on in religion ; or, the holy examples of ministers, should be living sermons to people. ‘What you have seen in me.’ Therefore the apostle exhorts, Phil. iii. 17. ‘Mark them which so walk, as you have us for an example ;’ and 1 Cor. xi. 1. ‘Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ ;’ that is, either I have been a follower of Christ, be ye therefore followers of me ; or else be ye followers of me, as far forth as I have been a follower of Christ. Those ministers may go off the stage with honour and comfort, who have left behind them the good seed of sound doctrine, and the good favour of an holy example.

For my own part, what my doctrine and manner of life hath been among you, you are witnesses, and God also. And however, I have great reason to judge and condemn myself before the Lord, and to bewail it, that my conversation hath been less exemplary and useful, than, oh that it had been ! yet I go off from you, with this testimony upon my heart, that I have not been of those who bind heavy burdens, and lay them on other mens’ shoulders, but will not touch them with one of their fingers ; but my endeavour hath been, to press on my own soul, and hold it out in my own practice, that word of life which I have preached to you ; and therefore am bold, in this sense, to exhort you, in the words of the apostle, ‘Be ye followers of me, as far forth as you have seen me a follower of Christ.’

Doct. 4. Godly ministers when they are parted from their people, would fain leave God behind them. Though it be not unusual, when the Lord sends them away, he goes with them ; God and his messengers, do not seldom take their farewell of people together ; yet their earnest desire is, that though they must away, yet the Lord would stay.

Doct. 5. Faithful ministers would be messengers of peace, going, as well as coming.

As the apostles first words were to be, ‘Peace be unto you,’ Matth. x. so some of this apostle’s last words were, ‘the God of peace shall be with you.’

Doct. 6. Whenever ministers part with their people, if they can but leave godliness in them, they shall certainly leave God with them. Or,

Those that obey the gospel, whatsoever or whomsoever they want, shall ever be in a peaceful and blessed condition.

‘These things do,’ that is, live in the practice and power of that doctrine of godliness ‘which you have received and heard ;’ and then fear not, ‘the God of peace shall be with you.’

This doctrine I shall fully prove to you, after I have premised,

That the doctrine which I have preached to you, is the doc-

trine of godliness ; the sum whereof take in these four particulars :

1. That Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners, came also to sanctify and purge them from their sins.

2. That those that believe in Jesus, must be careful to maintain good works, or to live a godly life.

3. That this godliness is not such a slight, and easy, and empty thing, as the mistaken world imagine ; but stands in an exact conformity of the whole man, heart and life, to the whole will of God.

4. That as whosoever believes not in Jesus, so whosoever is short of this true sincere godliness, cannot be saved.

This is the sum of that doctrine which I have preached unto you ; which being the eternal truth of God, I herein embark my own soul and life, desiring to be found in that same Jesus, and to be found walking in that same way of righteousness, which I have declared unto you.

2. That my design and aim, in preaching this doctrine to you, hath been to beget in you, and through the influence and assistance of the eternal Spirit, to bring you to this true godliness. I have travailed in birth with you, that Christ might be formed in you ; that I might leave you possessors and partakers of that grace which accompanies salvation ; that your faith might stand, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ; that your repentance might be repentance unto life, not to be repented of ; that you might obey from the heart, that form of doctrine that hath been delivered unto you ; that you might stand complete in all the will of God ; that you might be holy, and harmless, the children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked generation, amongst whom you must shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life ; that being rooted, and grounded in love, you might comprehend with all saints, what is the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, and might know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God : to this end have I taught every one, and warned every one, that I might present you perfect in Christ Jesus.

3. That as far forth, as the success hath answered my design and aim upon any of our souls, so far forth stand you entitled to this glorious promise in the text, ‘ the God of peace shall be with you.’ Look how many souls there are amongst you, that live in the power and obedience of these truths you have received ; to so many can I, with confidence, give this farewell of the apostle, without ifs or ands ; ‘ the God of peace shall be with you.’ To whomsoever the Lord hath been a God of grace, to them will he be a God of peace. Whoever amongst you have

this God of grace dwelling and ruling in you, shall certainly find this God of peace dwelling and abiding with you.

These things premised, I shall now give you the full proof of the doctrine, in the following Reasons. The doctrine you remember is, those that obey the gospel, whatsoever, or whomsoever they want, shall ever be in a peaceful and blessed condition.

The Reasons are,

1. The God of peace shall be with them.

2. If God be with them, all things whatsoever that befall them, shall make for their good.

Reas. 1. The God of peace shall be with them; these things do, live in the obedience of the holy doctrine which you have received, and the God of peace shall be with you. This glorious promise is pregnant with all the blessings that heaven and earth can afford.

If you ask, why, what is there in it? I demand of you, What is there in God? God is in the promise, all that is in God is here assured to the godly. The philosophers of old attained to some glimmerings of the excellencies that are in God, by these three ways.

1. *Per viam negationes*, conceiving of him as a Being removed, from all things, signifying imperfection: as ignorance, impotence, iniquity, corruptibility, composition, alteration, or any limits or bounds of this essence, power and glory.

2. *Per viam casualitatis*, conceiving of him, as the fountain of all other beings; and thence concluding, that whatsoever excellencies, or perfections are scattered up and down, in the whole creation, are all united in him, from whom they had their original.

3. *Per viam eminentiae*, by way of excellency; so that whatever perfections, whatever goodness is to be found in any creature, though it be not to be found in God, *formaliter*, yet there is that in him (he being the first cause of all) that doth infinitely, superabundantly answer them all. Though there be not the same specific excellencies in him, nor those very pleasures and delights issuing from him, which the creatures yield; yet there are such excellencies, such perfections, as transcend and surpass them all.

The scriptures tell us more positively and plainly, that God is almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, all sufficient, holy, righteous, gracious: the portion, the protection, the rewarder, yea, the exceeding great reward of them that diligently seek him. And this is he that is in the promise. God is in the promise. I must not enlarge in this spacious field; I shall keep nearer the text, and shall confine myself to these four particulars.

1. God is in the promise, as the God of peace, as the author and bestower of peace. The greatest of blessings, is the blessing of peace, peace hath all blessings included in it. It hath possession, fruition, and security ; it hath plenty, pleasure and safety ; where there is no peace, there is no security for the holding, nor opportunity of enjoying what we have. Whatever we have, we have it as if we had it not. Peace is the greatest of blessings.

Peace with God is the most glorious of peace. What is there that is excellent, what is there that is desirable, that is not comprehended in this peace with God ? Where there is peace, there is pardon ; guilt cannot consist with this peace ; ‘ being justified by faith, we have peace with God.’ Where there is peace, there is grace and holiness ; ‘ there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.’ Where there is peace, there is love and good will. As love, so peace is the union of hearts. The God of peace is with you, signifies no less than this ; the almighty God bears you good-will. These two, peace and good-will, are twins ; ‘ on earth peace, good-will towards men.’ Where there is peace, there is life, everlasting life ; internal, is the seed of eternal peace.

This peace is a portion ; peace with God is our possession of the God of peace ; this peace is a sanctuary ; if the God of peace be with us, the peace of God will keep our hearts.

Christians, in the world you must have trouble ; suppose you have, yet in him you shall have peace, who hath overcome the world, Isa. xxvi. 3. ‘ Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,’ (in peace, as it is in the original) ‘ whose mind is stayed on thee,’ Ps. lxxxv. 8. ‘ I will hear what the Lord God will speak, he will speak peace to the people, and to his saints.’ What a clattering is there in the world ? what tumults and commotions are raised about the followers of Christ, as if the world were falling about their ears ? The devil speaks wrath ; evil men speak death and bonds to them ; breathing out threatenings, reproaches, persecutions against them. In the midst of all this fearful noise, I’ll hearken, saith the Psalmist, what the Lord God will speak. Whatsoever men or devils speak, I will hearken, if the Lord God speak at the same rate. Oh no, he will speak peace to his saints ; let the sons of contention do what they can, the sons of God shall be sons of peace, they shall live in peace, they shall die in peace, they dwell in peace for ever. Isa. xxxii. 17, 18. ‘ The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places ; oh how great is the peace that they have, who love thy law !’ Christians, fear not to follow God ; let not that sad word, nor

the fulfilling of it, fear you out of your duty, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.' What if they do ; whilst you are able to say, I am persecuted, but I have peace ; I am poor, but I have peace ; in prison, but I have peace ; in a wilderness, but I have peace : though all the world be against me, God is at peace, my soul is in peace, what discouragement should all that be to you !

2. He that is the God of peace, is the God of power. He promises peace, and he promises no more than he can perform. He can create peace, he can make their enemies to be at peace with them. He can make a league for them with the beasts of the field ; with the lions, with the wolves, with the most brutish among the people. He can say to the proud winds and waves, Peace, be still, and they obey him. He can give them rest (from) the days of adversity ; he can give them rest (in) the days of adversity ; he can give his beloved sleep upon the points of swords and spears.

3. He that is the God of peace, is the God of patience. This is my great fear, that though God gives, yet I shall break my peace ; the God of peace with me ? oh ! this is he whom I dishonour, and disoblige daily ; by my distrusts, discontents, impatiencies, murmurings ; and what peace to such an heart ? what peace, so long as such unbelief ; so much iniquity as I find daily within me, remains upon me ? Will he, with whom no iniquity can dwell, dwell in that heart, where there is so much iniquity, by which he is provoked every day ; but he that is the God of peace, is also the God of patience ! who tho' he will not bear the iniquities of his adversaries, yet he will bear much with the infirmities of his people. Psal. lxxxix. 30. &c. 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments ; if they break my statutes and keep not my commandments ; then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.'

4. He that is the God of peace, is the God of hope. I have no peace in possession, whatever there be in the promise. I live in the fire, am born a man of contention. What likelihood is there, that I should ever live to see a good day ? my comforts are broken, my estate is lost, my liberty is gone ; friends I have none, enemies I have many, and mighty. I dwell in Mesech, I have my habitation in the tents of Kedar ; I am for peace they are for war ; whither ever I look, round about me, before me, behind me, on the right hand or on the left, all speak trouble and terror to me. I have no peace ; what, nor no hope of peace, neither ? where is thy God, man ? hast thou a God in thee, and yet no hope in thee ? the God of peace, and

yet no peace ! the God of hope, and yet no hope ! the God of hope will yet fill thee with joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13. ‘ Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? hope in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God.’ Psal. xliii. 11. The God of hope will open a window of hope in the darkest times, a door of hope in the most desperate cases. The God of hope will bear up the spirits of his saints, in hope against hope ; and this hope will never disappoint them. It shall never be said, there is no peace, there is no hope, till it can be said, there is no God in Israel.

But how, or in what sense, is it to be understood, that this God of peace will be with us.

I answer in three particulars.

1. The *heart of God* will be with you. Joseph’s blessing, ‘ the good will of him that dwelt in the bush,’ will be thy portion, Deut. xxxiii. 16. What was that bush ? the church or Israel of God. What case was that bush in ? ’twas all on a light fire : ’twas all in a flame. Who was it that dwelt in the bush ? God was in the bush ; and that kept it from consuming, though not from burning. The good will of this God shall be with thee ; his love, his favour, his care. ‘ I love them that love me,’ Prov. viii. 17. ‘ The Lord loveth the righteous,’ Psal. cxlvi. 8. The love of God, is the womb of all good. Hence sprang *the morning star*, from the love of God came the son of God ; hence came that *womb of the morning*, the blessed gospel ; which is so big with glorious grace ; with light, life, pardon, peace, glory, immortality ; from the love of God came the glorious gospel of God. *The upper springs*, all spiritual and heavenly blessings ; *the nether springs*, all earthly and outward blessings, do all rise and bubble up out of this fountain, ‘ the love of God.’ ‘ The precious things of heaven ; the precious fruits brought forth by the sun ; the precious fruits put forth by the moon ; the chief things of the ancient mountains ; the precious things of the lasting hills ; the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof ;’ all these flow in with the ‘ good will of him that dwelt in the bush.’

Love is all ; the apostle tells us, Rom. xiii. our love to God is the ‘ fulfilling of the law ;’ that is, it will bring forth all that to God, all that duty, and obedience which the law requires. I may tell you, that God’s love to us is the fulfilling of the gospel, that is, it will pour down all that upon us, it will do all that for us, which the gospel promises. Look over the whole gospel ; read and study every precious leaf and line of that blessed book ; and if there be enough in all that to make thee blessed, and to encourage thee on in thy holy course, all this is thine. Thou hast that love of God with thee, which will fulfil

the gospel ; there shall not one jot or tittle fail thee of all that the gospel promises. ‘ The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.’

2. The *help of God* will be with you, the Lord will be your helper in the day of your distress. Heb. xiii. 5, 6. ‘ He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ So that we may boldly say, ‘ The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.’ He hath said ‘ I will not leave thee ;’ and therefore we may say, ‘ I will not fear ;’ He hath said ‘ I will be,’ and therefore we may boldly say, ‘ the Lord is my helper ;’ he hath said, ‘ He will not forsake, he will help :’ and who is he that shall say, There is no help for thee in thy God.

There is no man, whose case may not be so desperate, as to be above all human help. If he should cry out, as the woman to the King of Israel ; ‘ Help, O king,’ the king must answer, ‘ If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ?’ If he should cry out, ‘ Help, O man of God,’ the man of God must answer, ‘ If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ?’ If he cry out, ‘ *Help O my friends*, my wit, my policy, my purse ; all these must answer, ‘ If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall we help thee ?’ But what case is there, wherein an [*Help Lord*] will not do ?

Foolish men count their case desperate, when they come to their [*God help*] that is an usual expression to set forth the extremity and helplessness of any man’s case. When we see men even lost in any misery, and their case even utterly hopeless ; then to signify our sense of such men’s lost condition, we cry out, God help that man, God help that woman, they are lost creatures. Ay, but if men did understand and consider what the help of the Lord is, they would see there could be no case so desperate, but an [*help Lord*] might recover all, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. When David was greatly distressed, and all was gone, ‘ he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.’

Consider here two things.

1. What his case then was ; he was in great distress ; he had lost all that ever he had ; his spoils that he had taken were all gone, his corn, and his cattle, his wives and his city were all lost, he had not an habitation in all the world ; he had nothing left him but a poor army, and these were worse than lost ; they were even ready to fall upon him. ‘ The people spake of stoning him, but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.’

2. What the event hereupon was : why God helped him to all he had again : ver. 19. ‘ There was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters ; neither spoil, nor any thing they had taken, David recovered all.’ Hence note,

1. That a Christian when he hath lost all, hath yet a God to go to at last.

Whilst a Christian hath a God to go to, his case is never desperate ; let him but encourage himself in his God, and all will be recovered.

Sinners, triumph not over the poor people of God ; when they are at their worst, when they are brought as low as your pride and malice can lay them ; tho' they should be stript naked, and left destitute of all their comforts, tho' all the world should ride on their backs, and tread on their necks, yet rejoice not against them : tho' they fall they shall arise ; when they are at their worst, there's still help for them in their God.

3. *The presence of the Lord shall be with them.* Whithersoever they may be scattered, they shall not be scattered from their God. That promise made to Moses, *Exod. xxxiii. 14.* ' My presence shall go with thee,' belongs to all the Israel of God. [My presence] in the original, 'tis *my face* ; in the Septuagint, ' myself shall go with thee.'

The presence of God is either general or special.

By his general presence, he is every where.

1. *Per essentiam*, he fills all things.

2. *Per cognitionem*, he beholds all things.

3. *Per sustentationem*, he upholds all things.

4. *Per dominium*, he governs all things.

But to let this pass, as not so proper to our purpose.

2. There is his *special* or gracious presence, whereby he manifests himself to be with his people.

1. In some visible and standing tokens of his presence ; as in those extraordinary, the pillars of the cloud and of the fire ; and in those ordinary, the ark and the temple of old, and the ordinances of the gospel now.

2. In some inward influences, and irradiations, upon the hearts of his people.

3. In some visible and signal effects of his presence ; whereof there are very many. There are, amongst others, these two notable effects of God's gracious presence, which his people, by virtue of this promise, may with confidence expect, Conduction, Covering ; they shall be led in their way, and they shall be hid in their way.

1. Conduction : the Lord will be with them, to lead them and guide them in the way that they should go. *Psal. xxv. 9, 12.* ' The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.' *Psal. cvii. 7.* ' He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.' *Psal. v. 8.* ' Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies, make thy way straight before my face.'

The Lord leads his people in their way, chiefly by his word,

which is a light to their feet, and a lanthorn to their paths : And sometimes also by his providences, hedging up all by-ways, and leaving but one way open to them, that hath the least appearance of the way of God. So ordering the matter, that any other way that is before them, looks with too foul a face to leave any doubt upon them, whether that be the way of God or not.

It is never uncomfortable to the people of God, while they see their way before them : doubts about their way, are more perplexing than dangers in their way. When they know what God would have them do, they can chearfully trust him for any thing they are like to suffer. Dost thou meet with wolves or lions in thy way ? thou mayest bless God it is there thou meetest them, it would be ill meeting them elsewhere.

2. Covering or protection in their way : Psal. xxxi. 20. ' Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, from the pride of man ; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion, from the strife of tongues.' (Thou shalt hide them in thy presence) or face ; thy light shall be their dark place to cover them : ' thou art my hiding place,' Psal. xxxii. 7. (In the secret of thy presence) the saints' hiding place is secret ; such, where neither the pride of men can find them, nor can they understand what it is. Reproaches shall not find them, persecution shall not find them, whose souls are hid in God : they are not found, when they are found ; they are hid when they seem to lie most open, and most exposed to mens' will and lust. Sinners do not understand what refuge the saints have in God. It is a great secret, a mystery to them : as the joy of the saints, the comforts of the saints, are a secret. A stranger shall not meddle with his joy : so is their safety of security ; they do not understand what kind, nor how great security ; what sure, nor what sweet repose the saints find in God. The secret of God's presence is a sure and a sweet resting-place for all his saints ; but how sure, and how sweet, no man knows, but they that enjoy it. The secret intimations of the care of God for them ; of his everlasting kindness to them ; of his governing hand, in all that befalls them, working it to their greater good ; the secret supports and refreshings darted in, as the beams of his countenance ; their secret sense that their head, their main, is in safety, though they have bruises in their heel, will yield such rest in the day of greatest adversity, as men can neither see, nor take from them. The pillar of the cloud interposed, did both hinder the Egyptian pursuit, and hide from their eyes, the comfort of that light which shined upon the camp of Israel. Moses knew what the comfort of God's presence meant, when he said, Exod. xxxiii. 15. ' If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence.' It is (if considered) a great word. Israel was then in a wilderness : among

wild beasts ; among briers and thorns ; in a weary pilgrimage ; but they had God among them : the Lord was carrying them to Canaan, the land of their rest, a land flowing with milk and honey ! but Moses prays, ‘ If thy presence go not with us, carry us not hence.’ We had rather be where we are, in a wilderness with God, than go to Canaan, and leave our God behind us. If thy presence go with us, we are willing to go, when thou wilt, whither thou wilt, which way thou wilt ; tho’ by the tents of Edomites, Ishmaelites, Moabites, Hagarens ; though through the armies of Anakims, Zamzummims : we will go any where, so God go with us. The absence of God makes a Canaan worse than a wilderness : the presence of God makes a wilderness better than a Canaan : and this presence of God shall be the lot of all his saints.

Reason 2. If God be with you, all shall make for you : all providential occurrences and events whatsoever, all difficulties, straits, disasters, disappointments whatsoever, that may come upon you, shall make for your good, Rom. viii. 31. ‘ If God be with us, who can be against us ?’ Who can be against us ? that is, none can be against us : or if any be, yet those that are against you shall be for you. Gen. xlii. 36. ‘ Joseph is not, and Simeon is not (said old Jacob), and must Benjamin away too ! all these things are against me :’ but yet, as old as he was, he lived to see all making for him, Rom. viii. 26. ‘ We know all things shall work together for good to those that love God.’ This is such a promise, as, if it were thoroughly believed, would set our feet on the necks of all our fears and dangers ; and will prove the truth of Sampson’s riddle, ‘ Out of the eater came meat, and out of the strong, sweetness.’

Now because there is so great encouragement to godliness in it, I shall spend the more time in enlarging upon it ; and shall shew,

1. What those things are, which are especially intended in that comprehensive term, ‘ all things.’
2. What that good is, which these things shall work to.
3. To whom these things shall work for good.
4. How these things shall work for good.
5. That they shall undoubtedly work for good to them that love God.

1. What those things are, which are especially intended, in that comprehensive term, ‘ all things.’ Some there are, as Augustine with others, who understand it universally, of all things whatsoever, whether good or evil, extending it even to the sins of the saints. It is true, God doth often bring good out of these evils ; making use of former sins to be forces against future : There is nothing that doth make the sinner more weary and wary of sin, than sin itself ; the review of what we have done

doth ofteneſt fright us from doing ſo any more. When you look back on ſin, and ſee its face, (for ſin carries its face in its back) you will fear it the more, whenever you meet it again. There is no argument doth more effectually humble and break the heart, and make it more fearful and watchful againſt ſin, than the ſhame and the ſmart of thoſe ſins we have fallen by. This is true, God doth often make this uſe of ſin, to be its own cure : and therefore it is not ſeldom ſeen, that the chief of ſinners have come to be the chief of ſaints. Yet, beſides, that this is not the ſubject matter that the apoſtle is here treating of ; let thoſe that bring ſin within the compaſs of this promiſe, and make this to run into the ſenſe of it ; that even all the ſins of the ſaints ſhall work for their good, let ſuch tell us, how, or in what way it is imaginable, that the ſinful decays of ſuch who backſlide from God, and never recover to their former life and vigour, but live and die in a languiſhing ſtate of ſoul ; let them tell us, how ſuch ſins can be imagined to work for their good : till then, we muſt enter our diſſent from this interpretation.

This then is not the ſenſe of the promiſe, that all ſins ſhall work together for good.

And yet if it were, it would be but a poor argument, to take the more liberty to ſin, becauſe God will turn it to good ; this would be even as rational, as for a man to tear his fleſh, break his bones, pluck out his eyes, burn his houſe, &c. becauſe God will turn all his ſuffering to good : he is little better than mad, that would not conclude ſuch a man out of his wits.

Others reſtrain it to the evil things that befall the ſaints, not the *turpia*, but the *triftia*, their ſufferings and afflictions ; to that vanity, and thoſe vexations they are in bondage under, and under which, with the whole creation, they groan and travail in pain, waiting for their redemption ; of which the apoſtle had been treating in the former part of the chapter. And yet while they pitch the ſenſe, eſpecially on ſuch things as theſe, they grant it may be extended to all other things, ſin only excepted ; *ad omnes res, creaturas, eventus, tum ſecundos, tum adverſos* : To all things and events, whether prosperous or afflictive. So Pareus with others.

And theſe I take to have hit the right. All heavy things, all the ſufferings and afflictions of the ſaints ; and not only theſe, but all things elſe whatſoever, that in the whole courſe of Providence be their lot or portion ; all the dealings of God with them, all the diſpenſations of providence towards them, ſhall all work for their good.

2. What is that good, which theſe things work to the ſaints ; or in what ſenſe all things may be ſaid to work good to them ? The ſenſe in general is this : They ſhall all walk to their welfare, they ſhall all happen to them for the better : there ſhall

nothing befall them, but one time or other they shall have reason to say, It was well for me, that it was thus with me. The wisdom and goodness of God did cut out such portions continually for me, did lead me through such a series and succession of cases and events, which though I could not understand, yet now I see that every condition, every contingency and occurrence of my life, through which Providence led me, was useful, and could not well have been wanted, but it would have been the worse for me. Thus in the general.

Particularly, for the fuller understanding what good it is that all things work to, consider, That there is a twofold good of the saints ; such as they obtain and enjoy, whilst they are *in via* in their way or course ; or such as they shall obtain, when they are *in termino*, when they are gotten to the end of their way, when they are come to their place. Or thus ; there is a threefold good of the saints, temporal, spiritual, eternal.

1. Temporal good, or our *bona corporis*, the outward good things of this life, which may serve and please, and delight us in these days of our pilgrimage ; which may abide with us, and attend us to our graves, but there will take their leave of us.

2. Spiritual good ; or our *bona animæ*, and those are either, 1. External, as the ordinances of God ; the light, liberties, and privileges of the gospel ; the society, and communion of saints, and our peaceful and plentiful enjoying of them. 2. Internal, as spiritual grace, faith, love, hope, patience, &c.

3. Eternal good, or that glory and joy, that everlasting rest and peace, the possession of that inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, that is reserved in heaven for us.

Now here note these things.

1. That our *bona corporis*, our outward good things, are only good for us, as they are conducive *ad bonum spirituales*, to the good of our souls. The *bona viæ*, are only good in the event, when they tend to the *bonum patriæ*. This world is but a nursery for eternity ; we are planted in this, in order to our transplanting into the other world ; and whatever we have here, is either good or evil, according to the respect that it bears to hereafter : As far forth as our immortal part is improved by these perishing things, so far forth only are they good for us. He that hath this world's goods, and is not hereby made more rich towards God ; he who prospers in this world, and yet his soul doth not prosper ; much more, he whose worldly fulness becomes the emptiness, and leanness of his soul : Are these good things good for him ? Is he in prosperity upon a true account, whose soul prospers not ? It is not ever good to prosper in the world ; it cannot be universally said, it is good to be rich, it is good to be in health, it is good to be in honour, it is good to be at liberty ; the contrary may sometimes be true ; it is good to

be poor, to be sick, to be in disgrace, to be in bonds; the necessity of our souls doth not seldom require it: then alone it is good to be full, and to abound, when our outward abundance farthereth our spiritual welfare.

Christians, could we receive this truth, that our outward good things are only good for us, as far forth as they conduce to our spiritual good: could we receive this truth, and live under the power of it, what a different judgment should we then have of all these worldly matters, from what we have? and how strangely would the course of this world be then changed? Would there then be such a violent and eager pursuing these carnal things? Would there then be such whining and complaining, and murmuring at every cross providence? We would then say, this may be good for me; good for my soul, how sad soever it looks.

2. That external spiritual good things, the ministry, and ordinances of the gospel, &c. are so far good for us, as they conduce to our internal spiritual good: and they being ordinarily so, it must be concluded, that ordinarily it is good for us that we enjoy them, and be not deprived of them. God may see the cutting Christians short of those privileges, and liberties, to be sometimes needful for them; and then even this also makes for their good; whereof more anon.

3. That our inward spiritual good, is good for us, so far forth as it tends to our eternal good: and therefore grace is ever good for us. It is ever true; it is good to be holy, good to be humble, to be in the fear of God, and to flourish in his grace. We may have too much money, too much credit, but we can never have too much grace. Our greatest flourishing and fruitfulness in grace, will certainly abound to our more full reward.

4. Note, That this is the plain sense and meaning of the promise, 'all things shall work for good,' that is, whatsoever befalls, shall certainly promote our internal and eternal welfare; and as far forth as the outward privileges of the gospel, yea, and the good things of this life, conduce towards this, all shall work for these also. If it be good for us to be rich, if it be good for us to be in honour, good for us to be at liberty; good for our souls, good in reference to our eternal state; if it be good for us that we enjoy the ministry of the gospel; there shall nothing befall us, that shall hinder; there shall be nothing wanting to us, that might further this our good.

The sum is, That all providential dispensations shall be so ordered, that we shall want nothing but what it is better to want than have: we shall suffer nothing but what we cannot well be without, but what the good of our souls requires; and that which we do possess, and that which we do suffer, shall not fail of bringing about its end, the advancing our eternal good.

And if this be the meaning, what a glorious promise is this? What can any rational man desire more? nothing shall befall him but shall be for his good: he shall be deprived or kept short of nothing, but what he had better be without than have. He that is unsatisfied with this promise, it is either from lust or unbelief; either he doth not believe, that God is true, and will perform this word: or else it is because his lust must be satisfied, though with the denial of his reason and interest; he that desires an estate in the world, ease, pleasure, liberty; or any thing else upon any other terms, but as they may be for his real good, hath as much lost his wits as his faith: and he that will take upon him to know what is good for him, better than God, may as well take upon him to govern the world. You may with as good reason, desire a fever, or a dropfy, that you may have the pleasure of your drink; as for the pleasures that carnal things would bring you in, to desire them, when they would be a snare to your souls.

3. To whom these things shall work for good; to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose: to the people of God, who you see, are here described by their election and vocation, 'the called according to his purpose,' and their sanctification, 'they that love God.' Love God, and you will live in the obedience of his whole will: These are the people, to whom this promise is made; prove your calling and election, prove your sanctification, and you may write your names in this glorious promise; 'all things shall work for your good.'

To those that are rebels, and reprobates from God, all things shall work together for evil. Whilst things hurtful work together for good to the saints; all good things work together for the hurt of sinners: their peace hurts them, their plenty hurts them, their pleasure hurts them; yea, both their prosperity and adversity, their plenty and their poverty, their pleasure and their trouble, their honour and disgrace, every thing that befalls them, turns to their prejudice. Their prosperity destroys them; their table is their snare; their pleasures are their plagues; and their very punishments are turned into sin; every thing that befalls them, heightens and hardens them in their wickedness, and ripens them for vengeance. God is not with them, and therefore nothing prospers with them. God is with his saints, and therefore nothing comes amiss to them, but all for their greater advantage: Christians, this is your portion, and your peculiar, wherein the men of this world shall neither partake with you, nor be ever able to deprive you of it.

4. How all things shall work for their good: in special, how shall the evil things, the sufferings of this life be for their good: How can this be? must we misbelieve our senses, lay down our

reasons, ere we can believe the scriptures? Must we call evil good, and good evil? Must we count darkness light, and light darkness? Is pleasure pain, and pain pleasure? Is loss gain, and gain loss? Is ease torment, and torment ease? Doth religion make things cease to be what they are, and to be what they are not? or at least, must we believe, that darkness is the mother of light, that good is the daughter of evil? Can we gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Can darkness give light, or death itself bring forth life? Must we say, that contraries no longer destroy, but produce each other, and that the womb brings forth its own destruction? How can these things be?

But must God give a reason of his actions, or else they are not! though evil cannot bring forth good, darkness cannot bring forth light? yet, cannot God bring forth good out of evil, light out of darkness? though darkness cannot bring forth light; evil cannot bring forth good by a natural causation; yet cannot God make evil an occasion of good? Though it doth not work efficiently, yet can it not work objectively neither to it? Though the torment the medicine puts men to, be not ease, yet may it not work towards ease? May not the storm, though it help not, yet hasten the labourer on his work, the traveller on his way? May not the darkness of the night, make more diligent in the day? May not sickness teach men more temperance, and poverty more frugality?

But to proceed more distinctly; how can the saints evil things work to their good? That they do so, cannot be denied, unless we deny, not only scripture, but common sense, and experience; but how comes it to pass?

I answer in four particulars;

1. The afflictions and tribulations of the saints are the way that leads them on to the possession of that good, which God hath intended to them; afflictions are the way of the kingdom; the cross is the way to the crown, Acts xiv. 22. 'Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.' Psal. lxxvi. 11, 12. 'Thou broughtest us into the net, thou hast laid affliction upon our loins, thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, thou broughtest us into a wealthy place.'

Observe it; their troubles are their way to their triumph; their very falling into the net, their way to escape. Their enemies boast; Escape! Arise! yes, let them free themselves with such hopes while they will, we have them sure enough, we have them under foot, we have them in the net; if this be their way, we will keep them in their way long enough; now we have them down, they shall not be able to rise. Ay, but yet it appears, through all this the Lord led them forth into a wealthy place, The high-way of the proud is it not

their more ready way to the dust, than the dust of saints is their sure way to honour. When Israel were to go to Canaan, they must take the brick kilns, the Red-sea, the wilderness, Jordan, in their way ; could any one have imagined, that the bondage, the straits they were under, the doubling their tasks, the cruelty of their task-masters, their encloser at the Red-sea, did mean any good to them ? yet, How fell it out at last ? their darkest dispensations had light in their latter end ; their greatest bondage leads on to their greatest liberty.

Every cross providence, is a step to the accomplishment of the promise ; the wheel is ever moving on its end ; it moves still forwards, even when it seem to go quite backwards ; as the river, by its many turnings and windings, forwards and backwards, is still in motion to the sea, when its seems to be running quite contrary.

Christians, if ever the salvation of God seems to be removed farther off from you ; if the work of God should at any time seem to go backwards, if cross winds should turn the whole course, so that you appear rather to be marching back to Egypt than on to Canaan, yet be not discouraged ; though your way be unlikely, and unpromising way, though you be led about forwards and backwards, yet still you are making on ; though the lesser wheels be never so cross and contrary in their motions, yet the great wheel is still moving right on to your blessed and hoped end. God intends your good, your spiritual good here, your eternal good hereafter : and believe it now, for he will let you see it hereafter, that those very things which most threaten your miscarriage, and a total abortion of your hopes, are made all to concur to the bringing them about, and to your more full and speedy possession of them.

Note farther here two things.

1. All things work ; not they shall work, *de futuro*, but *de presenti*, they do work : as the apostle says, ‘ The mystery of iniquity ; ’ so we may say, the mystery of the saints redemption doth already work ; the work is already on the wheel, and every wheel is on its motion for you ; not only your brethren, the saints and angels, who all are praying for your peace, and seeking your good, but your enemies also, the dragon with all his armies, are at work for you : all the councils of this world, are already sitting upon the very matter : God hath called them together for this purpose, the Pope, with all his conclave ; the Jesuits, Priests, Monks and Friars, with all their convent ; yea, the devil, with all his conclave of hell, are all at work for the good of saints. It is true, they mean not, nor intend any such thing, their designs are against you ; they count they are working for themselves ; as it is said concerning the Assyrian, Isa. x. 6, 7. God sent him forth upon a design of

his own, to execute his counsel, in the punishing of hypocrites ; to purge out the chaff from the wheat ; nevertheless, he meaneth not so, nor doth his heart think so : the Assyrian minds not what God's design is, but follows his own design ; fights for himself, and spoils for himself ; but God's design is still carried on by him, though he thinks not of it.

All the events in the world are driving the same way, every disease or infirmity that comes upon you, every loss that you sustain, every scoff or reproach that you suffer ; the shame in your faces, the sorrow of your hearts, the torment in your bowels, the aches in your bones, are all working your good. All the changes of your conditions, your fair weather, and your foul, your sun-shine and your clouds, your plenty and your wants, your eases and your pains, your liberties and your prisons, are all making for you : your good is already working by all these things.

See Christians, what an harvest of blessedness is growing up to you, out of this promise ; the seed is already sowing, your good is already working : God is at work, the whole creation is at work, men and angels, good men and evil men, friends and enemies, heaven and earth, and hell, are already engaged to work your good.

2. They work together, that is, as some understand it, they work together with God ; all these second causes work together with the first cause ; or as others, they work together amongst themselves. There is such a concatenation and concentrating of all these second causes, in the same design, that however they seem to thwart, and cross, and destroy some of them, what the others build and advance, yet they are all united in their end ; they jointly contribute to the weal of the saints. Though, if I mistake not, this latter be the more sense of the two : Yet I know no reason why both may not be understood. In the hand, and under the conduction of Providence, all these lower things concur and co-operate in the good of the church.

By the way, observe, what an harmony there is in all the works of providence ; The most cross and thwarting occurrences, do all conspire, and go hand in hand, to bring about the same end. As the differing virtues of various drugs do all concur to make up the medicine ; As the differing sounds of several strings or instruments, do altogether make up the melody ; As the differing colours in a picture, the dark as well as the brighter, do jointly contribute to the beauty of the piece ; no less do the most contrary, and contradictory actions and events, both make up the beauty of providence, and jointly subserve that one end, to which, by an unseen hand, and an all seeing eye, they are directed, and intended.

2. The evil things that befall the saints, come upon them to

keep out worse things. Wherever the cross comes, if it had not come, something worse might? The cross may be a means to secure from the curse: the curse was slain on the cross of Christ; and our cross also hath its use, to the delivering us from it.

Cor. xi. 32. 'We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world;' *periissem nisi periissem*: I had died, if I had not suffered; it is more men's cases, besides his that spake it; it is no bad exchange to have a cross instead of a curse.

3. The evil things of the saints, prepare them for better things; that they may work good for them, they are working them to good; working out their sin and iniquity, wearying them of sin. Hosea ii. 6. 'I will hedge up her ways with thorns, then shall she say I will return:' sin brought in afflictions into the world, and afflictions help to carry sin out; the cross, to which sin was once nailed, is now nailed to sin: the saints can seldom be meddling with sin, but they find it too heavy for them. Our Lord beats the devil with his own weapons, by those very means, purging his saints, by which he endeavours to pollute them; making those very persecutions, by which he labours to force them from holiness, to fix them in it.

Christians comfort your hearts; those floods that are cast against you, shall but wash you the whiter, and make you more meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: your purgatory prepares you for your paradise. No unclean thing must enter in thither: and you are not like to be made so clean, as by falling into the hands of the unclean. The saints never look so well, like sheep come from the washing, as when they come up from the pots, their very black makes them comely.

Oh Christians! what a comfort would it be, if your experience might come in, and seal to this truth: if you could say, thus it hath been with me; 'Before I was afflicted I went astray: I was proud, and vain, and wanton, and slothful, and carnal but now have I kept thy word.'

Sinners, whatever your mind be in persecuting the saints, never think to debauch them by it; if that be your aim, you mistake your course; the living spark which God hath kindled in them will not be blown out, but be blowing up, by your puffing at it; the dirt you cast upon them, doth but scour them the brighter. You take the best course you can, to keep them closer to the Lord, and his way: the warm sun will more hazard the loss of their garments, than the blustering wind: let them alone, the Spirit of the Lord within them, will be too hard for hell, with all its black regiments; and will not only secure

them, but advance them yet higher, by all their assaults. These stars shine the brightest when the night is darkest: when you have done your worst, it will be the better with them; though they will not thank you, yet they will thank God, for what they have suffered by you. If this be your aim, to make them like yourselves, you may set your hearts at rest, and give over such a vain attempt: your fury is like to do as little to force them, as your virtues are to invite them to a compliance with you. Your faces are too foul to draw them into your love, and yet not fierce enough to drive them into your fear. Satan, try thy utmost strength and skill, and if thou lovest not by thine own play at last, if thou findest not the poor people of God gotten nearer heaven, by thy attempts of plucking them down to hell, then let thy lies be believed, before the everlasting gospel.

Christians, make me not ashamed in this same confident boasting of you; yea, contradict not your God, by suffering yourselves to be corrupted by the evil men. The Lord himself hath adventured deep upon your integrity and steadfastness: The honour of his truth and faithfulness lies at stake, he hath said, 'That they shall not be afraid of any evil tidings, their heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,' Ps. cxii. 7. He hath said, 'By this shall their iniquity be purged, and this shall be all the fruit, to take away their sin.' God hath said, 'All things shall work together for good to them.' They shall not be the worse, but the better, for all that befalls them: they shall love me and my holy ways the more, they shall cleave unto me the closer, they shall be made more pure, and more tender: by all they suffer for righteousness sake; they shall love conscience, and their integrity, and faithfulness to it never the worse, for that it hath cost them so dear, but shall prize it the more: and be the more wary and tender, how they pollute and turn aside from it. God hath ventured deep on you; make not him a liar: the devil and his instruments will be ready to say, concerning you, as once he did to the Lord concerning his servant Job; Put them into our power, let us have the handling of them a while, and thou shalt quickly see, what truth there is in them, or what trust there is to them; they will curse thee to thy face; they will deny thee to thy face, they will eat their own words, they will be ashamed of their God, their godliness and confidence. Let God be true, Christians, and the devil a liar; be living commentaries on this blessed text; let the world, and their black prince see, that they cannot make you miserable, because they cannot make you sinners like themselves: that you are still the more upright, for falling into the hands of a crooked generation: let them see, that though your God will not suffer you, yet you are contented, to serve him for nothing. That though this hedge be removed from you, yet your heart is not removed from him; be able to

say, ' Though all this be come upon us, our heart is not turned back, neither have we declined thy way.' Let your standing and increasing in the grace of God, and abounding in the works of righteousness, be a standing witness for God in the world, and a seal to his scriptures, and in special to the glorious truth of this text.

4. The evil things of the saints, prepare better things for them; their sufferings go into their reward: ' As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ: ' every suffering comes with a comfort in its belly; and the sweet is so great as swallows up the bitter; it is a hundred-fold that the saints gain by all their losses in this life; but how great shall their reward be in heaven. 2 Cor. iv. 17. ' Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory.' They shall not only have weight for weight, measure for measure, their load of glory for their load of sufferings; but they shall have over-weight, over-measure; good measure pressed down, heaped together and running over, shall then be given unto them: according to their deep poverty, shall be the height of their riches; according as their blackness hath been in their houses of bondage, shall be their brightness in the land of promise; ' for all thy shame thou shalt have double: ' the double of thy reproach in renown, the double of thy tears in triumphs, all thy bottled tears shall be returned in flaggons of joy; yea, in rivers of eternal pleasure.

By this time, Christians, you see what glory there is in this good word: ' All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' And that none may have the face to say all this is but conceit; I shall, in the next place, bring in clear and undeniable evidence, that it is certainly and unquestionably so as hath been said: and therefore know,

5. That all things do, and shall certainly work ' for good to them that love God.' This (besides the testimony of the scripture) I shall make evident from these three propositions:

1. There is a Divine Providence that governs the world.
2. The design of providence, is the accomplishment of the good purpose and promise of God.
3. The providence of God shall never fail of accomplishing its end.

1. There is a Divine Providence which governs the world; the Epicureans, who deny Providence, and leave all on chance and fortune, may as well deny that there is a God, which yet they are ashamed to stand to. Of Epicurus himself it was said, *Quem nihil pudendum pudet, pudet tamen Deum negare.*

It can be no way reconcileable to the infinite wisdom of God, who made this glorious fabric with the various creatures therein, either not to determine them to their ends, or else to take no

care for their accomplishing those ends they are determined to. The whole current of scripture is so plain in these matters, that he that runs may read. Let the following scriptures, (amongst others) be considered.

Psal. xcvi. 1. 'The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the isles be glad.' Psal. lxxvii. 15, 16. 'The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season : thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desires of every living thing.' Psal. xxxvi. 6. 'Thou preservest man and beast.' Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. 'Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South, but God is the judge, he putteth down one, and setteth up another, Amos iii. 6. 'Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?' Psal. xvii. 13, 14. 'Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword ; from men which are thy hand.' The confessions of those infidels, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius speak the same. Dan. iv. 35. 'All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and he doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?' Dan. vi. 26. 'I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble, and fear, before the God of Daniel ; for he is the Living God, and stedfast for ever ; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed ; and his dominion shall be even to the end : He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth ; who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.'

But more distinctly, the Lord governs all inanimate and sensitive creatures in their actions ; he orders the stars in their courses. The stars in their courses he made to fight against Sifera. -He governs the winds and the floods ; he bringeth forth the winds out of his treasures, he rides upon the wings of the wind. He maketh the clouds his chariots, he sitteth on the floods ; the thunder, and the hail, and the rain, and the frosts, are all at his command. He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth the ice like morsels ; he sets bounds to the sea, which it shall not pass ; the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea ; yea the stones and dust of the earth, are all at his beck.

More especially, he rules and governs the men of this world. He sits in all the councils of men, though they see him not : he orders all their decrees : There is no decree can pass, unless God gives his vote. He rules in all the actions of men ; even those things that are acted through our improvidence, come not to pass without the providence of God. He rules in all the changes that are in the world ; he changes the times and the seasons : he changes kingdoms and governments ; he removeth kings,

and setteth up kings ; he makes war and creates peace : he bendeth the bow, and breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in funder, and burneth the chariots in the fire ; peace and war, health and sickness, plenty and famine, life and death, are all the disposures of his hand. He orders all the events and casualties of the world ; even from the greatest to the smallest. Without him not a sparrow shall fall, nor a hair of the head shall perish ; though there be to men, yet to the Lord there are no casualties, or contingencies. But all things come to pass according as his hand, and council had before determined.

2. The design of providence (as it respects the elect) is the accomplishment of God's good purpose and promise. Providence governs the world, and the purpose and promise governs providence. All the works of providence hath *rationem mediorum ad finem*. God doth nothing in vain : it is not consistent with the wisdom of God, to do any thing for nothing. God would have his people look farther than to the things that are before them, because all those things have a farther aspect themselves. All the works of providence have a double aspect ; they look backward, to the purpose and promise ; and they look forward, to the end for which they are ; as they look backward, so they have truth in them, exactly answering the purpose and promise from which they have their birth. As they look forward, to their end, so they have good in them, and that good (their subservience to their end) is the reason of their being. Here note two things.

1. That the subserviency of things to their end, is the goodness of them ; if the end be good, the means must (as such) be good also ; if what God hath purposed and promised be good, then all things that fall in between, having the respect of means to their accomplishment, must upon that account be good. If our crosses and afflictions, to subserve the bringing about of God's good will, and good word, we must say concerning them, 'good are the works of the Lord.' It is not, how any thing looks or feels at present, but what it means, and to what it tends. If the portion be bitter, and yet it tends to health ; if the messenger be ill-looking, and ill-favoured, and yet comes upon a good errand, you may bid them welcome. And thus all the providences of God are good. If you should ask of any providence, wherefore art thou come ? comest thou peaceably ? comest thou for good ? they must all answer, yes, peaceably, for good, and no hurt. 'Tis but to help all that good into thy hand, which hath been in the heart, and hath proceeded out of the mouth of thy God that loves thee. There is not a messenger of Satan that comes to buffet thee, but is also a messenger from God, that comes to thee for good. The very thorns in

thy flesh shall serve thee for plaisters, thine eye-sores shall be thine eye-salve, and thy very maladies thy medicines.

2. That this relative goodness of all the works of providence is the reason of their being. 'Therefore God doth what he doth, and hereby he may do what he hath said and intended. I do not say that the reason of God's taking this or that means, is always from any thing in itself, or for its natural tendency to such an end above any thing else; God hath his choice of means, he can chuse here or there at pleasure, can make use of what he will to serve his design; but the reason why things are, is this, God in his wisdom, saw their ordinability to this good end, and thereupon in his providence, he orders and brings them to pass.

So that now, whatever befalls a Christian, he hath this to allay and take off the grievousness and sharpness of it; this had never been, but for the good will and good word of the Lord to me. The Lord God hath said he will bless me, and do me good; he will heal me, and sanctify, and save me, and now he is about it; by this, he is working that salvation for me.

Christians, you have no reason to say, if the Lord be with me, why am I thus? why so poor, why so pained, why so persecuted, so scorned and trampled upon? sure, if the Lord had meant my good, it would have been better than 'tis with me: no, no, it is because the Lord is with thee, and means thee well, that he deals in this manner with thee. The design of his providence towards thee, is the accomplishment of his promise.

3. The providence of God shall never fail to accomplishing its end. There is nothing wanting that might give us the fullest assurance hereof. For,

1. The providence of God hath power with it. He is the Almighty that hath promised: he that ruleth in the earth dwelleth in the heaven, and doth whatsoever he will. 'Our God is in heaven, and doth whatsoever he will. I will work, and who shall let it?' Isa. xliii. 'Who can stay his hand, or say to him, what dost thou?' were it not for our unbelief, our case would be still the same, in greatest difficulties, as when the coasts are most clear. We might say of difficulties as the Psalmist of darkness, 'there is no darkness with thee, to thee the day and night are both alike.' Difficulties are no difficulties with thee, nor is there difference betwixt hard and easy. He can save with many, or with few; and with none as well as with some. We once read he had too many, but never that he had too few, to bring about his work. Oh how do we disparage the power of God, when our difficulties make us doubt? Is he God, and not man? Is he spirit and not flesh? Wherefore then dost thou doubt? whatever God hath said he can do: believe he is a God, and thou wilt never say, how can these things be?

2. The providence of God hath wisdom with it; he is the only wise, he is the all-wise God; 'He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations,' 2 Pet. ii. 9. He knoweth what is good for his saints, and when it will be in season; he understandeth what is proper and pertinent to every case. What is proper to every purpose, to every people, to every person, and for every season; he knows when it is a season to abate, and when to exalt; when to afflict, and when to deliver; when to put on the yoke, and when to take off the yoke; when to pull down, and when build up; every thing is beautiful in its season. If mercies come out of season, mercies would be no mercies; and if troubles come in their season, troubles should be no troubles; he knows the best method, and means to his end; the fittest means; he sees sometimes, the unfittest to be the fittest; the most unlikely unpromising means, do often best serve God's end.

Christians, if you would receive every dispensation, as coming from the hands of the wise God; you would never quarrel with your lot, nor say of any thing that befalls, I might be happy, but this stands in my way. If you would give God leave to be wiser than you, you would say wherever you are, it is good for me to be here, this is my way to my rest.

3. The providence of God hath faithfulness with it, Ps. xxv. 10. 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep his covenant, and his testimonies.' Psal. cxi. 8. His works are done in truth. God's works may be said to be done in truth in a double sense.

In reality, in fidelity. 1. In reality, not in specie, or in shew only, but indeed God's comforts are comforts indeed: God's salvation, is salvation indeed. The devil will come with his gifts, comforts and deliverances: but they are for the most part, but *spectra*, like himself, shews and apparitions: quite another thing than what they seem to be: sinners comforts, deliverances, enjoyments, wherewith the devil feeds them, do leave them in as poor a case, and worse than they found them: you will never thank the devil for his kindness, when you have proved them what they are. If you do not find yourselves as fast bound in the midst of all your liberties; if you be not wrap'd up in as many sorrows, after all the joys he hath procured to you; if the glittering glories, the glaring pleasures he entices you by and entertains you with, prove not trash and dirt, and mere lies in the end, then say, the devil hath forgotten his trade of lying; the devil's works will be even like himself, false and deceitful. But God is true, and all his works are done in truth.

2. In fidelity, his works are according to his word, 1 Kings viii. 24. 'Thou hast spoken with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled

with thine hand, in thy faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.' Ps. cxix. Not only in thy faithfulness thou hast saved me, in thy faithfulness thou hast comforted me, in thy faithfulness thou hast succoured me; but in thy faithfulness thou hast afflicted me: in thy faithfulness thou hast humbled, and broken me, and cast me down. The promise of God is, that we shall want nothing; we shall neither want his staff, nor his rod; neither comforts nor crosses: neither joys nor sorrows; we cannot well want either, and we shall want neither, because God is faithful. You may not only write down with the apostle, 'God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able to bear.' But you may write also, God is faithful, and will not suffer you to want a temptation. When it is seasonable, your hearts shall be glad; and if need be, for a season you shall be in heaviness. God is faithful, he will ever be true to himself, and therefore to you. 2 Tim. ii. 9. 'He abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.' Should he be false to his people, he cannot be true to himself, to his purpose and promise: his word is not yea and nay. God is not as a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent; that he should say, and unsay: that he should say, and not do: you may write God's name upon every word he hath spoken, you may write his name (I am) upon all that he hath said: it shall be.

Now Christians, put these three particulars together, and if you cannot spell out the conclusion out of them, 'the providence of God will certainly accomplish his good purpose and promise concerning you:' You are of little understanding as well as of little faith.

If God governs the world and nothing comes to pass but by his providence; if providence governs according to God's purpose and promise: if providence cannot fail of accomplishing both.

If God be almighty, and can, if God be wise and knows how, if God be faithful and true, let the devil if he can, with all his sophistry, evade the conclusion, 'That he will certainly do all that good for you, which he hath purposed and promised.' If God be not able to perform, he is not almighty: if he mistake his way, if he use impertinent, improper means, he is not the all-wise God. If he doth not actually perform what he is able and knows how to do, when he hath said it, he ceases to be the true God: So that the matter is brought plainly to this issue; if God be God, if God be the all-wise God, if God be the true and faithful God, this word which he hath spoken, 'All things shall work together for good to those that love God,' shall not fail of its accomplishment in its season.

Having thus proved the doctrine, I shall add a few words by way of caution.

Caution 1. Limit not the Lord to your time and way; God will make good his word, but you must give him leave to take his own season: 'He that believeth, shall not make haste.' Believe God, but do not prejudge nor precipitate, lest you fall into temptation. Put no more into the promise, neither for matter nor circumstance, than God hath put in it: put not that into the promise, which God hath not put in it, lest you miss and come short of that which God hath put in it. Let others mistakes and miscarriages be warnings to you: till God hath manifestly said, do not you say, this is the time; build not your confidence on conjectures, your faith on the strongest presumptions, lest your faith prove but a fancy, and your confidence your confusion: make not the promise of God of none effect, by looking for its effect out of season.

Believe not yourselves into fidelity: Consider, Acts i. 7. 'It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which God hath put in his own power. Study the word and its commentary, the works of God, but be sober in your conclusions.

This you may safely depend upon, and this will be enough, if you have no more: God will make good his word to you, sooner or later, in one time or other, in one way or other; in the best time, in the best way, in the appointed time, the vision shall speak, and shall not lie; Hab. ii. 3. 'Though it may tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, and will not tarry.' At least, at the ends of the days, when you shall stand in your lot, when you shall be gotten on the banks of Canaan, and shall thence look back on the promises and providences of God, you shall see and say, God is faithful, there hath not failed one word of all that he hath promised: Now I understand, though once I could not, how every wheel was turning, every instrument was moving, every event was working towards my good and everlasting welfare.

2. *Let not your expectation cause an abortion.* Let not your looking for mercy hinder the working of your affliction: it is not seldom, and the Lord grant it be not too common a case, that our door of hope becomes a door of sin. We do not set ourselves with that seriousness to humble, to purge ourselves from our iniquities, as we would do, did we apprehend our case more desperate; our fears and our sorrows have not their kindly work upon us, our hope hinders it. We might have been more broken hearted, had it not been for our hopes of building up: as it is with a person who conceives himself to be dying, he then falls to praying and repenting, and setting his heart in order, because he must die; but upon a little hope of recovery, he lays by his dying thoughts and preparations.

Christians, When ever you are under afflictions take heed

that your expectation of deliverance be near, put it not so much the farther off. Watch narrowly over yourselves, and look diligently to it, that your hope of redemption do not harden your hearts, nor hinder your humiliation and repentance. Hope in God, and wait for the promise of his coming : but know, that till the rod hath done its work, it is not like in mercy to be laid by ; and it is better to be continued in the furnace, than to be brought forth with your dross unpurged away.

By the way, learn hence two things.

1. Rejoice in this promise of God : Hath the Lord put in thy name here : let thine heart say, it is enough. Be more joyful in this, that God hath thus undertaken the care of thee, than if God had wholly put thee to thine own hand ; giving thee power to help, and liberty to chuse for thyself. In what wilt thou rejoice, if not in this, that the whole creation is engaged to do thee a kindness, to help thee into the possession of thy God ? 'Thou mayest now not only submit to, but thankfully embrace every providence, knowing upon what errand it comes to thee, for good, and not for hurt. Thou mayest now triumph not only in the consternations, but in the triumphs of thine enemies. Whether they ride over thy back, or thou tread over their neck, 'tis all one, the issue will be the same. Thy troubles and thy consolations differ only in their countenance ; with whatever grim face thy afflictions lock, there are smiles under ; learn to see thro' them, and thou mayest see light on the further side. Believe this word, thou mayest read it written upon every thing that befalls thee ; there's no messenger that comes but brings this promise in his hand, ' Even this shall work for good.' Read it and rejoice.

2. Lay thyself down quietly under it. No more preplexing or distracting cares, what shall become of thee ; no more unwarrantable shifting for thyself : Let God alone. Shift not for thyself, lest God leave thee to thine own shifts. Let not the violence of evil men disturb thy peace, or provoke thee to unpeaceableness. Whatever provocations thou mayest have, avenge not thyself, neither give place unto wrath, murmuring, or fears. In thy patience, possess thy soul, thy God, and his good word ; thy strength is to sit still. Stand still and see the salvation of God ; thou hast nothing to do but to be holy ; let that be thine only care ; thy God will see to it thou shalt be happy ; he is faithful that hath promised. Love God, and leave thyself and thy whole interest in this blessed word, ' all things shall work to thee for good.'

By this time you see something of the riches of this promise ; God is in the promise ; the God of peace, the God of power, the God of patience, the God of hope, the heart of God, the

help of God, the presence of God ; by virtue whereof, all that ever befalls them shall work for their good. Methinks the hearing of this promise opened, should set your souls, and all that is within you a crying out, O that this were my portion ! Wherever my lot do fall, as to outward things, though in a prison, though in a desert, though on a dung-hill ; let the lot of my soul lie in this promise, ‘ the God of peace shall be with you.’ Why, brethren, will you take up with godliness ; you have learned, and received, and heard the word of the Lord ; the word of faith, the word of righteousness, and holiness, will you hearken to, will you obey these words ? These things do, and the God of peace shall be with you.

O what foolish creatures are we, that ever we should be afraid of religion, afraid of holiness, afraid to own, obey, and follow God and his holy ways. What unreasonable fears are these, to those that believe the scriptures ? If the scriptures be true, this is the only way, this following God in holiness, to put yourselves out of all danger, to put yourselves into the heart, arms, presence, and protection, of the almighty God of heaven and earth.

O that I could persuade you in thither, and there leave you ; if you are once in the Lord’s arms, you are safe enough, into whatever hands you fall.

Christians, my business whilst I have been with you, hath been, to bring you to God, to espouse you to Christ ; and you that have already, or will yet at last be persuaded to give your consent, and will give me leave to make up the match, I can give you assurance, that he will shortly come and make up the marriage ; and must say to you, as Naomi to Ruth, Ruth iii. 10. ‘ Sit still my daughter, till you see how the matter will fall for the man will not be in rest, till he hath finished the thing this day.’ Sit still, Christians, till you see how matters will fall ; and however they fall, know, your Lord will not be in rest, till he hath finished this thing, and brought you home, to be with him where he is.

I am now parting from you in this confidence, that however, after a few days I shall see your faces no more in this world, yet I shall shortly meet you in the bride-chamber of glory, where we shall ever be with the Lord.

Beloved in the Lord, I must now leave you, but give me leave ere I go, to deal freely with you, and yet a little further, in the close of my day, this once more to open my heart to you ; and to tell you,

1. What my parting fears.

2. What my parting wishes for you are, which I carry upon my spirit.

1. My parting fears, I go off from you with, are especially these:

1. I am afraid, that there are many of you, upon whom I have bestowed my labour in vain, I am afraid, that I have instructed you in vain, exhorted, persuaded, beseeched, and re-proved you in vain : It was the apostle's case, and his fear, concerning the Galatians, chap. iv. 11.

It is my grief, that when I would have no more to speak, but an healing word, a comforting word ; I must yet drop down a bitter word on some of you ; that when I would speak only from mount Gerizzim, I must yet again speak to some from mount Ebal ; that when I would leave a blessing behind me upon you all, I am like to leave some bound under a curse. It is grievous to me thus to speak, yet for the discharge of my duty, and for your own necessity, bear with me ; I am afraid, that whilst I have been preaching to you, of an incorruptible crown, of an everlasting rest, a kingdom of joy and glory ; I am afraid there are many of you, ' That have no part nor lot in the matter, but are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity ; if the gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.' And are there none among you, from whom this gospel is hid ? hid as to the light of it, hid as to the saving power and efficacy of it ? I am afraid there's many a blind eye, many an hard heart, many a spirit still in prison, under the power of their lusts and brutish sensuality ; I am afraid there are many such among you ; and are not you afraid so too ? Oh that you were !

2. I have a greater fear than this ; I am afraid of some of you that not only all my past labours, but this last will be lost also. Those that stand it out to their last day, do usually stand it out in their last day. Blessed be God, that there are amongst you those over whom my soul is comforted ; to whom I can speak in the words of the apostle, Rom. vi. 16. ' God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin ; but ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine that hath been delivered unto you ; and being now made free from sin, you are become the servants of righteousness.' Oh that I could thus speak ! Oh that I could thus rejoice over you all ! But as the apostle said to the Corinthians, 2 Cor. xii. 20. ' I fear, lest when I come, I shall find you such as I would not.' So must I say with a grieved heart ; I fear, that now I am going, I shall leave you such as I would not. I would not leave one blind person, one vain person, one loose liver, not one unbeliever, or impenitent amongst you all. O what a good day would this day of my departure be ? what light would there be in this dark evening, were it thus with you ? If I might see you all recovered out of the snares of the devil ; every man's eye opened ; every man's fetters off ; every man's prison broken, and his soul escaped from that deadly bondage ; if every poor deadly creature among you, who yet lies bound hand and foot in his grave-

clothes, might now at last stand up from the dead, and live the life of God ; this would be mine and your great rejoicing ; but oh I fear with this apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 21. ‘ My God will humble me,’ and grieve me, and afflict me, to see in what a woful plight I must leave divers of you.

Oh ye sons of the night, you poor, ignorant, and dark souls, upon whom the light hath shined, but your darkness comprehendeth it not : Oh you poor, obstinate and hardened souls, upon whom I have been plowing, as upon rocks, and hewing as upon adamants, who still remain under as great hardness, as if no dew nor rain had ever fallen on you. Oh you poor, half-baked, almost Christians, that have taken up your stand in your present attainments ; my soul is under great fears, and must weep in secret for you, whilst my tongue must be henceforth silent : Oh every soul, that is without fear of himself ; my soul is afraid of you ; the fearless soul is in a fearful state.

Sinners, let my fears be your fears ; What, is there such astonishing guilt upon you, and yet not afraid ? Such a dreadful roll writ against you, and yet not afraid ? So many sabbaths, sermons, warnings lost, and never to be recalled ; nor any assurance left of one sermon, or warning more, and yet not afraid ? Such a subtil devil, such a deceitful heart, such a tempting world, that you have to deal withal ; such a black and bottomless pit, into which you are falling, and yet not afraid : Oh what stocks and stones hath the gospel to deal withal !

Beloved, I have laboured much with you, both publicly, and from house to house, to bring you under a due fear and jealousy of yourselves ; but hitherto your hearts have been too hard for me : Oh yet for trembling hearts, tremble and sin not ; fear and pray, fear and hope, fear and repent : ‘ Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.’ Oh if my fears were once become your fears ; your fears would become my hopes ! Oh what a day-spring of hopes would arise from the shaking of secure hearts ! These fears would be as the thicker darkness, fore-runners of break of day.

2. My parting wishes, and desires for you are,

1. That the good seed which hath been sown amongst you, were well rooted in every heart : I wish that my twenty years ministry among you, may not be lost labour to any one of your souls.

2. I wish that your next seeds-man may be more skilful and successful ; that the good Lord will provide you a man, that may teach you in wisdom, gain you in love, lead you on to life, by an holy example ; and if the Lord grant you this mercy, I wish that such an one may be dearly prized, and cheerfully accepted by you. God keep this flock from a ravening wolf, and a deceitful shepherd.

3. I wish that there may be no root of bitterness springing up amongst you : that there be no divisions or contentions, but that you may live in peace and love, that the God of peace and love may be with you.

4. I wish that this place, where so much good seed hath been sown, may become a fruitful field, that the fruits of faith and repentance, the fruits of righteousness and holiness may be in you and abound ; that you may be neither barren, nor unfruitful, that religion in the power and practice of it, may so visibly flourish, in the several persons, in the several families of this congregation, that they that go by, may see and say, This is the field which the Lord hath blessed.

5. I wish, that wherever clouds may at any time gather over you, may not fall down in a withering storm or a sweeping flood, but may pass away in a mist, or dissolve into a fruitful dew ; that no persecutions or temptations may ever carry you down the stream with evil men, nor blight any hopeful beginnings, that are budding forth in any of your souls, : if tribulation should be any of your lots, I wish it may not be to you as the hail of Egypt, but as the dew of Hermon.

I wish you a joyful harvest, that you may reap in eternity what hath been sown in time ; may you now sow in righteousness, and hereafter reap in mercy : may every one that is now sowing in tears, forever reap in joy ; may you that go on your way weeping, bearing precious seed, return with joy and bring your sheaves with you : may the showers of this day, be the watering of your seed, that it may spring up to eternal life.

Brethren, my heart's desire for you all is, that you may be saved ; and if there be any persons that bear evil will to me, my particular wish for them is, the good will of him that dwelt in the bush be those men's portions for ever.

These are some of my wishes for you : will you join your wishes with mine : will you turn your wishes into prayers, and let this be your prayer ; ' The Lord grant thee thine heart's desire, and fulfil all thy mind.'

Brethren, do I wish you any harm in all this ? If not, if it be to be wished that the word of Christ were rooted in your hearts, and your souls thereby rooted in the grace of God ; if it be to be wished, that your lust were rooted out, your sins dead and dried up, your foot gotten out of the snare, your souls brought into the fold, your fruits of righteousness and holiness abounding and growing up to eternal life : If all this be to be wished, then give in your votes with mine ; wish and pray, pray and press on ; press on and wait for the accomplishment of this grace in you all. I tell you again, I wish you well ; and not only I, but the Lord God hath sent me to you : the Lord Jesus wishes you well ; he wishes and woos, woos and weeps, weeps and

dies, that your souls might live, and be blessed for ever : he hath once more sent me to you, even to the worst amongst you, to tell you from him, that he is unwilling you should perish ; that he hath a kindness for you in his heart, if you will accept it : he hath blood and bowels for you : blood to expiate your guilt, to wash away your filth ; and bowels to offer you the benefit of his blood ; with this wish, ‘ Oh that it were theirs ! Oh that they would hearken and accept !’ Only I must add, that the Lord hath two sorts of wishes concerning sinners : the first is, ‘ Oh that they would hearken.’ Oh that they would come in, be healed, and be saved, Deut. v. 29. This wish is an olive-branch that brings good tidings, and gives great hopes of peace and mercy.

His last wish is, ‘ Oh that they had hearkened, that they had accepted,’ Psal. lxxxix. 13. ‘ Oh that my people had hearkened to me !’ Luke-xix. 42. ‘ Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that concern thy peace.’ This wish hath nothing but dread and death in it : it is the black flag hung out, that proclaims eternal wars. The sense is, Israel had once a fair time of it ; a time of love, a time of grace, a time of peace : Oh that they had hearkened then, that they had known the things that concern their peace ! But woe, woe to them, it is now too late, the door is shut, the season is over, the day is past ; ‘ But now they are hid from thine eyes.’

There are three deadly darts in this wish, (Oh that thou hadst) it concludes in it these three cutting words, ‘ Thou hast not : Thou mightest : Thou shalt not for ever.’

1. There is this in it, (Thou hast not)—What have I not ? Why, ‘ thou hast not known the things that belong to thy peace.’ Thou hast had the door of glory, the gate of heaven open to thee, and hast been called for, and invited in, but thou hast lost the opportunity. Thou knewest not when thou wert well offered, nor wouldest take notice what a day was before thee, what a price was in thine hand ; thy peace, the gospel of peace, the Prince of peace, a kingdom of peace was set open, offered and brought home to thy doors, but thou hadst so many other matters to look after, that thou tookest no notice of it, but hast let it slip. There is one dart, (Thou hast not known.) There is a gospel gone, there is a Christ gone, there is a soul, a kingdom lost.

2. There is this in it, (Thou mightest). Oh that thou hadst ? Why, might I ? Yes, thou mightest, if thou wouldest, thou mightest. Thy God did not mock thee, when he preached peace to thee ; he was willing, and wished it thine ; if thou wouldest thou mightst have made it thine own : but whilst he would thou wouldest not.

There is another dart (I might have known), I have none to

thank but myself for the loss ; mine undoing was mine own doing. There are no such torments, as when the soul flies upon itself, and takes revenge on itself ; oh the gashes that such self reflections make. Soul, how camest thou in hither into all this misery ? oh it is of myself, myself that my destruction is. The door was open, and I was told of it, and was bid come in, but I would not. That I am lost and undone, was not my fate, which I could not avoid, but my fault and my folly. It seems to give some ease of our torment, when we can shift off the fault. It was not I, but the woman said Adam ; It was not I, but the serpent, said the woman ; if that had been true, it would have given ease, as well as served for an excuse. This thought (it was mine own doing) tears the very caul of the heart. Oh I have none to blame but myself ; mine own foolish and froward heart. This is my ignorance, this is my unbelief, this is my wilfulness, my lust, and my pleasures, and my idols, that I was running after, that have brought me under this dreadful loss. It was my own doing.

3. There is this in it, (Thou shalt not for ever.) Oh that thou hadst ! why, may I not yet ? Is there no hope of recovering the opportunity ? not one word more, not one hour more, may not the sun go one degree backward ? No, no, it is too late, too late ; thou hast had thy day ; from henceforth no more for ever. There is the last dart, (time is past) there is the death, the hell, the anguish, the worm that shall gnaw to eternity.

This one word (time is past) sets all hell a roaring ; and when it is once spoken to a sinner on earth, there is hell begun. Go thy way wretch, fill up thy measure, and fall into thy place. The gospel hath no more to say to thee, but this one word ; ‘ Because I have called, and thou refusedst, I have stretched out my hand, and thou regardest not, but hast set at nought all my counsels, and wouldst none of my reproofs ; I also will laugh at thy calamities, and mock when thy fear cometh ; when thy fear cometh as desolation, and thy destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon thee ; then shalt thou call, but I will not answer, thou shalt seek me early, but shalt not find me.’

Beloved, my hopes are, and I am not able to say, but that you are yet under the first wish ; Oh that they would. Christ is yet preaching to you faith, and sends his wish along with his word, ‘ Oh that they would believe !’ Christ is yet preaching repentance and conversion to you, and wishes, ‘ O that they would repent,’ that they would be converted ; and to this wish of my Lord, my soul, and all that is within me, says Amen.

Brethren, will you yet again say your Lord nay ? shall Christ have his wish ? shall your servant for Jesus sake, shall I have

my wish? will you now at last consent to be sanctified, and to be saved? let me have this wish, and I dare promise you from the Lord, you shall have yours, even whatever your soul can desire.

Brethren, this once hear, this once be prevailed upon; be content that your lusts be rooted out, and your Lord planted into your souls. Be content to be pardoned; content to be converted, content to be saved. This once hear, lest if you now refuse, ye no more be persuaded with, 'Oh that they would!' but be for ever confounded with, 'Oh that they had!' Lest all our wishes, and wooings of you be turned into weepings, and mournings over you; this once hear; Oh that you would.

I heartily thank you, for your good wishes, and good-will towards me; for your willing and chearful entertainment of my person, and attendance on my ministry. And particularly, for your passionate desire of my longer stay among you. Which desire if God had not, my soul could not have denied you. Though the Almighty, to whose pleasure it is meet that we all submit; he hath said nay to that wish of yours; yet let your souls say Amen, to this last of mine, that the Lord God would dwell among you, and in you, both now and for ever.

And having thus finished my labours among you, I shall now close up with this double account.

1. Of my discharge of my ministry in this place.

2. Of my deprival. And shall so commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance amongst all them that are sanctified.

1. Of my discharge of my ministry; what my doctrine and manner of life have been, is known to you; and what my aim and intent hath been, is known to God. The searcher of hearts, knows that it is the salvation of souls that hath been the mark at which I have levelled. My way hath been to use all plainness, that I might be made manifest in your consciences: weakneses, and infirmities, both natural and sinful, (the Lord pardon it) I have had many. I am sensible that much more might have been done, both in public and private, had it not been for a weakly body and a slothful heart.

I repent that I have had no more zeal for God, no more compassion to souls; I repent that I have been no more constant and importunate with you, about the matters of eternity. 'Oh eternity, eternity!' that thou wert more in the heart and lips of the preacher, in the hearts and ears of the hearers. But while I thus judge myself for my failings, blessed be God, I have a witness in my conscience, and I hope in yours also, that I have not thinned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Brethren, I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, good and evil, and have not

ceased from day to day, to warn you to choose life, and that good way that leads to it; and to escape for your lives from the way of sin and death. Oh remember the many instructions I have given you, the many arguments whereby I have striven with you, the many prayers that have been offered up, for the guiding and gaining your souls into the path of life, and the turning your feet out of the way of destruction. Oh might I be able to give this testimony concerning you all, at my departure; 'they have troden in the right path; they have chosen the good part that shall not be taken from them.'

Brethren, beloved, with whom I have travailed in birth, that Christ might be formed in you; I must shortly give up my account in a more solemn assembly; will you help me to give it up with joy, by shewing your souls before the Lord, as the seal of my ministry. Every sincere convert among you will be a crown of rejoicing to me in that day. So let me rejoice, and let my joy be the joy of you all.

What shall I say more? If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, any bowels and mercy; if the glory of the Eternal God, the honour of the everlasting gospel, the safety of your immortal souls; the incorruptible crown; the exceeding eternal weight of glory, weigh any thing with you, then once more let me beseech you by all this, to hearken to that word of the gospel, which God hath spoken to you by me.

2. Of my deprival. The most glorious morning hath its evening; the hour is come wherein the sun is setting upon not a few of the prophets; the shadows of the evening are stretched forth upon us; our day draws, our work seems to be at an end. Our pulpits and places must know us no more.

This is the Lord's doing, let all the earth keep silence before him.

It is not a light thing for me, brethren, to be laid aside from the work, and cast out of the vineyard of the Lord; and it must be something of weight that must support under so severe a doom.

I know there are not a few that will add to the affliction of the afflicted, by telling the world it is their own fault, they might prevent it if they would; whether this be so or no, God knoweth, and let the Lord be judge. Blessed be God, whatever be, this is not laid to our charge, as the reason of our seclusion, either insufficiency or scandal.

You are not ignorant what things there are imposed on us, as the condition of our continuing our ministrations; which how lawful and expedient soever they seem in the judgment of many, yet have the most specious arguments that plead for them, left me utterly dissatisfied in my conscience about them.

I must profess before God, angels and men, that my non-

submission is not from any disloyalty to authority, nor from pride, humour, or any factious disposition, or design; but, because I dare not contradict my light, nor do any thing concerning which my heart tells me, the Lord says, do it not.

After all my most impartial enquiries, after all my seeking counsel from the Lord, after all my considering, and consulting with men of all persuasions about these matters, I find myself so far short of satisfaction, that I am plainly put to this choice, to part with my ministry or my conscience. I dare not lie before God and the world; nor come and tell you, I approve, I allow, I heartily consent, to what I neither do, nor can; but must choose rather, that my ministry be sealed up by my sufferings, than lengthened out by a lie: through the grace of God, though men do, yet my heart shall not reproach me while I live; 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.' But however, though I must now no longer act as a minister, I shall, through the grace of God endeavour peaceably, and patiently, to suffer as a Christian.

I should, to testify my obedience to authority, have become all things to all men, to the uttermost that I could, with any clearness of heart: but since matters stand so, I must lose my place, or my peace, I cheerfully suffer myself to be thrust off the stage.

And now welcome the cross of Christ, welcome reproach, welcome poverty, scorn and contempt, or whatever else may befall me on this account. This morning I had a flock, and you had a pastor; and now behold a pastor without a flock, a flock without a shepherd: this morning I had an house, but now I have none: this morning I had a living, but now I have none: 'The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

Beloved, I am sensible of many weaknesses and disadvantages I am under, which may render a suffering state the harder to be borne; help me by your prayers; and not me only, but all my brethren also, with whom my lot must fall; 'Pray for us, for we trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' Pray,

1. That God would make our silence speak, and preach the same holy doctrine that we have preached with our lips.

2. That he would give supports answerable to our sufferings; that he who comforteth those that are cast down, will also comfort his servants that are cast out.

3. That, according to our earnest expectation, and our hope, as always, so now also, Christ may be magnified in us, whether it be by life or by death.

And thus, Brethren, I bid you all farewell, in the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. 'Finally, Brethren, farewell, be

perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of peace and love shall be with you.'

'And that God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

FINIS.