

4. More seriousness in the work of salvation: 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.'

SERMON XLI.

What shall we then say to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us?—ROM. viii. 31.

WE are now come to the application of these blessed truths, and the triumph of believers over sin and the cross; yea, over all the enemies of our salvation. It is begun in the text—'What shall we then say?'

The words contain two questions—

1. One by way of preface and excitation.

2. The other by way of explication, setting forth the ground of our confidence. So that here is a question answered by another question.

First, Let us begin with the exciting question, What shall we then say to these things?

Doct. When we hear divine truths, it is good to put questions to our own hearts about things.

There are three ways by which a truth is received and improved—by sound belief, serious consideration, and close application. Sound belief: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' Serious consideration: Deut. xxxii. 46, 'Set your hearts unto all the words I testify among you this day;' Luke ix. 44, 'Let these sayings sink down into your ears.' Close application: Job v. 27, 'Lo! this it is, we have searched it out; know thou it for thy good.' Now these three acts of the soul have each of them a distinct and proper ground; sound belief worketh upon the clearness and certainty of the things asserted; serious consideration on the greatness and importance of them; close application on their pertinency and suitableness to us; see all in one place, 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' These are all necessary to make any truth operative. We are not affected with what we believe not; therefore, to awaken diligence, the truth of things is pleaded: 2 Peter i. 5, 10, 16, 'And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge,' &c.; 'Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure,' &c.; 'For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' So for consideration: Heb. iii. 1, 'Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.'

The weightiest things lie by, and are as if they were not; sleepy reason is as none, and the most important truths work not till consideration make them lively. So for application, what concerneth us not is passed over; unless we hear things with a care to apply them, we shall never make use of them: Eph. i. 13, 'After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' It is not enough to know the gospel to be a doctrine of salvation to others; but we must look upon it as a doctrine that bringeth salvation to our own doors, and leaveth it upon our choice. A plaster doth not heal at a distance, till it be applied to the sore; truths are too remote till we set the edge and point of them to our own hearts. Now this question in the text relateth to all three.

1. It challengeth our faith—'What shall we say to these things?' Do we believe them, and assent to them as certain verities? The apostle doth in effect demand what we can reply or say to these things. The unbelieving, dark, and doubtful heart of man hath many things to say against diviue truths; let God say what he will, the heart is ready to gainsay it; yet it is good to press ourselves thoroughly with the light and evidence of truths, to compel the heart to bring forth its objections and scruples. If any mind to contradict, have we any solid arguments to oppose? Truth wanteth its efficacy when it is received with a half conviction; and doubts smothered breed atheism, irreligion, and gross negligence. Certainly the weighty truths of christianity are so clear, that the heart of man hath little or nothing to say against them; therefore follow it to a full conviction. Doth any scruple yet remain in our minds? It is good thoroughly to sift things, that they may appear in their proper lustre and evidence: John xi. 26, 'Believest thou this?' Pose your hearts.

2. This question doth excite consideration or meditation. We should not pass by comfortable and important truths with a few glancing and running thoughts; it is one part of the work of grace to hold our hearts upon them: Acts xvi. 14, 'Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended to the things that were spoken.' Otherwise, in seeing we see not, and in hearing we hear not, when we see and hear things in a crowd of other thoughts; as when you tell a man of a business, whose mind is taken up about other things. No, your minds must dwell upon these things till you are affected with them; a full survey of the object showeth us the worth of it. 'What shall we say to these things?' that is, what can be said more for our comfort and satisfaction? or what do we desire more? How should we be satisfied with this felicity and love of the ever-blessed God to his people?

3. It awakeneth application to ourselves, that we may make use of these things for our own good. Application is twofold, direct or reflexive; and the question may be explained with respect to both.

[1.] Direct application: as when we infer and bind our duty upon ourselves, from such principles as are laid down; so, 'What shall we say to these things?' that is, what use shall we make of them? Christianity is not a matter of speculation only, but of practice; therefore, when we hear the truth of it enforced, we must commune with ourselves, What doth this call for at our hands, but serious diligence? 2 Peter iii. 11, 'Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,

what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' The truths of the gospel are not propounded that we may talk at a higher rate than others do, but to live at a higher rate. If I should be negligent, indifferent, careless, what will become of me?

[2.] Reflexive application is when we consider our state and course, and judge of it by such general truths as are propounded to us. Direct application is by way of practical inference; reflexive, by way of discovery; and to this sense may this question be interpreted, 'What shall we say to these things?' Doth heart and practice agree with them? Do I live answerable to these comforts and privileges? What, am I one called and sanctified, and one that continueth with patience in well-doing upon the hope of eternal life? 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye are reprobates?' If Christ be formed in his people, is he formed in me? Thus things must be brought home to the heart, and laid to the conscience, if we would make a profitable use of them.

Use. Is to awaken this self-communing; to make our assent more strong, our consideration more deep and serious, and our application, either by way of inference or discovery, more close and pungent. Do we assent? Is this a truth to be lightly passed over? If this be true, what must I do? or what have I done? Now this you should do upon these occasions—

1. When you are tempted to unbelief. There are some points which are remote from sense, and cross the desires and lusts of sensual men, and we either deny them, or doubt of them, or our hearts are full of prejudice against them; and also the devil doth inject thoughts of blasphemy, or doubts about the world to come, into the hearts of people; especially in those that take religion upon trust, or are secretly false to that religion they have received upon some evidence. Now, to prevent all this, it is good to commune with ourselves, that we may be well settled in the truth; therefore see with what evidence the great things of the other world are represented unto us in the word of God, and what a just title they have to our firmest belief. Faith will not be settled without serious thoughts, and it soon withereth there where it hath not much depth of earth, Mat. xiii. 5, 6; no thoughts in the highway ground, slight thoughts in the stony ground. Faith is a child of light, and given upon certain grounds: Luke i. 4, 'That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed;' and Acts xvii. 11, 12, 'They searched the scriptures whether those things were so;' therefore many of them believed. But presumption and slight credulity is a child of darkness, the fruit of ignorance and incogitancy; therefore it is good in those truths that need it most to ask, What say we to these things?

2. When you are in danger of dulness, deadness, and neglect of Christ and his salvation, so that your hearts need quickening and exciting to duty. Sometimes a coldness in holy things, and a sluggishness creepeth on the best, and you may find you begin to grow careless and customary; the conscience becometh sleepy, the heart dead, the affections cold. A lively inculcation is then necessary; you must rouse up yourselves by putting questions to your hearts: Heb. ii. 3,

'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' both by way of assent: Is it not true that there is a heaven and a hell? and, Is the gospel a fable?—and by way of consideration: What trifles and paltry vanities do you neglect Christ for?—and application, by way of inference: Must not I work out my own salvation with fear and trembling?—by way of discovery: Is this a flight from wrath to come, and a pursuit after eternal life?—that, serving God instantly day and night, we may attain to the blessed hope; that, giving diligence, we may be found of him in peace.

3. When strong lusts tempt you to sin in some scandalous and unworthy manner, what will ye do to relieve yourselves, but by such kind of questions? Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Rom. vi. 21, 'What fruit have you in those things whereof you are now ashamed?' And your hearts should rise in indignation against the temptation or carnal motion, Shall I lose my fatness to rule over the trees? If of profit: Mat. xvi. 26, 'What is a man profited if he shall gain the world, and lose his own soul?' If of pleasure, What! lose the birthright for one morsel of meat?

4. In a time of sorrow and discouragements; when affliction breaketh us, and lieth heavy upon us day and night. Suppose continual poverty or sickness, or else when we are wearied with a vexatious and malicious world; then should we revive our hopes and comforts, expostulate with ourselves about our drooping discouragements: Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? and why art thou cast down within me? still hope in God.' We must cite our affections before the tribunal of sanctified reason. This is the drift of this question in the text—'What shall we say to these things?' This were enough to comfort the most distressed and afflicted. Who will be so much grieved for what he knoweth is for his good? Yea, so great a good as eternal salvation?

5. Whenever any message of God is sent to you, go home and practise upon it speedily, whether any duties are pressed upon you in the name of Christ, or sins reproved—'What shall we say to these things?' Is it not a duty? or that a sin? A weighty duty, or a heinous sin? Do I perform this duty, or avoid this sin? or, What do I mean to do for the future? If upon the first opportunity, as soon as the message is brought to us, we did fall a-working of the truth upon our hearts, more good would be done, our christianity would be more explicate and serious; whereas the impression that is left upon us in hearing is soon defaced, and all for want of such serious reflections and self-communings: James i. 22–24, 'But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls; for if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man that beholdeth his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was;' they forget how much they were concerned in the truths delivered.

Second question by way of explication—*If God be for us, who shall be against us?* There observe two things—

1. The ground supposed—'If God be for us.'
2. The comfort built upon it—'Who shall be against us?'

From both observe—

That if God be for us, we need not be troubled at the opposition of those that are against us.

[1.] I shall explain the words of the text, both concerning the ground laid and the comfort thence inferred.

[2.] Show you the reasons of it.

(1.) To explain the words, and there the ground supposed—‘If God.’ It is not *dubitantis*, but *ratiocinantis*; not the *if* of doubting, but of reasoning. The meaning is, this being taken for granted, the other must needs follow. In the supposition, two things are taken for granted—

1st. That there is a God.

2dly. That he is with, and for his children.

[1st.] For the first: it is some comfort to the oppressed, that there is a God, who is the patron of human societies, and the refuge of the oppressed; who will take notice of their sorrows, and right their wrongs: Eccles. v. 8, ‘If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they;’ so Eccles. iii. 16, ‘Moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, and that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.’ Man, that should be as a god to his neighbour, proveth oftentimes as a devil or wild beast to him, making little use of his power, but to do mischief. And many times God’s ordination of magistrates is used as a pretence to their violence; and tribunals and courts of justice, which should be as sanctuaries and places of refuge for wronged innocence, are as slaughter-houses and shops of cruelty. Now this is a grievous temptation; but it is a comfort that the Lord will in due time review all again, and judge over the cause, that he may right his people against their oppressors. There is a higher court to which we may appeal: ‘all things are governed by a holy and wise God, who will right his people, and vindicate their innocence.’

[2dly.] That he is with, and for his children—*καθ’ ἡμῶν*, ‘If God be with us.’ But when is God with us? This must be stated with respect to the forementioned acts of grace. Worldlings judge of God’s presence by wrong rules; they measure his love and favour altogether by the outward estate; if their mountain stand strong, if their houses be filled with the good things of this world, then they conclude God is with them. No, we must determine it by the context; and we begin—

(1st.) With predestination. God is with his people, not by a wavering will, but a constant, eternal decree. There are some that belong to the election of his grace: 2 Tim. ii. 19, ‘The foundation of the Lord standeth sure.’ See that reasoning: Luke xviii. 7, 8, ‘And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him? Though he bear long with them, I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.’ Now election is for awhile a secret; but we have the comfort of it when we make our calling and election sure. Certainly God loveth his people with a dear and tender love, since he hath carried them in the womb of his decree from all eternity.

(2dly.) Effectual vocation is the eruption of this purpose. God is not with us, but in us. When we are made partakers of a divine nature, we have a pledge of his being with us in our own heart. We dwell in God, and God in us, 1 John iii. 24. The new creature is under his special care and protection, and he is very tender of them, 1 Cor. i. 9.

(3dly.) Justification is another act of his grace. We often give God occasion to withdraw from us; but his pardoning mercy maketh up the breach. Woe unto us if God depart from us! We often banish, and drive away our own mercies: Isa. lix. 2, 'But your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.' But he multiplieth to pardon, and accepteth us in the beloved, to the praise of his glorious grace. And so his favour and gracious presence is continued with penitent believers that cry for mercy.

(4thly.) It endeth in glory. The God of our salvation discontinueth not his care over us till he hath brought us into his immediate presence. Here God is with us while we dwell in houses of clay; there we are with God for ever in his glory. If he be with us here, we are to be with him there for ever; for we do not part company, but go to him whom we love and serve.

(5thly.) God is with us with respect to his particular care and providence, ver. 28, guiding all things for good. Now God's providence is either external or internal.

1st. God's external providence is seen in blessing our affairs: Gen. xxxix. 2, 'The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man;' and ver. 21, 'The Lord was with Joseph, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison;' Acts vii. 9, 'And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt, but God was with him.' This was most eminently fulfilled in our Lord Christ; he had such great success because God was with him: Acts x. 38; and John iii. 2. 'Nicodemus said, no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him.' But in their measure it is fulfilled in the saints also. God was with Christ; he driveth away the devil from him by a word, Mat. iv. They ask leave of him to enter into the herd of swine, Mark v. 12. So in christians; God is with them, to give them success, even to wonder, against Satan and his instruments. So God is with us when he loveth us, defendeth us, and blesseth our endeavours.

2dly. His internal providence, in a way of comfort and support, and sanctifying their troubles. Thus God was with Paul 'when all forsook him:' 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, 'The Lord stood by him and strengthened him.' And so he comforts his people: Isa. xli. 10, 'Fear not, for I am with thee;' so Isa. xliii. 2, 'When thou passest through fire and water, I am with thee;' not only to keep them from fire and water, but to be with them in fire and water. A christian is never alone, though all forsake him. Well then, the meaning is, since God will fulfil his eternal purpose, to justify, sanctify, glorify, what can hinder our eternal salvation? We that were predestinated when we were not, called when we were averse, justified when guilty, sanctified when unholy, and glorified, though now miserable, what cause have we to fear?

2. The comfort built upon it—'Who can be against us?' Let us state the meaning of this clause.

[1.] The whole world seemeth to be against those that believe in Christ. There are but two sides in the world, God and Satan. The whole world is Satan's kingdom: if God be with us, all else but God and his confederates will be against us. All is divided into two seeds and two kingdoms: the saints fight under Christ's conduct, the world under the devil's. We were listed as soldiers in baptism, under the captain of our salvation, and we renew our military oath in the Lord's supper, wherein we are afresh engaged against Satan; therefore 'Who can be against us?' doth not imply an exemption from troubles and opposition, but only that the victory is secured. There will be many against us: the army of wicked men is employed to uphold Satan's kingdom, to maintain what he hath gotten, and to hinder the redemption and delivery of his captives. We cannot expect none will be against us; but we need not fear them. Who are they that are against us, but vanquished enemies? We serve under a captain who hath already conquered, John xvi. 33; a captain whom Satan feareth, and who is able and willing to help us. This then is the first consideration: there will be enemies, but we need not fear them.

[2.] Though they be against us, yet they shall not do us any considerable hurt. See the like question, 1 Peter iii. 13, 'Who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?' God is with and for the sanctified and justified; the devil, the world, and the flesh, are against them; yet they cannot make void God's purpose; for if God be a friend, all tendeth to our good. So that the meaning of the question is, who will be against us so as to harm us? God's help is our safety and security.

[3.] Let us see how far they may harm us. The devil and wicked men are the enemies to Christ's kingdom and subjects; the devil desireth their spiritual, the wicked their temporal ruin. The devil useth the latter, in subserviency to the former, to shake their faith, by fines, imprisonments, exile, torture, death; but God is with them, standeth for them, helpeth them, strengtheneth them, protects them, many times giveth them safety in the midst of danger, bread in the midst of penury and want, joy in the midst of sorrow; if they kill the body, he will save the soul, and raise up the body at the last day. Let us see, then, how far the harm may extend.

(1.) Our conquest is not always nor principally by a visible prosperity, nor worldly greatness and dominion. God's protection is a secret: Job xxix. 4, 'The secret of the Lord is upon their tabernacle;' the special favour and providence of God, which the world knoweth not of, nor can discern. There is an insensible blessing goeth along with them; as the wicked are eaten out by an insensible curse, though they have great revenues. God can put a very great blessing in the compass of a very little means: so Ps. xxxi. 20, 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man.' They find sure refuge and defence in God, whatever proud and contentious men design against them: so Ps. xci. 1, 'He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.' It is a riddle to the carnal world how they subsist; but the Lord, by the invisible conduct of his providence, taketh care of them, provideth for them, and protecteth those that love, fear, serve, and put their trust in him.

(2.) Sometimes God permitteth that they shall harm us in our temporal interests, but not eternal. Alas! many times the people of God suffer many hard things: Heb. xi. 37, 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.' The meaning is not, who shall be against us to take away our lives and liberties? God will sometimes glorify himself in his people's sufferings, and in the general will have us perform to him a tried obedience: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptations; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;' make us perfect as Christ was by sufferings, Heb. ii. 10. But if we keep our innocence, the worst they can do is to send us to heaven, and so make us partakers of that which we desire most, Luke xii. 4. When they have killed the body, they can do no more. If they cut it to bits and parcels, they cannot find out the immortal spirit; and however they molest and mangle the flesh, they cannot hurt the soul, or hinder our eternal salvation, or take us out of Christ's hands, John x. 28. And a christian upon these terms should be content, that by conformity to Christ he may be brought to eternal glory.

(3.) Christians are to be considered, not only in their personal capacity, but also in their community. They may prevail as to single persons, to kill and burn them, but not as to root out the church: Ps. cxxix. 1, 2, 'Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed 'gainst me.' God hath still preserved his church from age to age, notwithstanding the many hostile attempts against it. His people have been severely chastised, but yet in mercy delivered: the 'gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' Mat. xviii. 18. The wit and policy, the power and strength of enemies, shall not utterly destroy the christian church. Their arms and weapons were usually kept over the gates, and there they were wont to sit in council. As not particular faithful believers eternally, so as it considereth the congregation and society of christian professors, it shall never perish totally and irrecoverably; but whatsoever changes it undergoeth in the world, it shall again lift up the head.

[2.] The reasons why we need not be troubled at the opposition of those that are against us.

(1.) Because of the infinite power of God; take it for his sovereignty, or his ability and sufficiency, or strength.

1st. If you take it for his sovereignty: all things are under his dominion, and are forced to serve him, both angels and men, good or bad of either kinds, they are all his hosts; therefore he is called the Lord of Hosts, who is the God of Israel. Whatever you fear is something under the dominion of God, and you need not fear the sword, if you do not fear him that weareth the sword: Ps. ciii. 19, 'His kingdom ruleth over all;' not only over all men, but all things, and those not only actually existent, but possible: 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 'Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.' The most potent and most opposite creatures are not exempt from his subjection: he created them at his plea-

sure, and disposeth of them at his pleasure ; they have a perpetual dependence upon him both for being and operation ; their rebellion against him doth not diminish his dominion over them. Now this is a mighty comfort to God's people, that whatever creature they are in danger of, that creature is subject to this kingdom and dominion of God, be it angels or devils, man or beasts, sea or wind, sickness or disease, Mat. viii. 7, 8, fire, wild beasts, &c.

2dly. For ability or sufficiency. All the ability of the creature lieth either in wit or strength. For the first : will they resist him with wit and policy ? can any creature outwit God ? Compare two places, Prov. xxi. 30, ' There is no wisdom, nor counsel, nor understanding against the Lord,' with Job xii. 13, ' With him is wisdom and strength ; he hath counsel and understanding.' Both man's wisdom and God's wisdom is set forth by three words, understanding, counsel, wisdom. Let us see what is in the Lord, and what is against the Lord ? Is there wisdom against the Lord ? In the Lord there is the same ; only against him there is the wisdom, the counsel, and understanding of the creature ; in him, of the creator. Surely the creature can do nothing without him or against him, for it is dependent. Whatever the creature hath, it cometh from him ; otherwise our understanding is but ignorance, our counsel rashness, our wisdom folly. Pharaoh thought to go wisely to work, but that wisdom cost him dear, when he intended to suppress God's interest, Exod. i. 10. Ahab, when God threatened to cut off his posterity, begets seventy sons, and disposeth and placeth them in the most strong and fenced cities : 2 Kings vii. 8, ' And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew seventy persons.' Herod would go wisely to work to destroy him that was born king of the Jews in the cradle ; but Christ was preserved for all that. The synagogue of Satan is still hatching crafty counsels to destroy the spouse of Christ, but with what effect ?—antichrist is consumed more and more. We are afraid of our subtle enemies. Are we ever in such straits but God knoweth how to bring us out ? They cannot overwit the Lord by whatever is plotted in Rome or hell. God knoweth all, for he hath understanding ; counterworketh all, for he hath counsel ; in the issue they will but play the fool, for he hath wisdom.

3dly. Strength. If any have the courage to oppose God's people and interest in the world, the attempt will be fruitless ; the malice of men and devils will be fruitless ; he only that can overcome God can hurt us. Our enemies are strong, ourselves weak ; but how strong is God ? They are nothing, nothing in comparison with God. So God saith, ' I am, and there is none else,' Isa. xl. 17. All nations before him are as nothing : as the stars differ in glory, but when the sun ariseth, the inferior lights are obscured, and their difference unobserved. Nothing, by way of exclusion of God ; as the sunbeam is nothing when the sun withdraweth, the sound in the pipe nothing when the musician taketh away his breath : Ps. civ. 29, 30, ' Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled : thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust : thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created ; and thou renewest the face of the earth.' Nothing, by way of opposition to God, and his cause and interest in the world : Isa. xli. 11,

‘Behold all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded; they shall be as nothing.’ Usually we feel them something in the effects of their rage and malice; yet they are as nothing to faith: and therefore faith should wink out all the terror of the creature: Isa. li. 12, 13, ‘Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man, that shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy maker?’ Let God’s favour and displeasure be well weighed and compared with man’s favour and displeasure, and you will find little cause and temptation to divert you from your duty. We have a God of might to depend upon, who can preserve us, notwithstanding the malice of enemies; therefore why should we bewray any fear or apprehensions of dangers?

(2.) Because of God’s love to his people. If he had never so great power, yet if he were not willing and ready to help them, we could not draw any security from thence. But we have no more reason to doubt of this than of the former. God, that is wise enough and powerful enough to defeat all opposition, is also good enough to do it. First, He knoweth their persons, and their wants, and all their dangers and necessities: Mat. x. 29–31, ‘Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ It is spoke to the disciples, when Christ had first sent them forth upon his message. What is the comfort? The malice of men can extend no further than the providence of God seeth fit to permit and order; God hath the knowledge, care, and government of the least things that belong to his people; their lives are dearly valued by God, and shall not be destroyed by any negligence and oversight of his, or prodigally wasted. He that taketh knowledge of the least creatures will much more take care of his servants; so Ps. lvi. 8, ‘Thou tellest my wanderings; put thou my tears in thy bottle; are they not in thy book?’ David at that time had been long from home, sitting up and down from wilderness to wilderness, and cave to cave; but was God ignorant of his condition during the days of his exile? No; this was particularly known and considered by him, as if God had laid up all the tears that dropped from him, and kept a sure record and register of all his sorrows. Well then, since God knoweth all that befalleth them, will he be an idle spectator, or make a party with them to help and deliver them? Secondly, How tender he is of them: Zech. ii. 8, ‘He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.’ The eye is a tender part; nature hath much guarded and fenced it. Now to meddle with them is to touch the apple of his eye. The troubles of his people go near his heart. Certainly they that are against God’s people are against God himself; benefits and injuries as done to them, God taketh it as done to him: Mat. xxv. 40, ‘And the king shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;’ and Acts ix. 4, ‘And he fell to the earth, and he heard a voice saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ The Jews have a proverb, ‘What is done to a man’s apostle is done to himself.’ Thirdly, It is his usual practice in the dispensations of his providence, namely, to regard them, and intend their

good: 2 Chron. xvi. 9, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect with him;' there is a description of providence, and the persons that have benefit by it. Providence is described by the eyes of the Lord; as the Egyptians in their hieroglyphics did set forth providence by the picture of an eye. God is all eye; and those eyes are not represented as shut up or closed by sleep, but as open, to note his vigilancy, and in motion, as running to and fro, prying into every corner of the whole earth, to note the particularity of his providence. And the persons who have benefit by it are those whose hearts are perfect with him. The world shall know that they are under the protection of an almighty and all-sufficient God. As to knowledge he is all eye, so as to power all hand, which is the great comfort of his people. He will show himself strong, manifest this almighty power in preserving and protecting them. Fourthly, It is not only the ordinary practice of his love and free grace, but it is secured by promise and covenant: Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;' and Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' As to positive blessings, he is a sun; as to privative blessings, he is a shield. As to way and end: by the way he is more a shield, till we are *ἐξωβελείς*: hereafter more a reward, and an exceeding great reward when our sun is in the high noon of glory. Well now, then it is blasphemy to say that either God cannot or will not help us. If he cannot save us, he is not God; if he will not save us, he is not our God: if he cannot, he is impotent, and so unfit to be God; if he will not, he is false, and must break his covenant; which are blasphemies to be abhorred by every christian.

(3.) The great foundation that was laid for God's being with us in the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is the true Emmanuel, God with us, Mat. i. 23. There we see God in our nature, and so drawing nearer to us, and coming within the reach of our commerce. In and by him, we are made nearer to God, who stood more aloof from us before. Since our nature dwelt with God in a personal union, first, there is a way opened for access: Heb. x. 20, 'By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil; that is to say, his flesh;' and Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, through the faith of him.' Certainly it is a great advantage to think how near God has come to us in Christ, and how near he hath taken the human nature to himself. This maketh our thoughts of God more sweet and comfortable. Secondly, Not only access, but reconciliation: 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.' There was not only a distance between us and God by reason of impurity, but a difference by reason of enmity. God is a God of glorious majesty, and we are poor creatures; God is a God of pure and immaculate holiness, and we are sinful creatures, lapsed and fallen under the guilt of sin, and desert of punishment. There was our great trouble and grievance, and nothing comfortable could we expect from him. But when God is willing to come among us, and take our nature, and die for a sinful world, there is a foundation laid for his being with us, to help us, and bless us upon all

occasions. The wonderful marriage which the divine nature hath made with the human doth help us against the thoughts of distance; but his death and sufferings, as the price of our atonement, doth make up the quarrel and breach between us and God. In his person, God manifested in our flesh, way is made for access; for in Christ God doth condescend to man, and man is encouraged to ascend to God; but in his sufferings the distance is taken away, and the guilty fears appeased which most do alienate us from God. God hath 'set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,' Rom. iii. 25. Now after such a foundation laid, will the Lord be strange to his people, as if the breach still continued? It cannot be. Thirdly, God in our nature hath taken upon him an office to defend and help his people, which he manageth both in heaven and in earth. In heaven by his constant intercession: Heb. viii. 1, 2, 'We have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens: a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man;' and Heb. ix. 24, 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' We have a friend in court, Jesus the true and great high priest, who hath the names of his people graven upon his breast and shoulder, to show how much they are in his heart, and to represent them and their necessities to God. On earth, 1. Externally, by his powerful providence; for all judgment is put into his hands, John v. 22, that he may defend his church and people. 2. Internally, by his Spirit: Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world.' Into what part or age of the world our lot falleth, Christ is ready with his protection and blessing. Now would Christ take such an office, to be head over all things to the church, and neglect the duty of it? No; the head of the church is also 'the saviour of the body,' Eph. v. 11. The whole body, and every member of it, is dear to him, as united to him in the sacred mystical body; and he will take care of them. And upon these accounts we may pray for, and expect 'grace to help in a time of need:' Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.'

Obj. But you will say, If there be such a power and goodness in God, and thus secured by the mediation of Christ and his blessed covenant, how cometh it that they are reduced to such great exigencies? Judges vi. 13, 'If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?'

Ans. 1. It is supposed you are christians, and have not the spirit of a worldling, that liveth upon and seeketh his main happiness in the creatures apart from God. A true christian is one that is dead to the world, but alive to God; one that hath laid up his treasure above the reach of all enemies: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up treasure for yourselves upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' Otherwise we cannot deal with you, for it is a vain

attempt to hope to reconcile christianity with your carnal affections ; but if you be such, though the feelings of nature be not altogether quenched in you, you will not be greatly moved as long as your main happiness is safe ; that is, while God's love to you is not lessened, while your communion with him is as free as it was before, while you lose no degree of grace, and your hopes of glory suffer not any eclipse ; for your solid happiness lieth in these things, other things are but appendages to sweeten our pilgrimage ; and though a christian hath a value for his natural comforts, yet it is a value and an esteem that is subordinated to higher enjoyments, that he hath something of value to esteem as nothing for Christ.

2. Temporal protection and prosperity is not excluded from the compass and latitude of this privilege, but included so far as God seeth fit, so far as it is good to have peace and liberty. Heretofore the blessings of God's presence were visible and sensible ; as they observed of Abraham, Gen. xxi. 22, ' God is with thee in all that thou dost ; ' so it is promised to Isaac : Gen. xxvi. 3, ' I will be with thee, and bless thee ; ' to Jacob : Gen. xxxv. 3, ' God was with me in the way that I went ; ' to Moses : Exod. iii. 17, ' I will be with thee ; ' to Israel : Deut. ii. 7, ' The Lord thy God hath been with thee ; ' Josh. i. 5, ' I was with Moses, and I will be with thee ; ' to David, 2 Sam. vi. 18. So that we cannot say that he will not own and bless us in the course of his providence ; but communion with him, and the enjoyment of his gracious presence, is that which the godly desire most : Exod. xxxiii. 5, ' If thy presence go not along with us, carry us not up hence.'

3. Though temporal happiness be not altogether excluded, there must be trial ; for there is no crowning without striving, nor can a reward be expected for sitting still : 2 Tim. ii. 5, ' He must strive.' According to the laws of the exercise, to put in for the prize in the Olympic games, and to refuse to run or wrestle, was ridiculous ; so it is to think of heaven and do nothing for it, or run no hazard for it ; partly because we need afflictions, that the inner man may be renewed, and we be more prepared, dispositively fitted for glory, being weaned from the world, and mortifying the flesh : 2 Cor. iv. 16, ' For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day ; ' 1 Peter i. 6, ' Wherein ye greatly rejoice ; though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.' We suffer to quicken us in our drowsiness and refine us from our dross. Partly to conform us to Christ, that we may overcome the world ; he overcame it by suffering, to show us that by suffering we shall overcome it, which is a nobler victory than if we had overcome it by the sword : Rom. viii. 37, ' Nay, in these things we are more than conquerors.' It is for the honour of God that it should be known that God hath a people that love him, and are dearly beloved by him.

4. In these trials God is with us ; and so if he save you not from afflictions, he will save you in and by afflictions. How is God with us in deep and pressing afflictions ? Partly in bridling the rage of men ; if you be in your enemies' hand, your enemies are in God's hand : whatever power they have is given them from above, John xiv. 11, and they cannot do anything but as God permitteth. Partly by the

effects of his internal government—(1.) Supporting them: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul;' 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee;,' Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' If we have his supporting presence, though we have not his delivering presence, it is enough. (2.) His comforting presence: Ps. xci. 15, 'I will be with him in trouble.' God is most with his afflicted people (as the blood runneth to the wronged part), as the mother is with the sick child, even to the envy of the rest. Then we are most prepared for the comforts of his Spirit, being refined from the dregs of sense. (3.) His sanctifying presence, blessing the affliction for an increase of grace: Heb. xii. 10, 'But they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.' Now these experiences show that he is still with us.

Use. Is information.

1. It informeth us of the misery of wicked men in the general. By parity of reason, if God be against us, it is no matter who is for us. How soon are all things blasted when God is against a people! they make little reckoning of God's help, or securing their greatness by God's protection; therefore the ruin is the more speedy: Ps. lii. 7, 'Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.' Alas! how soon can God blast all their confidences. Man is the mere product of his maker's will, and all that supports his being is the fruit of his bounty; surely he that blew up this bubble can as soon crush and dissolve it. They look upon the godly as the most afflicted creatures, because the hatred of the world is usually upon them; but sure they are the most miserable: though they have all the world on their side, yet if they have God against them, they have cause to fear; there is a wall between them and heaven. Certainly wicked men have stronger enemies than the people of God have or can have; they have God himself for an enemy, and he will overcome.

2. What reason the enemies of God's people have to be afraid, and to stop their fury and rage against his cause and interest. It is fruitless and vain to curse those whom God will bless; Balaam could teach them this: Num. xxiii. 8, 'How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy those whom God hath not defied?' It is ruinous; to allude to Acts xxii. 27: they that set themselves against his people set themselves against God: Isa. xxxvii. 23, 'Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? against whom hast thou exalted thyself, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.' Men do not know and consider who is their party, and with whom they have to do, that breathe out nothing but threatenings and destruction against the servants of the Lord. Are you a match for God? He is their second, and engageth against you; and he can soon tread out this smoking flax, and with the wind of his displeasure scatter this dust that flieth in the faces of his people.

3. That a christian is, or may be, above all opposition; and the fear of man, which is a snare to others, should be none to him, for he hath God's favour and almighty protection to support his cour-

age and fortitude. There are two things trouble us, an inordinate respect to worldly happiness as our end, or an inordinate respect to man as the author or means of procuring it; cure these two evils, and what should trouble or perplex a christian?

[1.] An inordinate respect to temporal happiness: that must be cured in the first place. What is your first and chiefest care? to secure your temporal interests, or to save your souls? To cure our cares and fears, Christ directeth us, Mat. vi. 33, 'First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' He promiseth us a kingdom, Luke xii. 32. And the apostle describeth the true christian, Heb. x. 39, to be one that believeth to the saving of his soul. Now if you will be christians indeed, stand to this, that whatever becometh of other things, your business should be to save your souls, and then your trouble about worldly accidents is plucked up by the roots; for it is our affections to them cause our afflictions by them. Can men take away the privileges of God's kingdom from you? or cast you into hell, and prohibit your entrance into heaven? No; but you would save your stake? Agreed, so it be consistent with your duty and fidelity to Christ; but if it cannot be, venture it in God's hands. Heaven is worth something; and it is a question whether they desire it or no that will venture nothing for it; therefore this must be determined and fixed as your resolution in the first place, that you will get to heaven whatever it cost you, and will obey God at the dearest rates.

[2.] An inordinate respect to man, as if he did all in the world. Sense seemeth to tell us so, but faith must teach us better; therefore, to cure this, consider who is most able to help or hurt you, and whether it be better to have God a friend or an enemy. If you will take the judgment of the people of God, you shall see—

(1.) That they always profess that God's presence, to whom all things are subject, is their great security: Ps. xlii. 7, 'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Israel is our refuge, Selah.' They think themselves safe enough with God, though all the world should be against them.

(2.) They have been confident of his presence with them, and fatherly love and care over them, in the saddest condition: Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear none evil, for thou art with me.' When death and they walk side by side, yet they are still confident of God's favour and presence; God doth not forsake his people, though he permitteth them to be exercised with divers calamities, Heb. xi. 35, 36.

(3.) Upon this ground they defy the creature: Ps. xxvii. 1, 'The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' so Ps. cxviii. 6, 'The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' It argueth great pusillanimity to yield to temptation when God is with us and for us, and to doubt of the sufficiency of his protection; for they must first prevail against God before they can against you.

(4.) Will you believe the judgment of your own reason? Then consider what is man and what is God, and set the one against the other—his wisdom against their policy, his power against their weak-

ness, his love and mercy against their malice and cruelty. What do we believe God to be and man to be? Man, compared with God, is a sorry, feeble, worthless thing, a puff of wind or a pile of dust, nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. Surely God is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness; man a poor creature, that in point of wisdom would give anything to know futurity, and the event and success of his enterprises, and is often cut off in the midst of his designs: Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'He returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish,' leaveth his projects and contrivances: Ps. ii. 12, 'And ye perish from the way,' while in the course and heat of their undertakings. We do not tell you what is in the other world, what is matter of faith, but what is obvious and sensible here. In point of power, how fain would men do more than they could, but that they are in the chains of providence, and under the restraints of God's invincible power! It is in their thoughts to cut off and destroy; but there is a higher power that disposeth of all circumstances: all is in your Father's hands. So his love and mercy against their malice and cruelty: Ps. lxxvi. 10, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain:' the frustration of their attempts. God often ordereth this.

(5.) How much it concerneth us to be in such a condition that we can say, God is with us; then you need not desire the best things in the world, nor fear the worst. But when can we say, God is with us? Three things are necessary.

1st. That the person be right, that he be renewed by the Spirit of God, and be reconciled to him; for called and justified are the privileges between the two eternities in the context, and the sure evidence of our interest in both. Then God taketh us into his special charge and protection, when regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and reconciled by the blood of Christ; for the new creation are his family: James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures;' Titus ii. 14, 'Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' These are the peculiar people. With others, God is no more present than he is with the rest of his creatures, in a way of common preservation. Therefore, if you would be certain of God's favour, and that your peace is made with him, you must look to this, that you be in an estate of pleasing God, that you are sanctified by the Spirit, and, being justified by faith in Christ, are at peace with God, Rom. v. 1. If you be renewed, and God reconciled, you need fear nothing. The evidence of both, and so of our interest in his providence, is our unfeigned dedication to God; for if we be for both, God will be for us. If you have given a hearty consent to his covenant, then you shall have the privileges of it: he will be your sun and shield, and then we need fear nothing.

2dly. As to our cause, it must be good. Take God's side against Satan and his instruments: 2 Chron. xv. 2, 'The Lord is with you while you be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you;' 2 Chron. xiii. 9, 10, 'With them are golden calves, and with us is the Lord our God.' God is there where his ordinances and worship are

kept up in their power and purity. If his people warp and decline, he is against them. When his people had erred in the matter of the calf: Exod. xxxiii. 3, 'I will not go up in the midst of thee, lest I consume thee in the way.' Therefore, lest God depart, we must be tender.

3dly. Our conversation must be holy, for wilful sin and guiltiness breed fears of God's displeasure. It is our sins that give our enemies advantage against us: Judges iii. 12, 'And the Lord strengthened Eglon, the king of Moab, against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord.' We read often in Scripture that their shadow was gone from them: Numb. xiv. 23, 'Because you are turned away from the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.' We banish away God's presence from us, because he cannot with honour own such a people: Amos v. 14, 'Seek good, and not evil; so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you.' If, after we have devoted ourselves to God, we retain our former sins, we lose the mercy and comfort of his favourable presence. We do but dream of God while we continue in sin. If we would have God to be with us, we must carry ourselves as in his presence, and be dutiful and obedient to him, seek him, rely on him, and keep his way.

Use 2. Is to press you to lay up this truth in your hearts; for it is the ground and foundation of all religion.

1. This is the ground of close adherence to God, when we cease from man, and cleave to God alone; then you live as those that from their hearts do believe that there is a God, and that he is a 'rewarder of those that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6, which are the fundamental principles which are at the bottom of all christian practice; and the more you live upon them, the more cause you will see to stick to God, and please God rather than man. They that trust in him, and do stand or fall to him alone, they are the best christians; you so far withdraw yourselves from God as you look to man. If once man get the pre-eminence of God, and be set above him in your hearts; that is, be loved, trusted, obeyed before God, so far your hearts grow dead to God, and religion presently withereth and decayeth: Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of man bringeth a snare, but he that trusteth in God shall be safe.' The soul that cannot entirely trust God, whether man be pleased or displeased, can never long be true to him; for while you are eyeing man, you are losing God, and stabbing religion at the very heart.

2. This keepeth us from shifting and helping ourselves by unlawful means: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God all-sufficient, walk before me, and be thou upright.' Were we soundly persuaded that his power is above all power, and his wisdom above all wisdom, and his goodness and fidelity invincible, it would save us from many sinful miscarriages and unlawful means that we take for our own preservation. We often lose ourselves by seeking to save ourselves without God, and because we cannot depend upon his all-sufficiency. Well then, since it hath such an universal influence upon all our conversations, we should get it rooted and settled in our hearts, that we may not be tossed up and down with the various occurrences of this life; God is our happiness, and not the creature.

3. This filleth us with courage and magnanimity in the most des-

perate cases : Dan. iii. 17, 18, ' O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter ; our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace ; but if not, we will not serve thy god, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' This is true fortitude, to look to God alone ; he will deliver from death, or by death ; he can save us from trouble ; or if not, he will hasten our glory. Yet we must resolve to stick close to him, however he determine the event.

4. This maketh us live quietly from cares and fears, when we can commit and submit all to God : Phil. iv. 6, 7, ' Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.' It is a blessed frame, questionless, to be careful for nothing. This is to be had by ceasing from man, and trusting in the Lord, who hath the government and disposal of all things.

Directions—

1. Let the will of God be your sure rule. For God must institute that religion which you expect he should accept and reward. None trust in the Lord but those that keep his way : Ps. xxxvii. 34, ' Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.'

2. Let the favour of God be your happiness. Be quieted in his acceptance, whether man be pleased or displeased : 2 Cor. v. 9, ' Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' Let God be enough to you, without and against man.

SERMON XLII.

He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?—ROM. viii. 32.

THE apostle had been speaking of God's eternal decree, which is his hidden love ; now he speaketh of redemption by Christ, which is his open and declared love. In predestination his love was conceived in his own heart ; in redemption it is manifested in the effects and commended to us : that was the rise, this the visible demonstration. In the former verse the apostle reasoned *a causa* ; here is *argumentum a signo*. Once more : the former question is a comfort against that trouble which may arise *ex presentia mali*, this against our trouble which may arise *ex absentia boni*. The covenant-notions by which God is expressed are two, suitable to the two sorts of blessings we have by him, positive and privative ; that he is a sun and a shield : Ps. lxxxiv. 11 ; and Gen. xv. 1, ' Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.' Do you fear evil ? God is our shield ; and ' if God be with us, who can be against us ? ' that is, so as to procure our utter and eternal ruin. Do you want good ? God is our sun, and our exceeding great reward. There is blessing enough to be had in