

most acceptable to God: Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.' Oh! when these two are coupled, the fear to offend him and dependence upon his grace in Christ, the Lord takes pleasure in them. And it will be most comfortable to you: Acts ix. 31, 'They walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost.' And it is most honourable to religion, for this is the religion of Christ's making; religion is then in its true constitution and frame: Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls.' When we reflect upon the proper ground of comfort, the mercy of God, the covenant of grace, and the merits of the Redeemer, and keep up a due care of obedience, this is christian religion. And it is an honourable thing in the world; and this will show that you are sincere and upright; and that after a while that you have gone on walking in his fear, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, you shall enjoy his blessed presence in heaven.

SERMON LXIV.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.—HEB. xi. 30.

IN the last verse we have represented the faith of Israel under the conduct of Moses, now we shall represent their faith under the conduct of Joshua. There we saw what was done in their passage out of Egypt, here we shall see what is done in their entrance into Canaan. 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,' &c. Here is—

1. The grace exercised—*Faith*.
2. The event that followed—*The walls of Jericho fell down*.
3. The manner how it was accomplished—*After they were compassed about seven days*. Where—(1.) The means, 'They were compassed about;' (2.) The time, 'Seven days.'

1. The grace exercised—*Faith*. The great skill of christians is to find out the new testament pre-signified in the old, and the old testament fulfilled in the new; both agree to tell us the way of living by faith in Christ. Joshua was a type of Christ, as his name shows, which in the new testament is always written *Jesus*: as Acts vii. 45, 'They were brought in with Jesus into the possession of the gentiles,' and Heb. iv. 8, 'If Jesus had given them rest;' that is, Joshua. Now this also was the name of our Lord: Mat. i. 21, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus (which signifies a saviour), for he shall save his people from their sins.' Joshua was a great captain; and Christ is the 'captain of our salvation,' Heb. ii. 10. Joshua was to overcome strongholds, and whatever let the people's possessing the land of promise; so doth Christ demolish all strongholds, the devil and the grave, death and hell, that he may introduce us into the heavenly Canaan, the land of our eternal rest. Joshua overcame by God's appointed means, by

the priests marching before, and the ark of the covenant following, and then the people: Joshua vi. 8, 'And it came to pass when Joshua had spoken unto the people, that the seven priests, bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns, passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of the Lord followed them,' &c. So doth Christ overcome by the gospel; the ark of the covenant is our strength: Ps. cv. 4, 'Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore.' The priests blowing with trumpets of rams' horns is a figure of the power of the ministry; for so the apostle explains this: 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' As they by the blast of their trumpets were to throw down this strong city, the way to be partakers of this benefit is faith; they walked about with the ark of the covenant, and the priests blowing their trumpets, submitting to God's direction; they expected the event; and so the prayer of faith will do very much to the demolishing of the strongholds of Satan as we go to the promised land.

2. The event that followed—the walls of Jericho falling down; their hope was not frustrated. If we will believe God's promises, and execute his commands, we need no shifts, or artifices, or secular policy, or means of our own, to work deliverance for us. To evidence the greatness of the success, we must know—

[1.] That Jericho was a strong and well-fenced city, one of those which frightened the spies who were sent to view the land: Num. xiii. 20, 'The cities are walled, and very great.' And see how the people aggravate the report of the spies: Deut. i. 28, 'The cities are great, and walled up to heaven; and, moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.' Every rumour increases in the spreading. This city, amongst others, to men's eyes seemed impregnable, so much we gather from Joshua, chap. vi. 1, 'Now Jericho was straitly shut up, because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in.' In the Hebrew (and so it is noted in the margin), the city 'did shut up itself;' that is, it was strongly fortified in itself, both by its situation and by art, and was shut up by the obstinacy of the inhabitants.

[2.] It was a frontier town, the first that kept them from entering far into Canaan, being the first city of Canaan on the west side of Jordan, by which the people entered into the land; and until this rub and impediment was taken out of the way, they could not safely make any further passage. Now, if they should miscarry in their first attempt, it would, in the eyes of the Canaanites, bring a disreputation upon their arms and contradict the report of the mighty wonders that were wrought for them; and in the eyes of the Israelites it would be a great discouragement to their faith. Therefore, in this first attempt, God would open a safe and ready way and passage to his people, and by this victory give them a pledge of further mercy. And therefore, upon their faith and obedience to God, the walls fell flat to the ground, Joshua vi. 20, for nothing can stand before the power of God and the faith of his people. Now this gave great courage to Israel to see that God owned them in it; but it was a

great terror to the Canaanites; for in fighting against his people, they were to fight with God.

3. The manner, how it was accomplished—‘After it was compassed about seven days:’ where take notice of the means and time.

[1.] The means is intimated in the word, ‘They were compassed about.’ To understand which, we must have recourse to the story. They had a special command from God to walk about Jericho, and had a promise that it should fall down flat, Joshua vi. 4, 5. Now their faith was manifested by obedience to his command and dependence upon his promise. The means may be considered negatively or positively; what they did not, and what they did.

(1.) Negatively, what they did not. (1.) They make no trenches to keep themselves safe. (2.) They stand not in battle array to repel the excursions of their enemies, but march on one after another in the order prescribed: Joshua vi. 9, ‘The armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets; and the rear-ward came after the ark, the priests going on and blowing with the trumpets.’ (3.) They lay no formal siege to assault the city; set no engines of battery against the walls. (4.) The people raised no cry to create terror: Joshua vi. 10, ‘And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word come out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout, then shall ye shout.’ It was meet that no noise should be heard, but that God’s voice should be attended upon with silence and quietness on the people’s part, that it might visibly appear their enemies were not overcome by the power of men, but of God. So that, by this negative view, we see the victory was not to be accomplished by force of arms, effusion of blood, or any other means which carnal reason or common sense would suggest; for God, without blow or bloodshed, can bring mighty things to pass.

(2.) Positively, what means they used: nothing but a procession of the ark, and armed men, and seven priests with seven trumpets of rams’ horns sounding to them. Silver trumpets were not used, though in a general case they were prescribed: Num. x. 9, ‘And if you go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresses you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets, and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.’ And an instance of the success of it we have in the Jews’ war against apostate Israel, when they say, 2 Chron. xiii. 12, ‘And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you: O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper.’ This promise annexed to the signs was fulfilled, and was a type and pledge of God’s blessing when his ministers stir up his people against Satan, sin, and antichrist, wherein the Lord will be with them and bless their labours. This was to be ordinarily done by silver trumpets, but in this case God would try them by more despicable means, by trumpets made with rams’ horns. And then the ark followed the priests, which was a special evidence of God’s presence among them; for when the ark was lifted up, the priests were to cry, ‘Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate thee flee before thee,’ Num. x. 35. A type of Christ’s ascension and conquering the enemies of our salvation;

as ye shall see the same words are used, Ps. lxxviii. 1, 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him.' And that psalm is a prophecy of Christ's ascension, as appears by the 18th and 19th verses, compared with Eph. iv. 8-10. As the ark was among the Israelites, so is Christ among his people; and what ground the church had because of that pledge of God's presence to expect deliverance, we have the same ground, yea, a more sure ground of confidence in Christ. Whenever he begins to stir and show himself, woe be to those that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world; he hath the same care, power, and faithfulness towards his people that ever he had at first. When he ascended up to heaven, he went thither conquering and triumphing, and still can subdue and conquer a rebellious world to himself. Well, in this order they went round about the city for six days together; and the event succeeded: this was to prove their faith the more, and to try their obedience and patience.

[2.] We come to the time—'After they had compassed about the city seven days.' They were every day to make this procession once; and the event appeared not till the last and seventh day. No reason can be given why it must be the seventh day but God's will; only a septenary is a sacred number. On the seventh day, when the signal fore-appointed was given, the people gave a shout, and the event succeeded; the walls fell down.

Now, from the means thus positively considered, I might observe two things—

(1.) That the means seemed ridiculous in the eye of reason; for what could seven priests blowing of seven rams' horns be to overturn such great and strong walls? But God's command and promise will do great matters, for he can bring his ends to pass by means that have not any natural aptitude and fitness thereunto. And the apostle saith, 2 Cor. x. 4, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' And faith must use such means as God hath appointed, though they seem weak.

(2.) Though these means seem ineffectual at first, yet we must tarry God's leisure; they will succeed in time, and they shall do what God intendeth to do by them. The walls of Jericho shall not fall down till the seventh day. God hath his set time to bring his people out of Egyptian bondage, and he kept touch to a day, though he seemed almost to break his word, for it was night before they went forth: Exod. xii. 41, 'And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.' And so in many other cases. Our times are always present with us out of impatiency of the flesh, when it may be God's time is not yet come. But they that would faithfully promote the interests of Christ's kingdom must tarry God's leisure.

Doct. That it is the property of faith to adhere faithfully to the interest of Christ's kingdom, quietly waiting for his salvation.

The business of the apostle in this chapter is to confirm the minds of the believers in adhering to christianity against the temptations of that age, which were of two sorts—(1.) The slender appearance of the

growth and progress of that religion; the church of God being but as a grain of mustard-seed cast into the ground, and coming up at first but with a few slender stalks and branches, which promised no great increase. (2.) The other temptation was the manifold oppositions they met with; their profession exposing them to great troubles, therefore they were quite discouraged, some began to forsake the assemblies of the faithful, and to be weary of persecuted christianity. Now, to cure them of this disease, he shows them what faith hath done in all ages, and what great things have been accomplished by weak means, whilst God's people had a heart to depend upon him; and among the rest, he produces this instance of the taking and demolishing of Jericho by the blowing of rams' horns. If this instance were useful for them, it is so for us; for all ages have their discouragements, and feeble minds soon faint and give out upon the least opposition. Therefore let us see what we shall learn from thence. I shall lay down seven propositions—

First, That Christ's purpose after his ascension was to destroy the kingdom of darkness. This is evident: Ps. cx. 1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' Christ upon the throne hath enemies here in the world, but in due time they shall be his footstool. He shall gain upon opposition, and against opposition, and by opposition; and they shall be so far from overturning his throne, that his enemies shall be a step or footstool to get into it. The same is emblematically set forth, Rev. vi. 2, 'And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.' This is a notable representation of the rise and progress of Christ's kingdom; he comes forth upon a white horse, and his furniture is a crown and a bow. His crown notes his dignity, and his bow the armour and weapons whereby he promotes his authority: Ps. xlv. 3, 4, 'Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.' Christ is furnished to subdue and conquer, and bring as many as he pleases into a subjection to his kingdom; for it is added, ver. 5, 'Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.' He hath weapons to wound the consciences of sinners, and pierce deep into their hearts. Having a grant of a kingdom over the nations, his design is to conquer and carry all before him, and he will do it.

Secondly, This kingdom of darkness is the state which is opposite to Christ's kingdom as mediator. The devils are said to be 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' Eph. vi. 12; and their power is called the power of darkness, as opposite to the kingdom of Christ, 'Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,' Col. i. 13. The gospel kingdom is a kingdom of light, life, and love, where we have the clearest knowledge of God that begets life in us, and love to God and his people. Now opposite to light is ignorance and error; opposite to life is a religion that consists of shows and dead ceremonies; and opposite to love is uncharitableness, malice, hatred, especially of the power of godliness. Now, where these eminently prevail, there is an opposite

kingdom set up against the kingdom of Christ, and this is done by two sorts of people—(1.) By all those that continue in the old apostasy and defection of mankind from God; as all men in their natural state, and eminently by the gentiles and idolatrous heathen world, who live in ignorance of the true God, and are dead in trespasses and sins, and where envy, pride, malice, and ambition reign, instead of the spirit of goodness and love which the gospel would produce. Now these men oppose the light that shines to them: John iii. 19, ‘This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.’ (2.) It may be and is done by a second falling away from Christ, which is foretold: 2 Thes. ii. 3, ‘That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;’ that is, the day of judgment will not come till there be a falling away first. Now this falling off from Christ’s kingdom is there where, in opposition to light, error is taught and ignorance is counted the mother of devotion, and people are restrained from the means of knowledge, as if the height of christian faith and obedience did consist in believing what men would impose upon them by their bare authority. And where, instead of life, men place their whole religion in some superficial rites and ceremonies, and some trifling acts of seeming devotion and exterior mortification; this is a kingdom opposite to that lively religion which Christ hath established. And instead of love to God and souls, all things are sacrificed to men’s private ambition; and conscience is forced by the highest penalties and persecutions to submit to the corruptions of the christian faith and worship. And wherever this prevails, there is a manifest perversion of the interest of Christ’s kingdom. Now this is the Jericho, the block in the way of God’s people in their passage to the heavenly rest. Now both these apostasies, the general apostasy from God, and the special apostasy from Christ, are defended by the authority and power of the world, and upheld by the interests of several nations which own and practise these things; and God’s people, in opposing them, are put to great difficulties. Therefore we are told that God’s witnesses are slain in the city: ‘And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified,’ Rev. xi. 8; that is, the city which answers to Sodom for impurity, to Egypt for idolatry, and to Jerusalem for persecution of the saints; for that is the city wherein our Lord was crucified; he would not say Zion, because that is the name of the church. And till the wall of the city fall down (as it is prophesied there the tenth part of the wall shall fall down), there is an impediment and block in the way of christianity.

Thirdly, To demolish this corrupt estate we are all to be active in our several places; for we are employed as soldiers under the captain of our salvation. Our great business in the world is to promote the kingdom of light, life, and love; to be sure we enter into it ourselves, and to bring as many as we can along with us. (1.) That we enter into it ourselves, for much of the kingdom of God is within us: Luke xvii. 21, ‘For behold the kingdom of God is within you.’ And we must all become light in the Lord: Eph. v. 8, ‘Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.’ And we that were dead

in trespasses and sins must be quickened in Christ: Eph. ii. 1, 'You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.' And then the love of God must bear rule in our hearts, and fill us with all meekness, purity, charity, goodness, holiness, and heavenly-mindedness; we must see we be not of the opposite party of Christ. Now Christ hath much to do with every individual person before he can settle his kingdom in their hearts. There is a mighty combat between Christ and Satan for the rescue of every sinner that is recovered to God. The strong man seeks to keep his castle till a stronger than he comes to dispossess him: Luke xi. 21, 'When the strong man armed keeps the house, his goods are in peace.' Satan is the strong man armed, and the heart of every unconverted sinner is his garrison, which he keeps shut up against Christ by prejudices, carnal interests, worldly inclinations, and sensual allurements; and this strong man must be cast out, and his fort stormed and demolished, before a sinner can be gained, and brought to change masters, and leave his obstinate impenitency. Christ draws one way, the sinner another; for many times we seem ready to repent, but then we are drawn off again, loath to quit our carnal pleasures and company, and we would sit down and be quiet in our sins, but Christ will not let us alone, till at last we leave the fort to him. (2.) When Christ's government is set up in the heart, where Satan reigned before, then we must most earnestly seek to promote his interest in the world, and that others be fellows with us in the same grace. Naturally 'all seek their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ,' Phil. ii. 21. But when we are the Lord's, and really made partakers of his grace, every one in his place must be a priest to God, we must blow the trumpet; by our desires, prayers, endeavours, and holy example, we must seek to promote Christ's kingdom, and draw others into the divine life. For this is one great effect of the love of God planted in our hearts, to convert others when we are converted ourselves: Luke xxii. 32, 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.' We are to invite them to have communion with us, as we have with the Father and the Son: 1 John i. 3, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' Grace is and will be diffusive of itself; as fire turns all near it into fire, so every one in his capacity will endeavour to bring home others to God.

Fourthly, To do this we have means in the eye of sense very weak, whatever they are in the eye of faith. Our means are to appearance weak; like those in the text, they carried about the ark of the covenant, and made a blast with rams' horns. The preaching of the gospel, the prayers of the church, the faith and holy conversation of believers, and the patience of the saints, these are the means—by these and such like is the kingdom of sin, Satan, and antichrist demolished, and Christ's kingdom is set up in the world. These means are proper to the Mediator's dispensation, whose kingdom 'comes not with observation,' Luke xvii. 10. But his kingdom is not carried on in a way of external pomp, but by internal power and virtue. The word preached is one means, as the apostle tells us that by the preaching of the cross he was the great solicitor to proselyte, gain, and recover the world:

1 Cor. i. 18, 'The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.' Use this means, and see what it will do. So the prayers of the church; for Christ taught us to pray, 'Thy kingdom come.' Acts iv. 24, 'And when they heard that, they lift up their voice with one accord;' ver. 31, 'And when they had prayed, the place was shaken, where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.' So also the holy conversation of believers: Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father that is in heaven;' 1 Peter ii. 12, 'Having your conversation honest among the gentiles; that whereas they spake against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation;' 1 Peter iii. 1, 'If any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conversation of their wives.' This overcomes prejudice, and endeareth and reconciles religion, and represents the goodness of it to the consciences of men. Another means is by meek and humble sufferings: Rev. xii. 11, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony: and they loved not their lives unto the death.' These were the means by which they got the victory over the pagan world. Thus is the opposition made by the kingdom of darkness against the kingdom of Christ borne down and demolished, and these strongholds brought to nought.

Fifthly, Though the means be weak, yet our faith must be strong; for there are mighty props to bear us up,—viz, the decree and designation of God, seconded with his mighty power, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and the promise and power of the Holy Ghost.

1. The decree and designation of God, seconded with his mighty power. The decree of God: Ps. ii. 6, 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Sion;' that is, appointed Christ to rule over the nations; and they that set themselves against God's decree, they do but imagine a vain thing, ver. 1. Now this is a mighty encouragement to all those that seek in their place to remove the corruptions whereby Christ's interest is obstructed and interrupted in the world, that they act with God, and seek to advance that which his decree hath established and his heart is set upon. The other branch is, that this purpose of God is backed with his almighty power, which can easily remove all impediments; and when he will take to himself and put forth his great power, opposition gives way of itself. So the scripture speaks: Ps. cxiv. 3, 'The sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back.' He alludes to the drying up of the sea and the water of Jordan to give his people passage; and when God puts forth his power, no opposition can hinder nor impediment stand in the way. Acts xii. 7, Peter's chains fell off from his hands when the angel bid him arise, and the iron gate opened on its own accord; so here the walls of Jericho fell down. We expect not miracles, yet still there are acts of wonderful power for the preserving and advancing of Christ's interest in the world, and when the season is come, opposition shall give way of itself.

2. You have the merit and intercession of Christ, the merit of his humiliation here upon earth, and the power of his intercession in

heaven. His merit on earth, for one end for which the blood of Christ was shed was to promote the interest of his kingdom, and to fetch men off from their inveterate prejudices and superstitions; and therefore the apostle saith, 1 Peter i. 18, 19, 'You are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of the Son of God,' &c. How shall we bring men off from their opposition which is confirmed in them, and hath been the religion of their fathers and grandfathers for many generations? Oh! see what the blood of Christ can do; it hath a mighty virtue in it to take off this opposition. And so his intercession in heaven: Ps. cx. 1, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' Christ is at the right hand of God, and there he is to sit till all opposition be destroyed, which is a mighty encouragement to all that are factors and agents for his kingdom here below. He is at God's right hand, pleading for them before God the Father: John xvii. 10, 'All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.' They are those that take his part in the world; and he is their advocate and intercessor at God's right hand, to prosper their endeavours, to pardon their failings, to remove impediments that lie in their way,—there he is pleading with God.

3. The mighty and all-conquering spirit that proceedeth both from the Father and the Son. Of this Spirit of God I shall say two things—(1.) That he is invincible and almighty, and therefore his operations are suitable to the agent. Oh! what mighty things hath this Spirit done as to the demolishing strongholds! Heretofore by this Spirit the apostles and messengers of Christ wrought miracles, cured diseases, cast out devils, conveyed gifts by laying on of hands, silenced oracles, and so everywhere destroyed the kingdom and power of Satan, and convinced the world of the truth of this despised religion. And still his mighty force is seen in enlightening and convincing men's minds of the truth of the christian religion, and furnishing his people with gifts, and converting others, and changing them from sinners to saints: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' (2.) This Spirit is promised to be with us in the faithful dispensing of Christ's ordinances: Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I will be with you always to the end of the world.' In the whole flux and course of the gospel kingdom he is with us. Now Christ is with us by his Spirit; for when he departed, the Comforter came to supply his absence: therefore, if he be with us, it is by his Spirit. Therefore, upon all these grounds, how mean and despicable soever the means appear, let us believe the Lord our God, who hath set his King on his holy hill, established him by his decree, which is backed by a mighty power, and the Lord Jesus represents his merit, and we have the presence and promise of a mighty conquering Spirit: 2 Chron. xx. 20, 'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.'

Sixthly, If our whole dependence be upon God, we must be sure to keep God's direction, and use only regular and holy means, such as he hath prescribed as our duty to observe. Here the Israelites every day

were to make the procession about the city, and the seventh day seven times, and all in silence; unless it were with blowing the rams' horns, they were not to raise a shout till the signal was given. We cannot expect success in what is not of faith. By carnal and unlawful means we forfeit God's protection, and lose his blessing, for he is not bound to maintain us in our sin. Our dependence supposes obedience; if we trust in God we must be true to him: Ps. xxxvii. 34, 'Wait on the Lord, and keep his way;' 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing.'

Seventhly, Keeping to God's direction, you must wait his leisure, or tarry for the time and season which God hath appointed. Six days the wall stands fast, not a stone stirred, and for a good part of the seventh, but upon the evening of the seventh day all comes tumbling down: Hab. ii. 3, 'The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Every dispensation of God hath its prefixed period; as the mercy, so the timing of the mercy is merely in God's hand. It is not always ready at our beck and call, but we must wait God's time, who hath his seasons of afflicting and trial as well as of delivering. We must not miscarry through weakness or haste, either give over as discouraged, or break out into any unlawful action to help ourselves: Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth will not make haste.' It is in vain to hope, but while we are waiting and acting in our place and calling. For the promoting of God's kingdom in the world we must tarry God's leisure. We can neither prevent nor put off God's time.

Use 1. The use is to encourage all those who wish well to the propagation of Christ's kingdom, and are troubled at the stumbling-blocks that are in the way. Consider what may be done, and what hath been done, and both will encourage you to wait upon God.

1. Consider what may be done.

[1.] Christ is the governor of the world; all power is put into his hands, to be employed for the good of his people: John v. 22, 'The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son.' He hath the government of angels, devils, men, and of all events in the world. Things are not left to their own arbitrament and uncertain contingency, but they are administered by our wise and powerful Redeemer. It is not Satan which governs the world, but Christ; therefore all that are of Christ's confederacy are of the surer side, for they are with the governor of the world, and then what may not be done?

[2.] He is the head of the church as well as governor of the world: Eph. v. 22, 'And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church.' He is more concerned than we can be. The church is not ours, but his; and he is fitter to be trusted with the concerns of it than we, and more tender of its welfare than we are or can be; therefore by the prayer of faith let us recommend his own affairs to him.

[3.] Christ's manner of governing should not be disliked by those that have faith, though sense despise it. His manner is not to subdue the world by the visible force of a strong hand, as an earthly conqueror, but by his word and Spirit, and the secret conduct of his pro-

vidence : Zech. iv. 6, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' The world dotes upon might and power, because that is the next visible means ; but God will do his business another way. A little key will open a door sooner than an iron bar. His holy and invisible means will do it better than all those ways which carnal wisdom suggests.

[4.] Considering the groundwork laid in his death and intercession, surely these means should not be contemptible. (1.) His word is a powerful instrument : Ps. cx. 3, 'The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion ; rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.' The word of the Lord is the rod of his strength ; and it is called the 'arm of the Lord,' Isa. liii. 1, and 'the power of God unto salvation,' Rom. i. 16. A mighty word it is, and doth mighty things in the hearts of God's people and in the world. Satan's kingdom is demolished, and so is antichrist destroyed by his word : 2 Thes. ii. 8, 'Then shall the wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth.' (2.) Then for the other branch, what can stand before the all-conquering Spirit of Christ? You see it in that servant of God, Stephen : Acts vi. 10, 'They could not resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake.' There is a spirit dispensed by the gospel that can turn a lion into a lamb : Isa. xi. 6, 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ;' bring us to love what we hate : 'to delight in the law of God,' Rom. vii. 22. Whereas before, our carnal mind was 'enmity against God,' Rom. viii. 7, that can change us, that bore the image of Satan and the earthly one, into the image and likeness of God : 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' He can turn a 'thorn into a fir-tree, and the briar into a myrtle-tree,' Isa. lv. 13. All these expressions the scripture useth to set forth the mighty things and changes which the Spirit of God can make. Thus consider what may be done.

2. Let us consider what is past, and how the gospel was planted at first. When the Lord Jesus first came to set up the kingdom of light, life, and love, what did he do? The gospel was planted at first not by force or human power, but only by the heavenly divine power of the Lord's grace. It was not the power of the long sword, but the demonstration of the Spirit, which converted the world. The apostles, when they were sent abroad, had no temporal interests to lean to, no worldly powers that were friendly to back them ; yet the gospel prevailed and got up in the world. These things were remarkable in the first spreading of the gospel—

[1.] The doctrine itself is contrary to corrupt nature ; it doth not court the senses nor woo the flesh by the offers of pleasure, or profit, or splendour of life ; but teaches us to deny all these things, and to expect persecutions, and to be contented with spiritual comforts, and the recompenses of the other world : Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' Christ did not allure his followers, as Mahomet, with fair promises of security and carnal pleasure, but tells us of mortification and the cross. It teaches us to row against the stream of flesh and blood

and to bear out sail against all the blasts and furious winds of opposition. The stream runs smoothly when wind and tide go together, where a carnal doctrine is set afoot among carnal men. But in Christ's doctrine there is nothing lovely to move a carnal eye; this doctrine taught the proud world humility; the uncharitable world, love to all men, even to their enemies; the unchaste world, that a lustful glance is adultery; the revengeful world, to turn the other cheek to the smiter; the covetous world, to be liberal, not to cark and take thought for worldly things, but to lay up our treasure in heaven; the dissolute world, to walk circumspectly in all godliness and honesty. This was the doctrine that prevailed.

[2.] Who were the persons and instruments that were made use of to promote this doctrine? They were contemptible persons, a few fishermen, destitute of all worldly props and aids, of no power, and wealth, and authority, and other such advantages as are apt to beget a repute in the world; yet they preached, and converted many nations, though they had no public interest to countenance them, though they were not backed with the power of princes or the countenance of worldly potentates. We are told, Prov. xxix. 26, 'Many seek the ruler's favour.' But the gospel had a firm footing in the world long ere there was a prince to countenance it, and many to persecute it. And as the instruments were poor, so the first professors of the christian religion were generally poor also: James ii. 5, 'God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith;' and 1 Cor. i. 26, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' And therefore it is much, being so destitute of worldly succour and support, that the gospel should be able to hold up its head in the world; but it did.

[3.] The powers of the world, as they were not friendly to it, so they were set against it. Bonds, sufferings, and afflictions did abide for them everywhere that professed this way; yea, fires were kindled, horrible tortures invented; but no fire was hot enough to consume the gospel. When Satan made his hottest onset against it by his bands of persecutors, even in the midst of persecution did the church increase her strength and glory; and the martyrs' blood was the church's seed. No rage of man was strong enough to bear down Christ, no sword sharp enough to wound his truth to the death; never did war, pestilence, or famine sweep away so many as the first persecutions did; the poor christians were murdered, slaughtered, butchered everywhere, yet still they multiplied and increased, as the Israelites did in Egypt under their cruel bondage, or as a tree lopped sends forth more sprouts.

[4.] Not only the powers of the world were irritated by Satan, but he raised up the most learned philosophers to dispute against the gospel, and bend the force of their learning against it; yet it prevailed above all the power of their carnal wit. It was the purpose and design of God that the gospel should be sent forth, and set up in such a place and age, where and when there were the most learned enemies in all the world, that so all their learning might be nonplussed, and the gospel triumph over it. Never were there so many learned men as about the time of Christ and his apostles; and if ever reason and learning could have disgraced truth, it would have been then. They

pleaded with words, but Christ with mighty works; they used sophisms and lies to get into men's souls, and he shined into men's souls with an insuperable light; their weapons were weak and carnal, but his strong and spiritual; all was carried on in a plain way, without the pomp of words and secular arts, lest the cross of Christ should be of non-effect, and that the faith of the world might not stand in high-flown notions or the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Those simple plain men were to deal with men of excellent parts and learning, some of which received the gospel, and suffered for it. Thus, as Aaron's rod devoured the magicians' serpents, so the gospel was too hard for the wisdom of the world, and in the mouths of babes did Christ show forth his praise, Ps. viii. 2.

[5.] Do but consider the wonderful success of the gospel; it did diffuse and spread itself like leaven in the mass and lump throughout all the parts of the known world, and that within the space of thirty or forty years, or thereabout. Saith Tertullian, *Hesterni sumus*, &c.—We are but of yesterday, and yet how are we increased! Look upon christians, and you shall find them in all places, in cities, villages, isles, castles, free towns, councils, armies, senates, markets; everywhere but where their religion forbids them to be, in the idols' temples. Such a wonderful increase and success the gospel had in such a short time, as the apostle tells the Colossians, chap. i. 6, 'The gospel is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you.'

[6.] There is this circumstance notable in it too; there were Jerichos to be demolished, the world was leavened with prejudices, and possessed with many false religions, wherein they and their fathers had been bred up and lived a long time. Christ did not seize upon the world, as a waste is seized upon by the next comer. No; the ark of God was to be set up in the temple that was already occupied and possessed by Dagon. Before Christ could be seated in the government of the nations, and settle his law, first Satan was to be dispossessed; the wolf was to be hunted out, that the flock might remain in peace. Superstitions received by a long tradition and prescription of time were to be removed. Men keep to the religion of their ancestors with much reverence and respect. People are loath to change their gods, though their worship be never so vain and foolish, the gods to whom they have prayed in their adversities, and whom they have blessed in their prosperities; to break their images that they have worshipped, and to destroy their temples and altars for which they had such veneration and reverence, this seemeth hard and severe. How dear idols are to their worshippers, and how people are habituated to those superstitions, appears by Rachel's stealing away her father's idols, Gen. xxxi. 34. Though she was one of them which built God's Israel, yet she had a hankering mind after her father's idols. Therefore these things stick by us, and no humours are so obstinately stiff as those which are found in religious custom. The Jews accused Stephen of saying, Acts vi. 14, 'That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us;' and Paul, Acts xvi. 31, 'That he did teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, nor to observe,

being Romans.' Certainly it is a very hard thing to bring men out of an old religion to a new one; yet, when the trumpet of the gospel sounded, down went all the altars, images, and superstitions of the gentiles, and the religion of Jesus took place.

[7.] I have but one consideration more, and that is, when Satan had raised up heretics in the church, to rend the body and divide it, as worms that breed in the body and devour it, that so by the church he might destroy the church, yet Christ confounded them, and a little time did break each sect in pieces, so that those which were the great scourge and vexation of one age were scarce known to the next but by their names and some obscure report. The church of Ephesus had Nicolaitans among them; but they hated their doctrine, and within a little while it came to nothing: Rev. ii. 6, 'But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.' And the church of Pergamus had those which held the doctrine of Balaam, yet there were 'those that held fast Christ's name, and did not deny the faith,' ver. 1; and so this heresy vanished and departed. So for others, where the light of the gospel did quickly disperse those fogs as soon as they arose. When any mists arose which did darken the kingdom of light, they were presently scattered and confounded. Well, then, here is encouragement for our zeal and fidelity to Christ, to support us in difficult cases whatever obstructions are made. Let us trust Christ's means, wait upon him with faith and patience, and in due time he will do his work.

Use 2. Let none of us build Jericho again. Joshua imposed a solemn curse on those that built the wall of Jericho, because thereby they would obliterate the memory of divine power and justice: Joshua vi. 26, 'And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord that raiseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof.' Which curse we find fulfilled: 1 Kings xvi. 34, 'In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho; he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.' Cursed are they that revive old superstitions.

SERMON LXV.

By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.—HEB. xi. 31.

In this verse observe—

1. The person spoken of—Rahab, an harlot and a stranger, bred up among idolators.
2. The effect of her faith—*She received the spies with peace.*