

Christ will deliver it you again in that day whiter than the snow in Salmon.

Inf. 7. Did Pilate give this title to cast the reproach of his death upon the Jews, and clear himself of it? *How natural is it to men to transfer the fault of their own actions from themselves to others?* For when he writes, *This is the King of the Jews*, he wholly charges them with the crime of crucifying their king*: and it is as if he had said, Hereafter let the blame and fault of this action lie wholly upon your heads, who have brought the guilt of his blood upon yourselves and children.

I am clear, you have extorted it from me. O where shall we find a spirit so ingenuous, to take home to itself the shame of its own actions, and charge itself freely with its own guilt*? Indeed it is the property of renewed, gracious hearts to remember, confess, and freely bewail their own evils, to the glory of God: and that is a gracious heart indeed, which in this case judgeth, that the glory, which by confession, goeth to the name of his God, is not so much glory lost to his own name, but it is the power of grace moulding our proud natures into another thing, that must bring them to his.



SERMON XXVIII.

Of the manner of CHRIST'S Death, in respect to the Solitariness thereof.

ZECH. xiii. 7.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

IN the former sermons, we have opened the nature and kind of death Christ died; even the cursed death of the cross. Wherein, nevertheless his innocency was vindicated, by that honourable title providentially affixed to his cross. Method now requires that we take into consideration the manner in which he endured the cross, and that was *solitarily, meekly, and instructively.*

* Because you desired that I should crucify your king, I have crucified him; the ignominy shall henceforth be yours, who extorted this from me. *Calv. on Matth. xxvii. 27.*

† For saints, when their hearts are renewed, are not ashamed, by repentance, to acknowledge their ignominious faults and ignominy, to the glory of God: nothing is lost to us, which redounds to his honour. *Brightman on Cant.*

His solitude in suffering is plainly expressed in this scripture now before us, it cannot be doubted, but the prophet in this place speaks of Christ, if you consider Matth. xxvi. 31. where you shall find these words applied to Christ by his own accommodation of them, "Then said Jesus unto them, all ye shall be offended because of me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Besides, the title here given [God's fellow] is too big for any creature in heaven or earth besides Christ.

In these words we have four things particularly to consider. *First*, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. *Secondly*, The person against whom it is commissioned. *Thirdly*, The dismal effect of that stroke. *Fourthly* and *lastly*, The gracious mitigation of it.

First, The commission given to the sword by the Lord of hosts. "Awake, O sword, and smite, saith the Lord of hosts." The Lord of hosts, at whose beck and command all the creatures are. Who, with a word of his mouth, can open all the armories in the world, and command what weapons and instruments of death he pleaseth, calls here for the sword; not the rod, gently to chasten; but the sword to destroy. The rod breaks no bones, but the sword opens the door to death and destruction. The strokes and thrusts of the sword are mortal; and he bids it awake. It signifies both "to rouse up," as one that awakes out of sleep, and "to rouse or awake with triumph and rejoicing." So the same word is rendered, Job xxxi. 29. Yea, he commands it, "to awake and smite*." And it is as if the Lord had said, Come forth of thy scabbard, O sword of justice, thou hast been hid there a long time, and hast, as it were, been asleep in thy scabbard, now awake and glitter, thou shalt drink royal blood, such as thou never sheddest before.

Secondly, The person against whom it is commissioned, "my shepherd, and the man that is my fellow †." This shepherd can be no other than Christ, who is often in scripture stiled "a Shepherd, yea, the chief Shepherd, the Prince of pastors." Who redeemed, feeds, guides, and preserves the flock of God's elect, 1 Pet. v. 4. John x. 11. This is he whom he also stiles *the man his fellow* †. Or his neighbour, as some render it. And so Christ is, with respect to his equality and unity with the Father, both in essence and will. His next neighbour. His other self. You have the sense of it in Phil. ii. 6. He was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

* עור—*Evigilavit, suscitavit.* Buxtorf. *Incitavit ad agendum.* Stockius.

† *Pastorem vocal Christum, ἀρχιεπίσκοπον, animarum nostrarum.* D. Par.

‡ ועל גבר עום—*Et super virum proximum meum.* Montanus.

Against Christ his fellow, his next neighbour, the delight of his soul, the sword here receives its commission.

Thirdly, You have here the dismal consequent of this deadly stroke upon the shepherd. And that is the scattering of the sheep. By the sheep understand here, that little flock, the disciples, which followed this shepherd till he was smitten, i. e. apprehended by his enemies, and they were scattered, i. e. dispersed; they all forsook him and fled. And so Christ was left alone, amidst his enemies. Not one durst make a stand for him, or own him in that hour of his danger.

Fourthly, And lastly, Here is a gracious mitigation of this sad dispersion, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones." By little ones he means the same that before he called sheep; but the expression is designedly varied, to shew their feebleness and weakness, which appeared in their relapse from Christ. And by turning his hand upon them, understand God's gracious reduction, and gathering of them again after their sad dispersion, so that they shall not be lost, though scattered for the present. For after the Lord was risen, he went before them into Galilee, as he promised, Matth. xxvi. 31. And gathered them again by a gracious hand, so that not one of them was lost but the son of perdition.

The words thus opened, I shall observe suitably to the method I have proposed.

Doct. That Christ's dearest friends forsook and left him alone, in the time of his greatest distress and danger.

This doctrine containing only matter of fact, and that also so plainly delivered by the pens of the several faithful Evangelists, I need spend no longer time in the proof of it, than to refer you to the several testimonies they have given to it. But I shall rather chuse to fit and prepare it for use, by explaining these four questions.

First, Who were the sheep that were scattered from their shepherd, and left him alone?

Secondly, What evil was there in this their scattering?

Thirdly, What were the grounds and causes of it?

Fourthly, and lastly, What was the issue and event of it?

First, Who were these sheep that were dispersed and scattered from their shepherd when he was smitten. It is evident they were those precious elect souls that he had gathered to himself, who had long followed him, and dearly loved him, and were dearly beloved of him. They were persons that had left all and followed him, and, till that time, faithfully continued with him in his temptations, Luke xxii. 28. And were all resolved so to do,

though they should die with him, Matth. xxvi. 35. These were the persons.

Secondly, But were they as good as their word? Did they indeed stick faithfully to him? No, they all forsook him and fled. These sheep were scattered. This was not indeed a total and final apostasy, that is the fall proper to the hypocrite, the temporary believer, who, like a comet, expires when that earthly matter is spent that maintained the blaze for a time.

These were stars fixed in their orb, though clouded and overcast for a time. This was but a mist or fog, which overspreads the earth in the morning till the sun be risen, and then it clears up and proves a fair day. But though it was not a total and final apostasy; yet it was a very sinful and sad relapse from Jesus Christ, as will appear by considering the following aggravations and circumstances of it. For,

First, This relapse of theirs was against the very articles of agreement, which they had sealed to Christ at their first admission into his service; he had told them, in the beginning, what they must resolve upon, Luke xiv. 26, 27. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Accordingly they submitted to these terms, and told him they had left all and followed him, Mark x. 28. Against this engagement made to Christ, they now sin. Here was unfaithfulness.

Secondly, As it was against the very terms of their admission, so it was against the very principles of grace implanted by Christ in their hearts. They were holy sanctified persons, in whom dwelt the love and fear of God. By these they were strongly inclined to adhere to Christ, in the time of his sufferings, as appears by those honest resolves they had made in the case. Their grace strongly inclined them to their duty, their corruptions swayed them the contrary way. Grace bid them stand, corruption bid them fly. Grace told them it was their duty to share in the sufferings as well as in the glory of Christ. Corruption represented these sufferings as intolerable, and bid them shift for themselves whilst they might. So that here must needs be a force and violence offered to their light, and the loving constraints thereof; which is no small evil.

For though I grant it was a sudden, surprising temptation, yet it cannot be imagined that this fact was wholly deliberate; nor that, for so long time, they were without any debate or reasonings about their duty.

Thirdly, As it was against their own principles, so it was much

against the honour of their Lord and Master. By this their sinful flight they exposed the Lord Jesus to the contempt and scorn of his enemies. This some conceive is imported in that question which the High-priest asked him, John xviii. 19. "The High-priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine." He asked him of his disciples, how many he had, and what was become of them now? And what was the reason they forsook their master, and left him to shift for himself when danger appeared? But to those questions Christ made no reply. He would not accuse them to their enemies, though they had deserted him. But, doubtless, it did not a little reflect upon Christ, that there was not one of all his friends that durst own their relation to him, in a time of danger.

Fourthly, As it was against Christ's honour, so it was against their own solemn promise made to him before his apprehension, to live and die with him. They had passed their word, and given their promise that they would not flinch from him, Matt. xxvi. 35. "Peter said to him, though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." This made it a perfidious relapse. Here they break promise with Christ who never did so with them. He might have told then when he met them afterwards in Galilee, as the Roman soldier told his general, when he refused his petition after the war was ended, *I did not serve you so at the battle of Actium.*

Fifthly, As it was against their solemn promise to Christ, so it was against Christ's heart-melting expostulations with them, which should have abode in their hearts while they lived. For when others that followed him went back, and walked no more with him, Jesus said to these very men, that now forsook him at last, *Will ye also go away?* There is an emphasis in [ye] *q. d.* What, ye that from eternity were given to me! Ye whom I have called, loved, and honoured above others, for whose sakes I am ready and resolved to die. "Will ye also forsake me?" John vi. 67. Whatever others do, I expect other things from you.

Sixthly, As it was against Christ's heart-melting expostulations with them, so it was against a late direful example presented to them in the fall of Judas. In him, as in a glass, they might see how fearful a thing it is to apostatize from Christ. They had heard Christ's dreadful threats against him. They were present when he called him the son of perdition, John xviii. 11. They had heard Christ say of him, "Good had it been if he had never been born." An expression able to scare the deadest heart. They saw he had left Christ the evening before. And that very day, in which they fled, he hanged himself. And yet they fly. For all this they forsake Christ.

Seventhly, As it was against the dreadful warning given them in the fall of Judas, so it was against the law of love, which should have knit them closer to Christ, and to one another.

If to avoid the present shock of persecution, they had fled, yet surely they should have kept together, praying, watching, encouraging, and strengthening one another. This had made it a lesser evil: but as they all forsook Christ, so they forsook one another also; for it is said, John xvi. 32. "They shall go every man to his own, and leave Christ alone," (i. e. saith Beza) every man to his own house, and to his own business. They forsook each other, as well as Christ. O what an hour of temptation was this!

Eighthly, and lastly, This their departure from Christ, was accompanied with some offence at Christ. For so he tells them, Matt. xxvi. 31. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night." The word is, *σκανδαλισθησεσθε*, you shall be scandalized at me, or in me*. Some think the scandal they took at Christ was this, that when they saw he was fallen into his enemies' hands, and could no longer defend himself; they then began to question whether he were the Christ or no, since he could not defend himself from his enemies. Others, more rightly, understand it of their shameful flight from Christ, seeing it was not now safe to abide longer with him. That seeing he gave himself into their hands, they thought it advisable to provide as well as they could for themselves, and somewhere or other, to take refuge from the present storm, which had overtaken him. This was the nature and quality of the fact. We enquire,

Thirdly, Into the grounds and reasons of it. Which were three.

First, God's suspending wonted influences and aids of grace from them. They were not wont to do so. They never did so afterwards. They would not have done so now, had there been influences of power, zeal, and love from heaven upon them. But how then should Christ have borne the heat and burden of the day? How should he tread the wine-press alone? How should his sorrows have been extreme, unmixed, succourless (as it behoved them to be) if they had stuck faithfully to him in his troubles? No, no, it must not be; Christ must not have the least relief or comfort from any creature; and therefore, that he might be left alone, to grapple hand to hand with the wrath of God, and of men; the Lord for a time

* They thought, either that he was not the Christ, as they had hitherto believed, because he could not defend himself from his enemies, or that it was not advisable, for his sake, to expose themselves to the hazard of death. *Pareus*.

with-holds his encouraging, strengthening influences from them; and then, like Samson when he had lost his locks, they were weak as other men.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” saith the apostle, Eph. vi. 10. If that be with-held, our resolutions and purposes melt away before a temptation, as snow before the sun.

Secondly, As God permitted it, and with-held usual aid from them; so the efficacy of that temptation was great, yea, much greater than ordinary. As they were weaker than they were used to be, so the temptation was stronger than any they had yet met withal. It is called, Luke xxii. 53. “Their hour and the power of darkness.” A sifting, *winnowing hour*, ver. 46. O it was a black and cloudy day. Never had the disciples met with such a whirlwind, such a furious storm before. The devil desired but to have the winnowing of them in that day, and so would have sifted and winnowed them, that their faith had utterly failed, had not Christ secured it by his prayer for them. So that it was an extraordinary trial that was upon them.

Thirdly and lastly, That which concurred to their shameful relapse, as a special cause of it, was the remaining corruptions that were in their hearts yet unmortified. Their knowledge was but little, and their faith not much. Upon the account of their weakness in grace, they were called *little ones* in the text. And as their graces were weak, so their corruptions were strong. Their unbelief, and carnal fears grew powerfully upon them.

Do not censure them, reader, in thy thoughts, nor despise them for this their weakness. Neither say in thy heart, Had I been there as they were, I would never have done as they did. They thought as little of doing what they did, as you, or any of the saints do; and as much did their souls detest and abhor it: but here thou mayest see, whither a soul that fears God may be carried, if his corruptions be irritated by strong temptations, and God with-holds usual influences.

Fourthly and lastly, Let us view the issue of this sad apostasy of theirs. And you shall find it ended far better than it began. Though these sheep were scattered for a time, yet the Lord made good his promise, in turning his hand upon these little ones, to gather them. The morning was over-cast, but the evening was clear.

Peter repents of his perfidious denial of Christ, and never denied him more. All the rest likewise returned to Christ, and never forsook him any more. He that was afraid at the voice of a damsel, afterwards feared not the frowns of the mighty. And they that durst not own Christ now, afterwards confessed him openly be-

fore councils, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake, Acts v. 41. They that were now as timorous as hares, and started at every sound, afterward became as bold as lions, and feared not any danger, but sealed their confession of Christ with their blood. For though, at this time, they forsook him, it was not voluntarily, but by surprisal. Though they forsook him, they still loved him; though they fled from him, there still remained a gracious principle in them; the root of the matter was still in them, which recovered them again.

To conclude: Though they forsook Christ, yet Christ never forsook them: he loved them still; "Go tell the disciples, and tell Peter, that he goeth before you into Galilee," Mark xvi. 7. *q. d.* Let them not think that I so remember their unkindness, as to own them no more: No, I love them still.

The use of this is contained in the following inferences.

Inf. 1. Did the disciples forsake Christ, though they had such strong persuasions and resolutions never to do it? Then we see, *That self-confidence is a sin too incident to the best of men.* They little thought their hearts would have proved so base and deceitful, as they found them to be when they were tried. "Though all men forsake thee (saith Peter) yet will not I." Good man, he resolved honestly, but he knew not what a feather he should be in the wind of temptation, if God once left him to his own fears.

Little reason have the best of saints to depend upon their inherent grace, let their stock be as large as it will. The angels left to themselves, quickly left their own habitations, Jude 6. Upon which, * one well observes, That the best of created perfections, are of themselves defectible. Every excellency without the prop of divine preservation, is but a weight which tends to a fall. The angels in their innocency, were but frail, without God's sustentation; even grace itself is but a creature, and therefore purely dependent. It is not from its being and nature, but from the assistance of something without it, that it is kept from annihilation. What becomes of the stream, if the fountain supply it not? What continuance hath the reflection in the glass, if the man that looks into it, turn away his face? The constant supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, are the food and fuel of all our graces. The best men will shew themselves but men if God leave them. He who hath set them up, must also keep them. It is safer to be humble with one talent, than proud with ten; yea, better to be an humble worm, than a proud angel. Adam had more advantage to maintain his station than any of you. For though he were left to the liberty of his own mutable and self-determining will; and though

* Mr. Jenkin, *in loc.*

he was created upright, and had no inherent corruption to endanger him, yet he fell.

And shall we be self-confident, after such instances of human frailty! Alas, Christian! What match art thou for principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness! "Be not high-minded, but fear." When you have considered well the example of * Noah, Lot, David, and Hezekiah, men famous and renowned in their generations, who all fell by temptations; yea, and that when one would think they had never been better provided to cope with them. Lot fell after, yea, presently after the Lord had thrust him out of Sodom, and his eyes had seen the direful punishment of sin. Hell, as it were, rained upon them out of heaven. Noah, in like manner, immediately after God's wonderful, and astonishing preservation of him in the ark; when he saw a world of men and women, perishing in the floods for their sins. David, after the Lord had settled the kingdom on him, which for sin he rent from Saul, and given him rest in his house. Hezekiah was but just up from a great sickness, wherein the Lord wrought a wonderful salvation for him. Did such men, and at such times, when one would think no temptations should have prevailed, fall; and that so foully? Then "let him that thinks he standeth, take heed lest he fall." O be not high-minded, but fear.

Inf. 2. Did Christ stand his ground, and go through with his suffering-work, when all that had followed him, forsook him? *Then a resolved adherence to God, and duty, though left alone, without company or encouragement, is Christ-like, and truly excellent.* You shall not want better company, than that which hath forsaken you in the way of God. Elijah complains, 1 Kings xix. 10. "They have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." And yet all this did not damp or discourage him in following the Lord; for still he was very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts.

Paul complains, 2 Tim. iv. 16. "At my first answer no man stood by me, all men forsook me: nevertheless the Lord stood with me." And as the Lord stood by him, so he stood by his God alone, without any aids or support from men. How great an argument of integrity is this! He that professes Christ for company, will also leave him for company. But to be faithful to God, when forsaken of men; to be a Lot, in Sodom; a Noah, in a corrupted generation; oh, how excellent is it! It is sweet to travel over this earth to heaven, in the company of the saints, that are bound thither with us, if we can; but if we can meet no

* Gen. ix. 21, 22. and xix, 36. 2 Sam. xi. 2. 2 Kings xx. 12.

company, we must not be discouraged to go on. It is not unlike, but before you have gone many steps farther, you may have cause to say, as one did once, *Never less alone, than when alone.*

Inference 3. Did the disciples thus forsake Christ, and yet were all recovered at last? *Then, though believers are not privileged from backslidings, yet they are secured from final apostasy and ruin.* The new creature may be sick, it cannot die. Saints may fall, but they shall rise again, Micah vii. 8. The highest flood, of natural zeal and resolution, may ebb, and be wholly dried up; but saving grace is “a well of water, still springing up into everlasting life,” John iv. 14. God’s unchangeable election, the frame and constitution of the New Covenant, the meritorious and prevalent intercession of Jesus Christ, do give the believer abundant security against the danger of a total and final apostasy. “My Father, which gave them me, saith Christ, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand,” John x. 29.

And again, “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth who are his,” 2 Tim. ii. 19. Every person committed to Christ by the Father, shall be brought by him to the Father, and not one wanting.

God hath also so framed and ordered the new covenant, that none of those souls, who are within the blessed clasp and bond of it can possibly be lost. It is settled upon immutable things: and we know all things are as their foundations be, Heb. vi. 18, 19. Among the many glorious promises contained in the bundle of promises, this is one, “I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.”

And as the fear of God in our hearts, pleads in us against sin, so our potent intercessor in the heavens pleads for us with the Father; and by reason thereof, we cannot finally miscarry, Rom. viii. 34, 35. Upon these grounds, we may (as the apostle in the place last cited doth) triumph in that full security which God hath given us; and say, What “shall separate us from the love of God?” Understand it either of God’s to us, as Calvin, Beza, and Martyr do; or of our love to God, as Ambrose and Augustine do: it is true in both senses, and a most comfortable truth.

Inference 4. Did the sheep fly, when the shepherd was smitten; such men, and so many forsake Christ in the trial? *Then learn how sad a thing it is for the best of men to be left to their own carnal fears in a day of temptation:* This was it that made those good men shrink away so shamefully from Christ in that trial: “The fear of man brings a snare,” Prov. xxix. 25. In that snare these good souls were taken, and for a time held fast.

Oh what work will this unruly passion make, if the fear of God

do not over-rule it ! Is it not a shame to a Christian, a man of faith to see himself out-done by an Heathen ? Shall natural conscience and courage make them stand and keep their places in times of danger ; when we shamefully turn our backs upon duty, because we see duty and danger together ?

When the emperor Vespasian had commanded Fluidius Priscus not to come to the senate ; or, if he did, to speak nothing but what he would have him ; the senator returned this brave and noble answer, “ * That as he was a senator, it was fit he should be at the senate ; and if, being there, he were required to give his advice, he would speak freely, that which his conscience commanded him.” The emperor threatening that then he should die ; he returned thus, “ Did I ever tell you that I was immortal ? Do you what you will, and I will do what I ought. It is in your power to put me to death unjustly, and in me to die constantly.” O think, what mischiefs your fears may do yourselves, and the discovery of them to others. O learn to trust God with your lives, liberties, and comforts, in the way of your duty ; and *at what time you are afraid* trust in him : and do not magnify poor dust and ashes, as to be scared, by their threat, from your God and your duty. The politic design of Satan herein, is to affright you out of your coverts, where you are safe, into the net. I will enlarge on this no farther ; I have † elsewhere laid down fourteen rules for the cure of this, in what of mine is public.

Inf. 5. Learn hence, *How much a man may differ from himself, according as the Lord is with him, or withdrawn from him.* The Christian does not always differ from other men, but sometimes from himself also : yea, so great is the difference betwixt himself and himself, as if he were not the same man. And where is he that doth not so experience it ? Sometimes bold and courageous, despising dangers, bearing down all discouragements in the strength of zeal, and love to God : at another time faint, feeble, and discouraged at every petty thing. Whence is this but from the different administrations of the Spirit, who sometimes gives forth more, and sometimes less, of his gracious influence. These very men that flinched now, when the Spirit was more abundantly shed forth upon them, could boldly own Christ before the council, and despised all dangers for his sake.

A little dog, if his master be by, and encourage him, will venture upon a greater beast than himself. Peter stood at the door without, when the other disciple, (or one of the other disciples,

* Charron, of wisdom, p. 558.

† A Saint indeed.

as the Syriac turns it, and * Grotius approves it as the best), i. e. one of the private disciples that lived at Jerusalem, went in so boldly, John xviii. 16, 17. We are strong or weak, according to the degrees of assisting grace. So that as you cannot take the just measure of a Christian by one act, so neither must they judge of themselves, by what they sometimes feel in themselves.

But when their spirits are low, and their hearts discouraged, they should rather say to their souls, "Hope in God, for I shall yet "praise him:" It is low with me now, but it will be better.

Inf. 6. Was the sword drawn against the Shepherd, and he left alone to receive the mortal strokes of it? *How should all adore both the justice and mercy of God so illustriously displayed herein!* Here is the triumph of divine justice, and the highest triumph that ever it had, to single forth the chief Shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, and sheathe its sword in his breast for satisfaction. No wonder it is drawn and brandished with such a triumph; awake rejoicingly, O sword, against my Shepherd, &c. For in this blood shed by it, it hath more glory than if the blood of all the men and women in the world had been shed.

And no less is the mercy and goodness of God herein signalized, in giving the sword a commission against the Man, his fellow, rather than against us. Why had he not rather said, Awake, O sword, against the men that are mine enemies; shed the blood of them that have sinned against me, than smite the Shepherd, and only scatter the sheep. Blessed be God, the dreadful sword was not drawn and brandished against our souls; that God did not set it to our breasts; that he had not made it fat with our flesh, and bathed it in our blood; that his fellow was smitten, that his enemies might be spared. O what manner of love was this! Blessed be God therefore for Jesus Christ, who received the fatal stroke himself; and hath now so sheathed that sword in its scabbard, that it shall never be drawn any more against any that believe in him.

Inf. 7. Were the sheep scattered when the Shepherd was smitten? Learn hence, *That the best of men know not their own strength till they come to the trial.* Little did these holy men imagine such a cowardly spirit had been in them, till temptation put it to the proof. Let this therefore be a caution for ever to the people of God. You resolve never to forsake Christ, you do well; but so did these, and yet were scattered from him. You can never take a just measure of your own strength, till temptation have tried it. It is said, Deut. viii. 2. that God *led* the people so many years *in the*

* One of the other disciples, not any one of the twelve, but some other, an inhabitant of Jerusalem, not so well known to be a favourer of Jesus. *Grotius.*

wilderness, to prove them; and to know them, (i. e. to make them know) *what was in their hearts*. Little did they think such unbelief, murmurings, discontents, and a spirit bent to backslidings, had been in them; until their straits in the wilderness gave them the sad experience of these things.

Inf. 8. Did the dreadful sword of divine justice smite the Shepherd, God's own fellow; and at the same time the flock, from whom all its outward comforts arose, were scattered from him? Then learn, *That the holiest of men have no reason either to repine or despond, though God should at once strip them of all their outward and inward comforts together*. He that did this by the man his fellow, may much rather do it by the man his friend. *Smite my Shepherd*: there is all comfort gone from the inward man; *Scatter the sheep*; there is all comfort gone from the outward man. What refreshments had Christ in this world, but such as came immediately from his Father, or those holy ones now scattered from him? In one day he loseth both heavenly and earthly comforts. Now, as God dealt by Christ, he may, at one time or other, deal with his people. You have your comforts from heaven; so had Christ, in a fuller measure than ever you had, or can have. He had comforts from his little flock; you have your comforts from the society of the saints, the ordinances of God, comfortable relations, &c. Yet none of these are so firmly settled upon you, but you may be left destitute of them all in one day. God did take all comfort from Christ, both outward and inward; and are you greater than he? God sometimes takes outward, and leaves inward comfort; sometimes he takes inward, and leaves outward comfort: but the time may come, when God may strip you of both.

This was the case of Job, a favourite of God, who was blessed with outward and inward comforts; yet a time came when God stripped him of all, and made him poor to a proverb, as to all outward comfort; and the venom of his arrows drank up his spirit, and the inward comforts thereof.

Should the Lord deal thus with any of you, how seasonable and relieving will the following considerations be?

First, Though the Lord deal thus with you, yet this is no new thing; he hath so dealt with others, yea with Jesus Christ that was his fellow. If these things were done in the green tree, in him that never deserved it for any sin of his own, how little reason have we to complain? Nay,

Secondly, Therefore did this befall Jesus Christ before you, that the like condition might be sanctified to you, when you shall be brought into it. For therefore did Jesus Christ pass through such varieties of conditions, on purpose that he might take away the

curse, and leave a blessing in those conditions, against the time that you should come into them. Moreover,

Thirdly, Though inward comforts and outward comforts were both removed from Christ, in one day, yet he wanted not support in the absence of both. How relieving a consideration is this! John xvi. 32. "Behold, (saith he) the hour cometh, yea, is now "come that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall "leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is "with me." With me by way of support, when not by way of comfort. Thy God, Christian, can in like manner support thee, when all sensible comforts shrink away together from thy soul and body in one day.

Lastly, It deserves a remark, that this comfortless forsaken condition of Christ, immediately preceded the day of his greatest glory and comfort. Naturalists observe, the greatest darkness is a little before the dawning of the morning. It was so with Christ, it may be so with thee. It was but a little while and he had better company than theirs that forsook him. Act therefore your faith upon this, that the most glorious light usually follows the thickest darkness. The louder your groans are now, the louder your triumphs hereafter will be. The horror of your present, will but add to the lustre of your future state.



SERMON XXIX.

Of the manner of CHRIST'S Death, in respect of the Patience thereof.

ISA. liii. 7.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

HOW our Lord Jesus Christ carried on the work of our redemption in his humble state, both in his incarnation, life, and death, hath in part been discovered in the former sermons. I have shewed you the kind or nature of that death he died; and am now engaged, by the method proposed, to open the manner of his death. The solitariness or loneliness of Christ in his sufferings, was the subject of the last sermon. The patience and meekness of Christ in his sufferings, come in order, to be opened in this.

This chapter treats wholly of the sufferings of Christ, and the