

# MOUNT PISGAH.

## A SERMON,

Preached at the PUBLIC THANKSGIVING, Feb. 14th,  
1688-9, for ENGLAND'S Deliverance from Popery &c.

Upon DEUT. iii. 24, 25.



### THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Right Honourable GEORGE Earl of *Southerland*, Lord  
*Strathnaver*, Heritable Lord of Regality, and Sheriff in the  
Shire of *Southerland*.

MY LORD,

**I**T was a sweet refreshment to me in the days of our late exile, to be providentially cast into your Lordship's company and acquaintance. I savoured in yourself and your most accomplished Lady, those things which are rarely found in persons of your eminent station and quality in the world.

I have neither forgotten your tender sympathy with poor distressed Sion, nor my weak endeavours to prop up your faith, with respect to a more cheerful aspect of providence upon the churches.

And now, my lord, we that mourned for, and suffered with Sion, are this day called to rejoice with her. Yea, you are called to rejoice with a joy above the common joy, inasmuch as your Lordship is not only a partaker of the common mercy with others, but God hath honoured you in accompanying and assisting the glorious instrument of our deliverance.

My lord, it is a greater honour to be serviceable to the interest of Christ, than to descend from the blood of nobles. It is the honour of angels that they are ministering Spirits for the church's good. What my apprehensions of, and expectations from this providence are, your lordship will measure from the following discourse.

Let England rejoice to behold a Protestant king upon her throne; a king that gives more honour to the throne than it is capable to reflect on him that sits thereon. His soundness in Protestant prin-

ciples his prudence and equity in government, his zeal for the interest of Christ at the lowest ebb, speak him such a blessing to this nation as for ages past it hath not enjoyed: And now, my lord, we may expect, if ever, to find that glorious description of a just and holy king answered in him, that "he shall be *to us* as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

My lord, having in my place performed the duty of thanksgiving to God, enjoined by public authority with the same alacrity that Moses' mother obeyed the command of Pharaoh's daughter to nurse her own child; I am bold (notwithstanding the imperfections that attend it) to offer it in all humility to your lordship's hands; being confident the design of it will be agreeable to your spirit, though there be nothing of external ornament to commend it to your fancy. So heartily congratulating your lordship's safe and happy return, with your pious and ingenuous lady, in the memorable year of England's deliverance from the Romish yoke, I beg your honour's pardon for this presumption, and remain

*Your Honour's most obliged*

*Servant to command,*

J. FLAVEL.

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## MOUNT PISGAH.

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DEUT. iii. 24, 25.

*O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven, or in earth that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.*

**I**T is the observation of a learned † man, that the revolution of a hundred years hath produced (especially in these latter times) new motions and alterations in the church, like unto those that fell out a hundred years before. So it was in Germany and Bohemia;

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† Dr. Goodwin, in Apoc. p. 189.

John Huss, at the stake, about the year 1417, uttered this remarkable speech; *After an hundred years, you Papists shall be called to an account.* The Bohemians caused *post centum annos* to be stamp't upon their coin for the preservation of so memorable a prediction; and accordingly in a hundred years, 1517, Luther arose, and with him the reformation. It hath been so in England. Our fathers deservedly set a signal remembrance upon the year 1588; *Annus octogesimus octavus est annus mirabilis*; the year *eighty-eight* is a wonderful year; and it was so indeed, for then the Lord defeated the formidable enemies of his cause and people with a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm upon the great waters: Then did England sing his praises, saying, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod: xv. 11.

A full *century* is now run out since that year of wonders, wherein we have reaped the precious and inestimable fruits of that year's mercy. And notwithstanding the great ingratitude of this nation for all the civil and spiritual mercies it hath enjoyed in consequence of that mercy, whereby God hath been highly provoked to say to England as he did to Israel, Judg. x. 13. *I will deliver you no more*; yet, behold! another *eighty-eight* crowned and enriched with mercies, no less admirable and glorious than the former; a year for which the children yet unborn shall praise the Lord.

You are called this day to rejoice; I am not only called to rejoice with you in the public mercies of this day, but also to direct you to the best way of improving the mercies you rejoice in, that they may prove introductive to greater mercies than themselves. To that end I chose this scripture; which contains both parts of the work and duty of the day. The text contains the sum of Moses' prayer at Edrei, after the signal victory God there gave him over the last enemy that forbade his passage to the confines of Canaan. This Edrei was a town on this side Jordan, situate in the fruitful country of Bashan, near unto that famous river by which it was divided from the land of promise, and afterwards fell to the lot of Manasseh. Hither Moses had led the people; and now it was but one remove more; (their passage over Jordan) and they should finish their wearisome peregrination, and arrive at the desire of their hearts; even rest and settlement in that good land the Lord had promised them. And here you may see how swift and strong the motions of Moses' spirit in prayer were, now it was come so nigh the *centre*, almost in sight of that pleasant land where God intended to settle his worship, and record his name. "O Lord,

“thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness,” &c. I pray  
 “thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jor-  
 “dan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.” Wherein note,

1. The mercy prayed for.

2. The argument pleaded to obtain it.

1. The mercy Moses prays for, that he might go over and see the good land, &c. The good land was Canaan, called the glory of all lands, Ezek. xx. 6. It was a glorious land in respect of its natural fertility and amenity; but much more glorious in respect of the presence of God in his ordinances. And therefore above all the pleasant sights of Canaan, he desires to see *that goodly mountain*, that is, Mount Moriah, on which Abraham offered up his only son Isaac, and whereon, by the spirit of prophecy, Moses foresaw the glorious temple was to be built, whither the tribes should go up to worship, even the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel. There were to be the symbols of his presence, and the house of prayer for all people. There the ark was to rest, and all the promises made to Abraham and his seed to be fulfilled. This inflames the desires of Moses (now upon the very borders) to have a sight of that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, that famous forest so renowned in scripture, of whose stately cedars the glorious temple was to be built, 1 Kings v. 5, 9. This desire of Moses was not from any superstitious opinion he had of the holiness of the place, in respect of the patriarchs whose bones were laid in that land, (as some Popish glosses would have it) but he earnestly desired to see the accomplishment of the promises, now so nigh the birth, by the actual possession of that good land. This was the mercy he prayed for.

*Objection.* But how could Moses desire to go over Jordan into this good land, when God had before so expressly told him he should not? Numb. xx. 12. “And the Lord spake unto Moses  
 “and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the  
 “eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this  
 “congregation into the land which I have given them.” Did this holy man suffer his desires to transport him beyond his duty, to go further than God would have him?

*Sol.* No, he did not; not being sure the threatening was absolute, but might be such a one as was made of Hezekiah’s death, 2 Kings xx. 1. or of Nineveh’s destruction, Jonah iii. 4. there was room for prayer. You see the mercy Moses prayed for.

2. Let us next consider the argument by him pleaded for the obtaining of his suit, and that is taken from the whole series of former mercies, which were all introductive to this remaining and completing mercy, the planting of them in the land of promise.

“ O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand,” &c. Where note,

1. His most thankful acknowledgment and magnifying of past and present mercies. His eyes were not so dazzled with the splendor of mercy to come, and in a near expectation, as to overlook the former or present mercies as small and inconsiderable. No, he lifts up the name of God in his praises for them, and tells him, he had begun to shew him his greatness in them. They are great in Moses' eye, and he expresses a suitable sense of them. He well knew the way to engage further mercies, is thankfully to acknowledge and magnify past and present ones. But,

2. He rests not there, but improves these beginnings of mercies, and pleads them in his argumentative prayer for the consummating and perfecting mercies yet to come; q. d. Lord, thy works are perfect, thou dost not use to begin and not finish as men do; to bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth; the gods of the heathen are a lie and vanity, but thou art the true God, and thy promises are truth itself. Now, Lord, in pursuance of thy promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thou hast begun to fulfil the mercy promised; Israel is brought with signs and wonders, and a mighty hand out of Egypt, and upon the very borders of the land? Lord, complete the work now, in giving them the possession of it; and for me, Lord, I pray thee (if it be thy will) let me enter with them; and as I have had my part in the troubles of Egypt, straits and trials these forty years in the desert, let me take my part also in the joy, rest, and comfort of that blessed land to which I am now come so nigh. This seems to be the sense and meaning of Moses' prayer. Divers excellent points of doctrine naturally offer themselves from the text, as,

Doct. 1. *That the rest and prosperity of the church is a very desirable mercy in the eyes of the saints.*

If any thing will make a Christian desirous to abide on earth, next to the finishing of the works of grace on him, and the work of obedience by him, this is the thing: Psal. cvi. 4, 5. “ Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation: that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation: that I may glory with thine inheritance.”

Doct. 2. *How desirable soever it be to see the church's glory and prosperity on earth, yet the greatest and best of saints may be denied it.*

Moses, the saint of God, the favourite of heaven, earnestly de-

sired the sight of this mercy, and was denied it. Get thee up to mount Nebo, saith God, and die there, thou shalt not go over Jordan; and yet Moses was no loser by it. Though God shut him out of Canaan, he took him into heaven. We read, Mat. xiii. 17. of that blessed day when Christ was among men in the flesh, preaching, praying, and working miracles, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see those things which they saw (among whom he walked) and saw them not, and to hear the things which they heard, but did not hear them. Demarthus of Corinth, was wont to say, that those Grecians lost a great part of the comfort of their lives, that had not seen great Alexander sitting upon Darius' throne. St. Augustine wished to have seen three things, Rome in its glory, Paul to the face, and Christ in the flesh. But we must not be our own chusers, it shall be given to them for whom it is appointed. But I stay not upon either of these, there are two other points in the text which invite my thoughts and discourse this day; viz,

*Doct. 3. That great mercies received (though there be yet greater than they to be expected) call for an answerable sense and acknowledgment in the saints.*

*Doct. 4. That the beginnings of mercy and deliverance to the church are convertible into some pleas and arguments in prayer for the perfection and consummation thereof. I begin with the former, viz.*

*Doct. 3. That great mercies received (though there be yet greater than they to be expected) call for an answerable sense and acknowledgment in the saints.*

Moses magnifies the mercies received in Egypt, and in the wilderness, at the red sea, and at Edrei; as things wherein God had begun to shew him his greatness, and his mighty hand, things on which God had visibly stamped and impressed his greatness; though he still expected greater things to come. It was Elihu's counsel to Job, with respect to God's providential proceedings with him, Job xxxvi. 24. "Remember that thou magnify his work which men behold." Elihu thought it to be Job's duty (and doubtless it was so) to magnify or lift up the name of God, even under afflicted providences, to exalt God when God cast him down; but you are called this day to magnify the work of God in comfortable providences, and to lift up his name, whilst he is lifting you up in deliverances and cheerful providences. It is true we cannot magnify any work of God by making any addition to it, or making it

greater than it is; but we should magnify every work of God by giving it its full dimensions in our considerations of it, and suitable affections to it. "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," Psal. cxi. 2. We then magnify them, when we search them out, ponder and weigh them in all their circumstances; and this must needs afford singular pleasure to a sanctified soul. O it is sweet to trace the footsteps of God along these pleasant paths of mercy and salvation, where-in he hath walked towards his church, or ourselves in particular. Two things invite our thoughts to dwell upon them at this time.

1. What makes a work of mercy truly great.

2. What is that suitable sense we should have of such works.

1. What are the things that make any work of mercy truly great.

Now there are seven considerations or properties of a work of mercy, which make it great indeed. If but one or two of these be found upon such a work, it deserves the name of great; but if there be a concurrence of them all in any work of God, as there is in that work which we celebrate this day, O how great will it then appear!

(1.) Then doth a work of mercy or deliverance deserve the name of great and magnificent, when it involves our spiritual, as well as our civil and natural comforts and enjoyments in it, and rescues our souls as well as our bodies from ruin and misery.

Temporal mercies have their value, it is no small mercy to have our estates, liberties, and lives secured from rapine and violence. Deborah celebrated this mercy in her song of praise, Judges v. 6, 7, 11. "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased in Israel, until that I, Deborah, arose, that I arose a mother in Israel. They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water; there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates." It was a sad time in Israel, when they were barred from their fountains, and forced to creep through by-ways and woods by night, for fear of the enemy; when the course of justice was stopt, and there were no judges in the gates: Therefore the people are here excited to praise the Lord for their deliverance from these calamities.

But it is a far greater misery to be cut off from the wells of salvation, barred from the springs of ordinances; forced to creep through by and obscure ways to get bread to relieve our souls; to have our teachers driven into corners; which hath been the case of

God's people for many years in England. Now to be delivered from such miseries, is a mercy above all value.

Liberty to serve the Lord without fear, liberty without a snare or hook in it, and a well settled durable liberty, for such is that we may now (if ever) promise ourselves; what soul can dilate itself wide enough, to take in the adequate sense of such a mercy? We were glad of liberty from our enemies, when we sought it not; we peaceably and thankfully improved it, though just fears and jealousies much darkened the lustre of it: But the Lord in this dispensation of his providence will, I hope, so establish the just liberties of his people, that it shall never be in the power of violent and wicked men any more to oppress them. There was a time when the witnesses of Christ lay dead, and their enemies rejoiced over them; the Lord hath begun to revive them, and the time (I trust) even the appointed time is at hand, when they shall hear a great voice from heaven *jussu supremi magistratus*, saith learned Mede) saying, *come up hither*; and both England and France shall rejoice together in their spiritual, as well as civil liberties and mercies. What soul that loves Jesus Christ in sincerity, doth not feel itself cheered and raised in proportion to the hopes and evidences it hath of the approach of so great and desirable a mercy?

(2.) Then is any work of mercy and deliverance to the church deservedly stiled *great*; when it is wrought out in an *extraordinary way*, and the finger of God evidently seen therein. Thus it was with Israel in their introduction into the land of promise, Psalm xlv. 3. "For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance; because thou hadst a favour unto them." It was not by the strength of their own arm, or the length of their own sword, that they subdued and conquered; no, it was a smile of providence that did the work. The finger of God in providence appears in the secret influences of God upon the spirits of men, infusing courage into the hearts of some, and sending faintness into the spirits of others; so that the feeble become as David, while the men of might cannot find their hands. This lifts up the wheels above the earth, as Ezek. i. 19.

(3.) The sudden production of mercy magnifies it. Mercies are highly to be prized, how long soever we wait for them; but when they come surprisingly, they come with great advantage upon us, and have for that the more ravishing sweetness in them, Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2, 3. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for us,



“whereof we are glad.” The change was so great, so sudden, that it amazed them; they took it rather for a *phantom* that deluded their senses than for a reality. The deliverance was incredible, they could not believe themselves to be delivered, when they really were delivered. They fancied when they came to Jerusalem, that it was rather a pleasing dream of Jerusalem in Babylon, than so indeed. Are we indeed set at liberty to worship God at Jerusalem? Or are we mocked with a dream, and deluded with a pleasant fancy of such a mercy? So again we read, Isa. lxvi. 8, 9. “Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Sion travailed, she brought forth her children.” What, sow and reap in the same day! The birth to anticipate the pangs of travail! Who hath seen or heard such things, saith the *prophet*? Surely England hath seen it this day. Cardinal Pool once abused this scripture in his letter to pope Julius the third, applying it to the sudden change of England to *poperly* in the beginning of queen Mary’s reign. But we are called this day to sanctify the name of God in a work of providence, wherein the Lord hath indeed fulfilled it before our eyes! So great and sudden! “Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O thou King of saints.” Generations to come will think we do but hyperbolize, when they shall read the one half of the wonders of our days.

(4.) When one mercy is an introductive leading mercy to many more that are greater than itself; that mercy which is so, though in itself it were never so small, well deserves the title of a great mercy, and may we not judge the present mercy to be such? In the rending off these kingdoms from Antichrist, the tenth part of the great city is visibly fallen. Rome hath paid her tenths to Christ already, and that as an earnest of the whole, which is shortly to fall into his hands. Rome’s glass was turned up by Christ more than 1200 years past, and in the judgment of very learned and searching men, is now almost run down. Antichrist hath lately had a triumph, and said, *I sit as a queen, and shall not see widowhood, or loss of children any more.* The kings of the earth hath given *δυναμιν και εξουσιαν*, their force of arms, and power of laws unto the *beast*. But the Lord hath begun to shake heaven and earth, that the things which are made may be shaken down, and so to ruin him by the same means he first arose. He is taking to himself his power and reign, that the kingdom and dominion under the whole heavens may be the Lord’s; and that the work of providence which we celebrate this day appears to me a great step towards it. Call it Gad, for a troop follows it. The world hath

found, and shall still find much truth in that observation of the learned \* Dr. More: ‘ I am not ashamed (saith he) to profess  
 ‘ that I think it clear, out of the Apocalypse, that the scene of  
 ‘ things in Christendom will in a short time be very much changed  
 ‘ for the better; the time of the churchs appearing, that is truly  
 ‘ apostolical both in life and doctrine, appears by the computation  
 ‘ of propheties to be very near at hand, when the witnesses shall  
 ‘ arise, and the woman come out of the wilderness, and the king-  
 ‘ doms of the world shall be the kingdoms of the Lord, and his  
 ‘ Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. There is no sta-  
 ‘ bility to be expected in the kingdom of men (but vengeance will  
 ‘ ever and anon flow in upon them) till that city be raised, whose  
 ‘ foundation is not only laid in twelve, but whose gates, tribes, an-  
 ‘ gels, the breadth and height of the wall, and the solid continent  
 ‘ of the whole city, are nothing else but a replication still of twelve  
 ‘ throughout; That is to say, till that church appear which is  
 ‘ purely apostolical in doctrine and worship.’

England is said to be the first kingdom that received the gospel with the countenance of supreme authority. This was its honour; and to be the first that breaks off from Antichrist, will be as great an honour as the former. The rest are to follow in their order. O what a leading mercy is the mercy of this day!

(5.) Then may a work of God be stiled great and magnificent, when the Lord carries it on through great difficulties and seeming impossibilities. The greater the difficulties in the way, the greater must the mercy be when it arrives to us through them all. Thus came the Israelites into the land of promise, Psal. lxxvi. 12. “ Thou  
 “ causedst men to ride over our heads; we went through fire,  
 “ and through water; but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy  
 “ place.” To pass through fire and water is a proverbial speech, noting the greatest difficulties, and deadly dangers: such was that at the *Red Sea*. A deliverance out of such dangers may be called life out of death, and such have our deliverances been. Our enemies had grasped all power into their hands, and were full of confidence; they were folded together as thorns, and drunk as drunkards, as the prophet expresses it, Nah. i. 10. Strong combinations, and answerable confidence, and security of the event; but when the time of mercy was come, armies, navies, counsels, foreign confederates, and all give way to the design of mercy. And what are all the mountains before Zerubbabel?

(6.) That which exceedingly greatens a mercy or deliverance is the *seasonableness* thereof, when it nicks the proper season, comes in the most opportune time. Deut. xxxii. 36. “ The Lord shall

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\* The Mystery of Godliness, l. 5. c. 17. printed 1660.

“judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left.” The Lord suffers the danger to come to an extremity, and then in the mount of difficulties and straits he appears; if deliverance should come sooner, it would be less valued; and if later, it would come too late for our comfort. He is a God of judgment, and all his works are made beautiful by their seasonableness. How the case stood with the protestant interest in Europe when God began to stir up the spirits of the princes to commiserate and relieve it, we all know: our enemies looked upon us as their sure prey, and we could not but look upon ourselves in great hazard. The Lord suffered the mischief conceived to go to the parturient fulness of its time, and then gave it a miscarrying womb. Who is like unto the Lord? And what works are like his works?

(7.) In a word, then is a work of mercy truly great, when it brings forth invaluable blessings at a cheap rate, when enjoyments and comforts, more worth than our lives, come at easy rates to our hands.

You read, Isa. ix. 5. “Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood.” War is terrible and costly, especially civil wars. When a nation, like a candle lighted at both ends, quickly consumes and melts down in the middle. There are confused noises in battles, terrible to hear; the thundering of drums, and sound of trumpets; the neighing of horses, and shouts of armies; the roaring of cannons, and shrieks and groans of dying men; these are confused noises indeed: and yet it is worth enduring all this, to hear the joyful sound of the gospel, and preserve the pure reformed religion in the midst of us: it were better to part with our blood, than the gospel; exhaust our treasure, and leave our children poor, than divest them of the best of blessings, and leave them to be trained up in idolatry, and stretch out their hands to a strange god.

But lo, what hath God wrought for England! you have those mercies that have cost others dear, and they have cost you nothing; you have sold yourselves for nothing, and are redeemed without price: your God hath been liberal in mercy, but sparing of blood. Such mercies, so many mercies without a stroke! according to this time, it shall be said, *What hath God wrought.*

Thus you see what these mercies are wherein God shews his greatness.

*Secondly,* In the next place, let us consider what that suitable sense, or those answerable impressions are, which such great mercies call for. Moses, in the text, expresses a very becoming sense of the great things God had begun to do for him and his people;

O that there were such a heart in us this day. Now there are five things wherein the comely behaviour of our souls towards God, under great mercies, doth consist.

(1.) In our eyeing the hand of God in the mercy, and thankful ascriptions of all the glory and praise to his name. So doth Moses in the text, "Thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand." The Israelites were a great host, six hundred thousand men that marched out of Egypt, an army sufficient to invade and subdue a far greater country than Canaan was; but Moses looks off from them, and ascribes all their successes and victories to the hand of God: not my *mighty host*, but *thy mighty hand*. God affects not social glory; the dividing of the praise forfeits the mercy. He that doth all in us and for us, expects justly the praise and glory of all from us. Psal. cxv. 1. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory." Here is a double negative, and no more than need; for there is double danger of the creature's invading the rights of heaven and sacrilegious usurpation of God's peculiar praise. Let us therefore look off from armies and navies, from the prudent conduct and courage of men, and see the hand of God in all the great and marvellous things wrought in the midst of us this day.

(2.) It is decorous, and suitable to great mercies, to have our hearts filled with joy and cheerfulness answerable to them: praise is comely for the upright. As it would be our sin to mourn when God smites and rebukes us; so will it also, not to rejoice when he cheers and comforts us. It is not our *liberty* only, but our *duty* to rejoice in such works of mercy as these are. Isa. lxxv. 18. "But be ye glad, and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Methinks joy should not be under a Christian's command, when he sees what God is creating for Jerusalem. As the morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy at the creation of the world; so should all his sons and daughters sing, and shout at this new creation of the new heavens, and the new earth.

Mistake not here, I call you not to rejoice in the miseries or calamities that are upon any this day, much less at the calamities of our late sovereign. He that searcheth my heart, knows I commiserate his condition, and from my soul desire the Lord to bless his afflictions to his illumination and eternal salvation. But that which you are to rejoice in this day, is the advancement of Christ's interest in the world, and the salvation of his church from the imminent dangers it was so lately under; and the prospect the Lord now gives you of far greater mercies to his people, than ever yet they enjoyed. These are the proper objects of our rejoicing.

(3.) Then have we a becoming sense of great mercies, when those mercies kindly thaw, and melt our hearts into repentance for sin, and a sense of our great unworthiness of them; when we abase ourselves under exalting providences. We greatly mistake ourselves, if we think England hath obliged God to be thus peculiarly favourable to it. It is astonishing to think, that a nation so swarming with *drunkards, persecutors, formalists* in religion, yea, *atheists* and *scoffers* at all practical and serious piety, should nevertheless be thus favoured, delivered, and exalted in mercy above all the nations round about us. I know God hath a great number of precious and upright-hearted ones in England, that have sighed and cried for the abominations committed in the midst thereof; but so far are they from *arrogating*, that they are every where *admiring* the goodness of God in unexpected mercies. They think, if he had given them their lives for a prey in some obscure corner of the world, he had done more for them than they could justly have expected; or if he had furnished them with a sufficient stock of faith and patience to stand quietly at the stake, and have glorified him in the midst of the flames, he had done more than they had deserved at his hands: but to be delivered from all those fears, to sit down in peace amidst pure gospel-ordinances, and to look on all these but as the beginnings of mercy, the dawning of a more bright and glorious day than ever yet this nation enjoyed; this, I say, is melting and humbling indeed to all gracious spirits. It is a lovely sight to see the tears of repentance overtaking the tears of joy and thankfulness; sighs and blushes for sin, mixed with smiles and rejoicings in mercies.

(4.) Then do we answer the voice of mercy, and discover a suitable sense of it, when it strongly obliges us to new obedience, and more exactness in walking with God, for the time to come. We find an excellent example of both these effects of mercy, viz. repentance for past sins, and resolutions for new obedience, in Psal. lxxix. 8, 13. "Remember not against us former iniquities," saith Asaph; that was the frame of his heart as to past sins; and then, ver. 13. as to the future, if he would let "the sighing of the prisoners come before him, and deliver those that are appointed to die," as he speaks ver. 11. then, saith he, "We thy people, and the sheep of thy pasture, will give thee thanks for ever, we will shew forth thy praise to all generations." O England! England! thy God this day calls thee to thy knees, though it be thy day of thanksgiving and rejoicing: he expects to see thy tears upon thy cheeks this day for thy former iniquities, and that thou bind thyself to thy God with these bonds of mercy, never to return any more to folly. It is not bells and bon-

fires, but repentance for thy past follies, and new obedience, thy God looks for at thy hands.

(5.) Lastly, Then do we act becomingly to the mercies of God, when mercies already brought forth, do encourage and strengthen our faith for those that remain still in the womb of the promises: So it was with Moses in my text, and oh that it might be so with us all! our greatest and best mercies are yet to come, but those we bless God for this day, are pledges and earnest of them: You see them not, neither did you see these you are now praising him for; six months ago; hath he caused these mercies to be brought forth, and will he shut up the womb? hath he done things we looked not for, and shall he not be trusted farther than we can see? Look as the head of Leviathan was served into the Israelites' table in the wilderness, garnished about with rich experiences of the goodness and faithfulness of God, that it might be food to their faith in the wilderness: so, much so are the mercies and deliverances of this day to be improved, for the encouragement of faith for further and future mercies.

*Use.* The point before us is full of useful instructions, cautions, and counsels. Time will permit me to do little more than note them to you; because I have noted to you another point of doctrine, which, should I omit, I should be wanting to the duties of the day, and your just expectations. Well then, have the mercies of God already performed such great things? And do they require such a sense and improvement of them from us? Then,

(1.) Take heed of slighting and despising the mercies of God which are fresh and new before your eyes this day. There are two special duties incumbent on all the saints under such mercies as these, viz. to observe the Lord's providences, and to resound his praises; and the latter depends upon the former. God can have no praise, we can have no comfort from unobserved or slighted mercies, "Whoso is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord," Psal. cvii. 43. A due observation of mercies will beget a due valuation of them; and a due valuation of mercies is fundamental to all your praises of God for them. Look upon the other side of these providences, and think what your condition had been, if the Lord had left your estates, liberties, and lives, to the wills and mercies of your enemies.

(2.) Check all atheistical thoughts from this experiment of the hand of God so seasonably interposing betwixt his people and their destruction. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," Psal. lviii. 11. Great and notorious is the atheism of these times: all serious piety is hissed and ridiculed; the very existence of a Deity, and Divine providence is denied by some. But would men

open their eyes, and observe what it is before them this day, they would see enough to stop the mouth of atheism for ever. Are these fortuitous hits and accidents, or the effects and productions of the wise and steady counsels of heaven? "The Lord is known by the judgments that he executeth." But when his hand is lifted up men will not see. It is convincingly clear, the hand of God, not the power or policy of men hath done this. There was no power in the prevailing part, but what might, with far greater probability have been repelled by the other; no policy in the one, but as great to countermine it in the other. But you see the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; it is the hand of God that disposeth these great events.

(3.) Be not staggered if you should see new difficulties arise in the way of mercy, after God hath begun to do great things for his people. Moses and his people encountered many such difficulties after God had lifted up his hand in great signs and wonders for them in Egypt: And so may we, even when we are come upon the borders of our expected mercies. Let us not say we shall never be moved more; there is a great deal of filthiness in England yet unpurged, many corruptions to be removed; and let us not expect much tranquillity till God hath refined and reformed us. When the morbid matter is not well purged out of the body natural, or politic, there is danger of a recidivation, or relapse into the old disease, which God in mercy prevent. Former sins and follies will cast us back into former straits and miseries. O let us not return again to folly. We are now upon trial once more how we will carry it under mercies and liberties: God forbid so great an opportunity as this for setting the church and state upon the true foundations of liberty and prosperity, should be lost. Take heed of a discontented spirit under gracious providences, lest you provoke the Lord to turn his hand of judgment again upon you. Who could have thought that Jonah, who was so lately in the *whale's belly*, called *the belly of hell*, and was so greatly humbled there, and so miraculously and graciously delivered thence, should presently fall into a great pet of discontent with God, and that for a trifle, the withering of a gourd? Yea, and which was worse, for his mercy to others. O we know not what manner of spirits we are of. The greatest mercies and deliverances do not long please us unless our little by-interest be gratified.

(4.) Let England now study to do great things for God, who hath impressed his greatness upon the mercies it enjoys this day. O England, God hath done great things for thee, saved thee with a great salvation; and he expects returns from thee suitable to thy great mercies and obligations. Let me say to thee as Elihu to Job,

chap. xxvi. 2. "Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have  
"yet to speak on God's behalf."

(1.) A national reformation is now expected by the Lord; he hath strongly obliged us to it this day by so glorious and unparalleled a national salvation. It is our reproach, that a land of ministers, a land of bibles, a land of peculiar mercies, should be a land swarming in every part of it with profane *swearers*, filthy *adulterers*, beastly *drunkards*, and heaven-daring *atheists*. Do we thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Thy God, O England, is pleading with thee this day by the voice of mercy, drawing thee out of these puddles and pollutions by the cords of love, whilst he is pleading against the same sins in the nations round about thee by fire and sword. He hath now set upon thy *throne* a great example of virtue to correct thy lewdness, and effect thy reformation. O England, wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be? When, if not now, under such strong inducements and signal advantages?

(2.) The loosing of every yoke and undoing of every heavy burden is now expected from thee. God hath loosed the yoke of Popery from our necks, which neither we nor our fathers could bear: and, God forbid we should lay any other yoke upon our brethren's neck, than what Jesus Christ hath laid, by his plain commands, upon all his disciples, or make any thing a term or condition of communion which himself hath not made so.

O let the groans and cries of oppressed consciences be heard no more from henceforth in England. Did not the Lord lately shake the rod of our common enemies over us all? Had we not an *ecclesiastical court* erected among us, which made those to tremble, at whose bars others had trembled? If our God hath been so good to us, beyond all examples or expectations, to deliver us from our fears and danger; surely he expects that those who have found mercy should be ready to shew mercy; else we must expect he will make good his threatening against us, James ii. 13. "He shall have judgment without mercy that shewed no mercy;" or *unmerciful judgment*, as *κρίσις ἀνίλεως* may be rendered; and the instruments and executioners of his judgments are not so far off, but he can quickly *hiss* for them again, if we answer not to the voice and call of mercy.

(3.) A hearty and lasting union amongst all that fear God, is now justly expected from us. I never expect union and coalition betwixt the godly and ungodly, it will be as much as I can expect to see the wickedness of men restrained and curbed by good laws that they persecute not; but renewing grace must change their hearts, and destroy their inbred enmity before they close with the people of God in love. Nor do I think



*supercilious pharisees, or superstitious bigots*, will inwardly and heartily affect the sincere and spiritual servants of Christ: it will be a mercy that they cannot *afflict* whom they do not *affect*: But I should hope that, in such a time as this, all that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, and are animated by the same Spirit of grace and adoption, should now every where depose their wrath, compose their little differences; and that their hearts be now melted in the sense of these great and common salvations into more love and union than ever. Such returns as these will be pleasing to the Lord, and the only methods of lengthening out England's tranquillity. And though my infirmities, as well as age, cut off my expectations of being much longer serviceable, or of enjoying long the mercies God is preparing for his people; yet I should account it an extraordinary mercy to see these beginnings of mercy well improved, in order to those greater and better ones. Which brings me to the last observation which next comes to be opened and applied, viz.

*Observation. That the beginnings of mercy and deliverance to the church, are convertible into so many arguments and pleas in prayer, for the perfection and consummation thereof.*

The point lies clear and obvious in the text: To open it let us consider,

1. What the mercies were which are here called the beginnings of mercy?
2. What the greater mercies were, he expected beyond Jordan?
3. How the former strengthen faith in prayer for the latter?
4. Why the completing of mercies begun is so desirable to the saints?

1. What those mercies were which are here called the beginnings of mercy? And they were great and manifold: In this *catalogue* are to be placed all the mercies they had received for forty years, from the day they came out of Egypt, unto this great deliverance at Edrei inclusively.

(1.) God began to shew his great power in their wonderful deliverance out of Egypt with mighty signs and an out-stretched arm. This deliverance from Egypt was a pattern or model of the future deliverances of his churches in New-Testament days, Mic. vii. 15. "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, will I shew unto him marvellous things." Which seemeth to have relation to the time of the restitution, and saving of all Israel. After the manner of Egypt also hath God begun to save the Gentile churches from Rome, which is spiritually called Egypt, Rev. xi. 8. And this begun deliverance from the *mystical*,

is greater than that from *literal Egypt*, and so much greater, by how much spiritual bondage and slavery of men's souls, is worse than that on their bodies. The hand of God was evidently seen in that, and is no less admirable in this. The wonders of the *reformation* are, like those in Egypt, wrought out by the mighty hand and power of God.

(2.) The hand and power of God was seen in making provision for them in all their wilderness-straits after they came out of Egypt. There were no tilled fields or barns, no store-houses in the wilderness, nor shops to furnish them with clothes for forty years in the desert; yet God took care to sustain them. It is said, Neh. ix. 21. "Forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." And certainly it would furnish an admirable history of Providence, if the instances of God's care over his poor, scattered, persecuted saints were collected, and how the Lord hath sustained them from the beginning of the reformation, though none were suffered to buy or sell that received not the mark of the beast in their foreheads, or right-hand, Rev. xiii. 17. Their enemies would have starved them, but their God hath wonderfully provided for them.

(3.) The Lord frustrated all the plots of their enemies to destroy them, and there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel: "Remember, O my people (saith God) what Balaam, king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." They built many *altars*, and offered many sacrifices; what would they not have done to have gotten but a word or two out of God's mouth against his people? But their God was true and faithful to them, and would not hearken to Balaam's insinuations against them. There have been plots upon plots to destroy the begun reformation. Rome and hell have consulted our destruction, as they did theirs, but to no purpose.

(4.) The Lord discomfited and defeated the open force, as well as the great treachery of their enemies, and no weapon formed against them ever prospered. The kings, several kings, by whose lands they travelled towards Canaan, fell upon them in their way, but still to their own cost, they forfeited their lives and lands by their quarrel with Israel. And now the last of those kings and kingdoms that opposed their passage is fallen into the hands of Israel: These were the mercies wherein God had begun to shew his greatness to Moses and his people; and, after the manner of Egypt, unto us also.

2. But what were the greater mercies he expected beyond Jordan, which he so vehemently desires to see, and in comparison

wherewith he stiles all these great things but the beginnings of mercy? Certainly Moses expected better things than these, as great and glorious as they were: And these were,

(1.) The full and free enjoyment of all God's ordinances, which the people had not enjoyed for forty years before. All that were born by the way were not circumcised, Josh. v. 5. and for the *passover* we find but three of them celebrated all that space, the first in Egypt, Exod. xii. the second at mount Sinai, Numb. ix. the third at Gilgal in Joshua's time, Josh. v. 10. and as for their other sacrifices and offerings appointed by the Lord, they were either omitted, or very disorderly performed, which, because of their many troubles, and frequent removes, they could not enjoy: and when they did, they were not performed as he required, which the Lord smartly rebuked them for, Amos v. 25. "Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" No, they had not, at least not in the due order as God required. But when they should arrive to a settled condition in Canaan, then the ordinances of God should be more frequently enjoyed, and that after the due order, for so Moses had told them, Deut. xii. 8, 9. "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes; for ye are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you." When they should be settled in Canaan, and the ark find rest, Moses knew that all things should then be reduced to the rule and pattern God had given them. And truly nothing is more beautiful, more desirable in the eyes of the saints. For so much of God's order as is found in his worship, so much of his presence and blessing may be expected, and no more. And as he expected more purity in ordinances, so,

(2.) Rest and peace were expected in Canaan, mercies the people had long wanted. The *ark* had been ambulatory a long time, removing now here, now there: but in the temple it was to find rest. Therefore you read in Psal. cxxxii. 8. the temple called the place of rest: "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou and the ark of thy strength," because there it was to have a fixed abode. And as the ark was there to find a place of rest, so the people also, who instead of *tents*, should now be placed in towns and cities.

(3.) But especially that which Moses desired to see in Canaan, was the fulfilling and accomplishment of the promises of God made to the *patriarchs*, in the faith and comfort whereof they lived and died. This privilege Joshua enjoyed, chap. xxiii. 14. *Not one thing hath failed, all are come to pass.* O what a lovely and desirable sight was this?

But in these latter days, we, for whom better things are provided, look for greater mercies than Moses and the people could expect in Canaan. For we, according to the promises, expect,

(1.) An abundant increase of the church, both *extensively*, in the number of converts; and *intensively*, in the power of religion. The best ministers every where complain with the prophet, that they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought. They now and then, at best, hear but of a single soul wrought upon: but the time will come, when they shall not fish with angle-rods, but spread out their nets, and inclose multitudes, according to that glorious promise, Ezek. xlvii. 10. And as to the *intensive* increase of the church in the spirit, and power of godliness, we expect to see a generation of more spiritual, active, and lively Christians to spring up, such as shall far excel those of this drowsy, lukewarm generation, according to that promise, Isa. lx. 21. "Thy people" also shall be all righteous."

(2.) Greater peace and quietness, from persecuting enemies, is yet to be expected. The poor church hath been afflicted, and tossed with tempests; persecutors have broken in, ever and anon, upon it, and made havock of it; a tender conscience hath cast men upon great difficulties to preserve it; but the days are coming, when God will give his church rest, either by the conversion or restraint of all its enemies; *The wolf shall lie down with the lamb*. Antipathies shall be deposed, Isa. xi. 6. not a pricking briar, or grieving thorn, that shall not be rooted up, Ezek. xxviii. 24. Surely this is a sweet, and desirable mercy to the weary saints; and yet a far sweeter mercy than that is to be expected, *viz.*

(3.) The pouring out of the Spirit of unity on the people of God, to consolidate, and strengthen the poor dilacerated church. For the divisions of Reuben there have been great thoughts of heart; our divisions have darkened the lustre of religion, imbittered, and spoiled the communion of saints, prejudiced the world, and obstructed conversion. But God will melt the hearts of the saints into one, Jer. xxxii. 39. they shall have one heart, and one way, and serve the Lord with one consent. Then shall religion shine in its native glory. One reason of our justlings one against another, hath been the darkness that hath been upon us all; but this darkness shall break up. For,

(4.) We expect a more spiritual, and excellent ministry than the church for many years hath enjoyed, Jer. iii. 15. "I will give you" pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with "knowledge, and understanding." It is a sore plague, and judgment upon the world, when men shall be set over the people, that are ignorant of regeneration, strangers and enemies to practical holiness, men that break their profane jests upon the very Spirit of

prayer; but these unclean spirits shall pass out of the land, Zech. xiii. 2. O what a good riddance will this be! when God shall set up, in their room, laborious, faithful and godly ministers, full of experimental knowledge of Christ; watchmen that shall see eye to eye, as he speaks, Isa. lii. 8. Then shall we see another most desirable and inestimable mercy performed to the church, beyond all it hath enjoyed since the primitive days; namely,

(5.) The purity of ordinances, and officers in the church, the whole worship, and *economy* of the church measured by the scripture-reed, according to Rev. xi. 1, 2. and Ezek. xliii. 11. all reduced to the pure, primitive rule and standard, which will discover and correct the oblique and corruptive super-additions of men; things under which men of tender consciences, and such as tremble at the word, in all ages have groaned. And then will the ordinances of God shine forth in their beauty, and be mighty in power and efficacy; especially when,

(6.) There shall be a more eminent presence of God among his people; for so it is promised, Ezek. xlviii. *ult.* *And the name of the city (viz. the measured regulated church) from that day shall be, The Lord is there.* This is the true glory of the church, this makes the new heavens, and the new earth, which according to his promise, we look for, and the great and marvellous things our eyes behold this day are the beginnings and introduction to it: Which brings us to the third general head, namely,

(3.) What influence these begun works of God have to strengthen and encourage our souls in prayer for these greater, and more perfect mercies: And this they do upon a three-fold account.

(1.) As these begun introductive works of mercy, are indications and signs that the time of mercy, even the set time, is come.

There is an appointed, or set time for the church's deliverance now, as well as for theirs out of Egypt; that was called "the time of the promise," Acts vii. 17. Deliverance can neither come before it, nor will it linger when that time is fully come. Promises, like a pregnant woman, have their appointed months, Hab. ii. 3. their set and appointed time, Psal. cii. 13. Now, when we behold such things done, and doing in the world, as are at this day before our eyes; we may rationally conclude the time of mercy, even the set time is near; as our Saviour speaks, Mat. x:iv. 32, 33. "Learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors."

Now, it is a singular encouragement in prayer, when we know, or can but probably conjecture that the time is near for the accom-

plishment and performance of those very promised mercies we pray for; as we see in Dan. ix. 2, 3. when Daniel understood, by searching and studying the sacred records, such prophecies as that, Jer. xxv. 11, 12. that the time fore-set was near at an end, then he set himself with extraordinary fervency to prayer. And do not the generality of learned and good men agree, that the set time for Rome's destruction is now near, even at the door? It is near 1260 years since Christ turned up her glass, and you see this day all things working towards the accomplishment of the written word. This cannot but be a strong encouragement to seek God by prayer for the full accomplishment of what is so near us.

(2.) God hath ordered the deliverances and mercies of his church to be birthed out by the cries and prayers of his people. When, therefore, mercies are come to the birth, it is a special season, and singular encouragement to prayer. Ezek. xxxvi. 36, 37. "I the Lord plant that that was destroyed, I have spoken it, and I will do it: Thus saith the Lord God, Yet for this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." So again, in Jer. xxix. 11, 12. "I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil; to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me; and I will hearken unto you." In both these places, you see God will have prayer to assist the birth of mercy, and never is any mercy so sweet, as when prayer comes betwixt our dangers and deliverances, our wants and supplies. Hence it was that Hezekiah sent that seasonable message to the prophet Isaiah, 2 Kings xix. 3. "Lift up a cry for the remnant that is left, for the children are come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth." If ever men will strive with God to purpose in prayer, it is when they perceive the greatest mercies are at the birth, and prayer is the midwife to bring it forth.

(3.) When God hath begun a work of mercy, it gives singular encouragement to prayer, because that time is the time of finding a proper and acceptable season; as it is Psal. xxxii. 6. "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found;" or in a time of finding. *Courtiers*, who have great requests to make to kings, do carefully observe their *molissima fundi tempora*, as they call them; their convenient seasons when they find the king most propense, and inclinable to acts of grace. That which is in motion, is the more easily moved. God is now in the way of mercy, his goodness is moving spontaneously towards us; and if ever prayer be like to speed and prevail, now is the time. And in the last place,

(4.) Manifold and weighty are the reasons and motives, that should fully engage the most fervent desires and prayers of all the

saints, to see the full deliverance of Zion; and to pass over Jordan to behold that goodly mountain, and Lebanon, I mean those six glorious mercies and privileges before-mentioned.

*First,* The saints' love to Christ makes it above measure desirable to them; nothing is more dear and precious to a Christian, than the glory and interest of Christ, and answerable to the strength of their love, is the fervour of their desires. It is said, Psal. cii. 16. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."

Whilst the church groans under Antichrist, the glory of Jesus Christ is darkened and much eclipsed in the world. It hath been the chief part of the saints sufferings, to see his ordinances polluted, and the rights of heaven invaded by the usurpations of men; this is it that hath cost them more sorrow of heart, than their personal sufferings have done. But to see the accomplishment of that prophecy, Rev. xi. 19. what will it be but as life from the dead? "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament," &c. As it was an exceeding joy to the godly in Israel, when good Josiah came to the crown, to see the temple opened, which had been neglected in the days of his predecessors, Manasseh and Ammon, in whose reigns the book of the law had lain in the rubbish, but now the worship of God was restored; so it cannot but ravish a gracious heart with singular delight and joy, to see the pure, primitive worship of God restored to its first purity and glory. And the more any man is sanctified, the more he is inflamed with desires after it, because the glory of Christ is so much interested and concerned therein,

*Secondly,* Their love to the church, of which they are members, makes this greatly desirable. Moses was a man who excelled in love to the church, witness that transcendent rapture of his, Exod. xxxii. 32. but though he be scarcely imitable therein, yet every real Christian doth, in his right frame, prefer Jerusalem to his chief joy, Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. and, accordingly, their love to Zion is evidenced in their prayers for, and desires of its prosperity, Isa. lxii. 1. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." So again, Psal. cxxii. 8. For my brethren, my companions' sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee." For when the church shall be delivered from the Antichristian yoke, and settled in peace and purity, great will its increase be. Her children shall say again in her ears, the place is too strait, give room that we may dwell. She will look forth as the morning and her glory be fresh in her.

*Thirdly*, The pity and compassion the saints have for the poor, miserable, perishing world, cannot but make this, a desirable thing in their eyes. For whilst the gospel is restrained in its full liberty, or the ordinances corrupted by the mixture of human inventions and traditions; it is not to be expected that the church should be much enlarged by an addition of converts.

The kingdom of our Lord Jesus is for the present confined within strait and narrow limits, and it is just matter of sorrow to consider how small a part of the habitable world is in subjection to him: So many millions bowing down to idols, the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty, Psal. lxxiv. 20. The sight of precious souls perishing for want of the word, made the bowels of the compassionate Redeemer to yearn within him, Matth. ix. 36. and the same consideration and occasion cannot but affect and melt every soul in which is the Spirit of Christ: proportionably to the compassions men have for the miseries of the perishing world, will their desires be for the enlarging and perfecting of the gospel-privileges and mercies.

*Fourthly*, Love to ourselves will make us long for such a sight as this: for what is there in this world more pleasant to a Christian than to see Christ walking amidst the golden candlesticks? The peaceful and sweet enjoyment of God in his pure ordinances, Psal. xxvii. 4. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." This was David's *hoc unicum*, one thing above all other things in this world in his eye, and so it is to all that see things with such an eye as David had; and next to that is the sweet and comfortable communion of saints with one heart and mouth glorifying God, and serving him with one consent. These are the things which make it worth while to live on earth; the pleasure of life doth consist in them. Now all these desirable things cannot be enjoyed in any eminent degree on this side Jordan, I mean till the great promises now near their birth be accomplished.

#### Use I.

The point before us frowns upon, and severely reprehends two sorts of persons, viz.

1. Wicked.
2. The godly.

(1.) It administers just reprehension to wicked men, who instead of thankful acknowledgments of the beginnings of mercies, and improving them in prayer for the obtaining of greater, do inwardly repine and fret at the work of mercy begun, and are afraid of



nothing more than a full and complete reformation. Are there not such wretched creatures to be found this day in England, that would be better pleased to be at their old persecuting work again, and see good men destroyed, than to enjoy a due liberty to worship God according to the dictates of their consciences, after they have seriously studied and prayed for reformation? Some there are who call themselves *Protestants*, but (blush O heavens at this, and be astonished) they have not been ashamed to say, *rather popery than presbytery*: And Haman-like, take no comfort in their own liberty, because those they hate enjoy theirs.

Thus it was with the ungodly *murmurers* in Israel, when God had brought them out of Egypt with signs and wonders, and a mighty hand; yet, their lusts being crossed, they would needs make them a *captain*, and return back to Egypt, Num. xiv. 4. What madness was here? Could they think God would divide the red-sea for them in their return to Egypt as he did at their departure thence? Or that they should find such welcome in Egypt, which they had deserted, disobliged, and brought so much ruin upon? What stupendous madness was here!

(2.) It justly rebukes the dead-heartedness and ingratitude of good men, among many of whom is neither found that fervency of prayer, nor sense of present mercies which God expects, and the present dispensations of his providences call for.

How inexcusable at this time is a flat, discouraged, and dull spirit in prayer? To be found under such a temper as this, when the morning of so glorious a day is sprung up, and opened upon us, and such encouragements to enliven faith and hope are before our eyes, this is sad. The saints that are gone to heaven under the late and former troubles, were mighty wrestlers with God in prayer: They fasted and wept; they pleaded our cause heartily with God; wept and made supplication for the mercies we now enjoy, though it was not their lot to see them: And shall we that are entered into the fruits and mercies they prayed for, and are under such signal encouragements, be now remiss and cold?

Or shall we ungratefully overlook the beginning of mercy as small and inconsiderable things? Shall we say, all this is nothing, because we have not yet all that we would have? God forbid! When Israel was in Egypt, then a little straw would have been esteemed as a great mercy; but afterwards *quails* and *manna* were despised and slighted. Brethren, three or four years ago, you would have accounted it a special mercy to have enjoyed an hour or two together in prayer, or to have had a little spiritual bread handed to you behind your enemies backs: and is it nothing in your eyes this day to behold the worship of God at liberty? Yea, to see the success of the gospel in the bringing home of many souls

to Christ, the fears of Popery vanished, the witnesses risen, the tenth part of the city fallen, and such a prospect of far greater and more glorious things before your eyes? O let not the consolations of the Almighty seem small!

If wicked men envy and grudge at our mercies, and we ourselves undervalue and slight them, then is there a grievous provocation given to the Lord to turn his hand, and bring all our former miseries back again upon us.

### Use II.

Hath God brought us by a mighty hand out of spiritual Egypt by the reformation, and hath now led us so many years through the wilderness until he hath brought us at last almost in sight of the good things he hath promised? Then let us be exhorted to the duties, and warned of the dangers of our present state.

(1.) Take heed of provoking God in the way: Moses did so, and for that was shut out of the good land, Numb. xx. 12. his heedlessness of the command deprived him of the good of the promise. Unbelief, murmuring, and idolatry shut out many thousands of them that came out of Egypt, and for those sins their carcasses fell in the wilderness, 1 Cor. x. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And these are our examples, not for imitation, but caution. When *seamen* sail along the coast where abundance of wreck is floating, they sail the more warily. You are not yet so secure and safe, but that you may quickly fall into as great dangers and miseries as ever, if you provoke the Lord in the way of mercies. In the miscarriage of others we may get experience at a cheap rate. After great deliverances, the greatest judgments are to be feared if God be provoked by the abuse of them. So Joshua tells them, Josh. xxiv. 20. "He will turn again and do you hurt after he hath done you good;" for one mercy can never be pleaded as an argument to obtain another, if it be abused and trampled under feet. So Josh. xxiii. 15. and Jude 12.

(2.) Be not discouraged if you should meet with some difficulties, even on the borders of the land of promise. After all their wilderness straits, deliverance at the red-sea, and encounters with the neighbouring kings, there was a swelling Jordan at last betwixt them and the place of rest and mercy; and so it may fall out with us: But let not our faith be staggered; for look, as the *ark* of the covenant stood in the midst of Jordan, to secure the tribes in their passage through it, Josh. iii. 8. so doth the promise stand this day in the midst of mystical Jordan; I mean the dangers and troubles of the church, to secure its passage through them all. Brethren, follow ye the Lord in the way of duty, and you shall assuredly find that Jordan shall divide when you come to it; and that all trou-

bles, all fears, all difficulties do owe you a safe passage through them: The covenant, yea, Christ, the Mediator of the covenant, stands in the midst of them all to secure you.

(3.) Bless God for casting the lot of your nativity upon such a happy and extraordinary period of time as this is. Many saints have desired to see the days you are likely to see in a little time, and have not seen them. The whole space of time, from the first to the second coming of Christ, is by the prophets called one day, Zech. xiv. 7. and the greatest part of this long day very doubtful and changeable; neither light, nor dark, nor day, nor night; peace and trouble, truth and error taking all along their alternate courses. *But at evening-time it shall be light.* And as the greatest darkness is a little before the dawning of the morning, so here the blackest and gloomiest part of the whole day is to be expected before this lightsome glorious evening: such tribulation, immediately before the fall and ruin of Antichrist, as ages past never saw. Lactantius speaking of this very time, says, ‘That a little before it, the state of human affairs must necessarily be changed, and all things grow worse and worse; so that these times of ours (saith he) in which iniquity is grown, as one would think, to the height, yet in comparison with those days, may even be called golden times: The godly shall be every where distressed by the wicked, they shall flourish, and the righteous be in contempt: All right and law shall perish and be confounded; no man shall possess any thing but what is ill gotten, or valiantly defended; there shall be no faithfulness in men; no peace, humanity, shame, or truth left: Wars shall rage every where; all nations shall be in arms; neighbouring cities shall make war upon each other; then shall slaughters be in all the world, mowing down all like an harvest; of which confusions and destruction this shall be the cause: I tremble to speak it, (but it must be spoken, for it shall surely come to pass) that the Roman name, by which the world is now ruled, shall be taken away from the earth.

These things, in themselves, are exceeding dreadful, and yet I say, let the saints rejoice in that God hath cast their lot upon these times. For,

1. These are the last troubles the church is like to feel from the hands of that enemy; and there is much comfort in that. God never exercised so great patience and long-suffering towards any enemy of his church as he hath towards this. But the day is come to avenge the blood of the saints upon Babylon, and destructions are come, even come to a perpetual end.

2. The Lord will take care of his people in all these calamities and national confusions: They shall be reserved as a seed to con-

tinue and enlarge the church, which is to be the subject of all the promised liberty and glory.

(4.) Labour to get suitable frames of spirit to those good times you expect. Carnal hearts will not suit them, or find any pleasure in them. We look, according to the promise, for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and seeing we look for such things, O what manner of persons ought we to be! 2 Pet. iii. 11. You that are parents, how are you concerned not only for yourselves, but for the religious education of your children: If you live not to see those good days, in all probability they will; the hopes of the next generation depends much upon your religious and zealous care and diligence. Never were children born in a more happy and encouraging time than yours is.

And for you young ones, I would leave one word of counsel this day. Get principles of grace implanted in your hearts betime: For the days are coming in which the world will be no place of pleasure for profane and carnal persons. As serious piety has been hissed at, and ridiculed in these late debauched times, so will profaneness in future times. "Holiness to the Lord shall be upon the bells of the horses," Zech. xiv. 20. that is, *husbandmen* shall have their hearts in heaven, whilst their hands are on the plow. *Merchants* and *seamen* shall drive a trade for heaven as well as earth, Isa. xxiii. 18. Isa. lx. 5. If you be profane and ungodly you shall at once be the contempt of heaven and earth.

(5.) Lastly, Bless God for those instruments by which you are brought out of spiritual Egypt to the borders of Canaan.

You must not ascribe more to instruments than is due to them, nor lean and depend too much on them. Many benumb their own arms by leaning on them. But on the other side, beware of ingratitude to the instruments by which God works out your deliverances, and conveys to you such excellent mercies. Some know no other way of expressing their joy, but by drunken healths and *huzzas*, a sacrifice suitable enough to Bacchus, but such as God abhors, and his vicegerent will not thank you for. There are other ways of expressing your joy in the mercy which will be highly acceptable both to God and the king; viz.

(1.) Pray for your rulers, that God would make kings to be nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers to the church, according to that promise, Isa. xlix. 23. That he would preserve and secure the heart of the king by his wisdom and fear, from those dangerous temptations and snares that surround the throne: "That he may be just, ruling in the fear of God, and so be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. That the zeal of God

may inflame his soul, and that he may be a second Hezekiah in restoring and reforming the worship of God: That God would lengthen the days of his life upon the throne for the peace and prosperity of his church. In this you will answer the great things God hath done for you and his church at this time.

(2.) Be loyal, peaceable, and obedient subjects. Convince the world that religion breeds the best subjects: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," Mark xii. 17. Where you enjoy protection, you owe allegiance. Be not *murmurers*, as the ungrateful Israelites were, 1 Cor. x. 10. Understand and value the mercies you enjoy under the government, and bless God for them; lest he teach you by sad experience the difference betwixt his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, as he did them, 2 Chron. xii. 8. Beware you exchange not the golden yoke of *Christ* for the iron yoke of *Antichrist*.

(3.) Take heed to order your conversation aright; let not your irreligious lives make the solemn religious duties of this day to blush, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God," Psal. l. *ult.* And thus your present mercies, how great and glorious soever they be in themselves, shall be but as the dawning light of a much more glorious day springing up upon these nations, and all the churches of Christ, after so long and gloomy a night of afflictions and sorrows; which the Father of mercies grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*