

SERMON XLVI.

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.—ROM. viii. 36, 37.

IN the former of these verses the apostle continueth his challenge, and then in the latter giveth the answer from experience. He continueth the challenge, ver. 36, speaking to the last enumerated—'sword.' Lest he should seem to triumph over a feigned enemy, he showeth how the people of God in all ages are not only subject to divers calamities, but even to death itself. He proveth it by a quotation: Ps. xlv. 2, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long.' The words of the psalm seem to relate to the times of Antiochus, when every day they were in danger of death for religion's sake—'As it is written, For thy sake,' &c. The answer is written in ver. 37. That in all these things we have had experience, and have found this, that they have no power 'to separate us from the love of Christ.'

In the words considered in themselves observe three things—

1. The greatness of the trial—*For thy sake we are killed all the day long.*

2. The absoluteness of their conquest and victory—*In all these things we are more than conquerors.*

3. The author or cause—*Through him that loved us.*

First, The greatness of the trial. The calamity of the people of God in those times is, first, literally expressed; secondly, set forth by a similitude or metaphor.

1. Literally expressed—'For thy sake we are killed all the day long.' Where—

(1.) The cause—'For thy sake;' out of love to him, and zeal for his glory, and the purity of his worship. This instance showeth, partly, that the true religion is ever hated in the world; and partly, that for the love of God we ought to endure all manner of extremities. Partly, that it is a blessed thing when our death is not occasioned by our own crimes, but merely for God's sake; when a man doth not 'suffer as an evil doer,' but for righteousness' sake.

2. The grievousness of the trial—'We are killed;' not spoiled only, but killed. It is further set forth: Heb. xi. 37, 'They were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword;' that is, put to death several ways. Some think it should not be *ἐπειράσθησαν*, but *ἐπυράσθησαν*, were burnt, or tempted by some cruel kind of death to forsake God. The whole signifieth that the lives of the saints were most cruelly taken away by several kinds of tormenting deaths.

3. The continuance—'All the day long.' Either the church speaketh as a collective body, for a single person can be killed but once—now one, then another made away; all hours of the day they were taking or killing some of the brethren; yet the rest were not discouraged; or else 'killed all the day long' must bear this sense, that they were always in fear of death; it did continually hang over their heads, they

were no time free, as the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xv. 31, 'I die daily.' He did daily run the hazard of death.

2. By a similitude—'We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Some take the allusion from sheep appointed for sacrifice. The wicked thought they did God good service in killing the godly, John xvi. 2; and the godly themselves yielded up themselves as a sacrifice to God: 2 Tim. iv. 6, 'I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand;' but this is forced. *Πρόβατα σφαγῆς* rather implieth sheep destined to the shambles. (1.) The similitude importeth, partly, the contempt of the enemies; they made no more reckoning of them than of sheep: Zech. xi. 4, 5, 'Feed the flock of the slaughter, whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty;' that is, they care no more for their death than they do for the killing of a sheep. (2.) It noteth their own imbecility; they had no power to resist; as Mat. x. 16, 'Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.' Sheep have no power or means to preserve themselves. (3.) Their meekness; they did no more resist than sheep: Isa. liii. 7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.'

Doct. Such as resolve upon the profession of christianity must prepare to give their life for the maintenance of it, when God calls them thereunto.

This seemeth hard; but,

1. Christ requireth it of all: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' It is too late for us to interpose for an abatement when the terms are thus fixed by Christ himself. So our Lord, when he openeth the doctrine of self-denial, he showeth it must extend to life: Mat. xvi. 24, 25, 'He that saveth his life shall lose it.' There is nothing so dear to us as life; nothing which nature doth so highly value, and tenderly look to, and so unwillingly let go. Many that can yield in other points cannot yield in this, but then they are not sincere with God; for you must not look upon it as a note of excellency, but the disposition of those who have the lowest measure of saving grace; as appeareth by these clauses, 'If any man will come after me;' and 'He cannot be my disciple.' You will say, What can the strong and eminent christian do more than part with life? This is not the difference between the strong and the weak christian, that one can part with a few things for Christ, and the other can part with all; no, all must part with all. Not this, that one can part with his ease, profit, and credit. and the other can part with his life; no, both must part with life. The difference is not in the things to be parted with, but in the degree of the affection; the strongest christians can die with greater zeal, love, readiness, joy, and so bring more honour to God by their death than weak christians do, who offer up themselves to God with greater reluctancy and unwillingness.

2. Such have been the trials of God's children in all ages; as the instance is brought from the godly who lived under the law-dispen-

tion. Now, if the saints of old endured such hard things, and tribulation even unto death, then it followeth—

[1.] It is no strange thing: 1 Peter iv. 12, ‘Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had happened unto you.’ Our taking the ordinary case of the godly for a strange thing, is that which doth disturb and distemper us. None wondereth at a bitter winter coming after a sweet summer, or a dark night succeeding a bright day, because it is an ordinary thing; so here.

[2.] Then it is no grievous thing, but such as the people of God have endured, when they had not the advantages that we have. A double advantage we have above the saints of the Old Testament.

(1.) They had not such a pattern of self-denial as we have, and that is the death of Christ, which teacheth us to obey God at the dearest rates: Mat. x. 24, ‘The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.’ Christ is a pattern of sufferings; and to look for exemptions from them, is to expect to be better dealt with than he was; we tread upon no step of hard ground but what Christ hath gone there before us, and his steps drop fatness; left a blessing behind him to sweeten the way to us; so Heb. xii. 1-3, ‘Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied, and faint in your minds.’ Jesus is propounded as our example; he endured cruel pains in his body, and bitter sorrows in his soul; deserted by God, contradicted by men, yet he bore all patiently and undauntedly; this is the copy and pattern which is set for our imitation, that we may not sink under our burdens.

(2.) The other advantage. They had not such a clear discovery of eternal life as is now made to us in the promises of the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10. Since the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, life and immortality is brought to light in the gospel. It was but sparingly revealed then, and, to appearance, the covenant ran more in the strain of temporal promises; but now Christ hath struck a thorough light into the other world, and clearly tells us that great is our reward in heaven; and therefore we may rejoice if men persecute us, Mat. v. 11, 12. We will do so, if we believe him. Who would not permit another to take down a shed, if we did believe that he would build a palace for us at his own cost and charges? The reward is so far above the suffering, that certainly now we should more willingly submit to be killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter. If the people of God did so heretofore, upon those few glimmerings which they had about eternal life, certainly they had not such a clear prospect into the other world, nor such a visible demonstration of the certainty of it, as we have by the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. To manifest the truth and reality of our graces, of our faith in Christ, and love to him, and hope of salvation.

[1.] To show our faith; which is such a trusting ourselves in Christ’s hands, that we are willing to part with all, even life itself, for

his sake. This is called a believing to the saving of our souls, Heb. x. 39. Sense saith, Save thyself; Faith saith, Save thy soul: Heb. xi. 35, 'They accepted not deliverance, looking for a better resurrection,' when stretched out by torture like the head of a drum.

[2.] To show our love. Nothing can or ought to separate us from the love of Christ. God alloweth us to love life, but he will be loved better; for 'his lovingkindness is better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 3. Now the greatest things must be greatly loved; and then is our love tried, when the blackest dispensations cannot draw us from God. It is the property of love to long to be with Christ, 'which is better for us,' Phil. i. 23. Therefore we should be content to have the prison-door opened, that those who have desired and longed to be with Christ may be admitted into his immediate presence, and let out into liberty and joy.

[3.] Hope. We expect within a little while to have our desires accomplished: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' Will a soul that is at heaven's gate lose all that he hath waited for because the entrance is troublesome? As those that are going to a mask or show, when they come where it is exhibited, must crowd, and will venture hard for what they hope to see. Now God will have graces tried with difficulties; the crown of victory is not set on our heads if we fight not.

4. Reason. It is necessary to have this prepartion of heart, that we may the better deny other things. Life is that which maketh us capable of all the contentments of the flesh and pleasures of the world, and maketh them valuable to us. Now this is a blow at the root, we are prepared for mortification; when we can deny life itself, we can deny all the appendages of life. Therefore so much of christianity being exercised in self-denial, our Lord would have us once for all bring ourselves to the highest point, that we may do other things the more easily. The apostle's bonds and afflictions did not move him, because he did not 'count his life dear to him,' Acts xx. 24. And certainly a man is never dead to the world, and the interests of the animal life, till he be dead to life itself, and is willing to part with it when God pleaseth.

5. This life must be quitted. Now God will have it quitted in obedience; for things of mere necessity have no moral worth in them. Now it is a mighty help to die willingly and comfortably, when we can once lay life at Christ's feet.

Use. To inform us—

1. That christianity wholly draweth us to another world; for life itself is one of the interests that must be hazarded for Christ's sake: 1 Cor. xv. 19, 'If in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable.' Christ would never proselytise us to a religion that should make us miserable. Now it would do so if our only happiness were in this life; for it requireth us not only to deny the conveniences of life, but life itself.

2. Those that take God's word for the other world must expect to have the strength of their faith and love tried. All along this hath been God's way. God would not confirm Adam in innocency before he had let loose a trial upon him; wherein he, failiug, brought misery

upon himself and his posterity. After the breach, the father of the faithful is tried: Gen. xxii. 1, with Heb. xi. 17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried.' And still God continueth the same course to all believers: James i. 12, 'Blessed is he that endureth temptations; for when he is tried, he shall receive a crown of life.' In the primitive times their baptism was a presage of their slaughter.

3. Those that expect to be tried had need to be well prepared by a due knowledge of the cause, and foresight of, and resolution against, all known dangers.

[1.] By a due knowledge of their cause; that it may be sure it can be said for God's sake. The cause is sometimes more clear and unquestionable, as when it is for a great essential point, and here our courage should be more clear; for then there can be no doubt in the mind whether the cause be good or not, and then all the comforts of christianity do fall upon the soul directly, and with great power and efficacy; or else more dark, when it is for a particular truth or duty.

First, It may be for the profession of a particular truth, which we are to own in its season, for we must be established in 'the present truth,' 2 Peter i. 12. What is the present truth the godly-wise will soon discern. Whoever compiled the creed, yet the observation is in a great measure good, that the controversies that have happened in the church have succeeded according to the method and order of the articles therein contained. The controversy with the heathen was about the one only and true God; with the Jews, and afterwards with the pseudo-christians, about Christ, his person, natures, offices, states; then about the Holy Ghost, his personality and operations in converting the elect; then about the church. Now, in all such controverted truths we must show the same zeal the faithful did in former ages. But to return; though it be but for a particular truth, yet we must show our fidelity to Christ. For then we have an occasion to show that our hearts be true to God, and very sincere—when we are willing to suffer anything from man rather than renounce the smallest truths of God; for though the matters for which we suffer be not great, yet sincerity is a great point; and though profession thus be forborne, and of exceeding great moment to our peace in some points, yet we 'can do nothing against the truth,' 2 Cor. i. 8. I am not bound always to profess in lesser things; yet, if they will bind me against it, I am to endure all manner of displeasures rather than yield to the lusts and wills of men. Eating of swine's flesh was no great matter, but when they would compel them to it, in affront to God's institution, contempt of God is a great matter, Heb. xi. 25, 36, 37. I say the more of this, because men are apt to translate the scene of their duty to former times or foreign places, if to turn infidels and Turks; as the Jews, if they had lived in the prophets' days: Mat. xxiii. 30, 'If we had been in our fathers' days, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' How doth God try thee in thine own age?

Secondly, For particular duties, as well as particular truths. In the general, there is less controversy about the commandments than about the creed; the *agenda* of christianity are more evident by the light of nature than the *credenda*. Yet, because the commandments

are general, and human light is imperfect about the application; as the heathens were right in generals, but 'became vain,' Rom. i. 20, 21, yet in particular duties we must not be wanting, for that is a sincere heart that will run the greatest hazards rather than commit the smallest sin or omit the smallest duty, when it is a duty, and I am called to perform it. In omission there is a greater latitude than in commission; for *affirmativa non ligant ad semper*. In the general, he that suffereth for a commandment is as acceptable with God as he that suffereth for an article of faith. Though the cause for which we suffer be civil, yet obedience to God is concerned in it; as if a man suffer for being loyal to his prince and the laws, or doing his duty to parents, or because he will not bear false witness, or tell a lie, or subscribe a falsehood, or because he will not disown a brother, 1 John iii. 16. This man is a martyr to God, as well as he is a martyr to Christ, that suffereth for mere christianity; which I would have you to note, that you may see how much this precept of God, of laying down our lives for his sake, doth conduce, not only to the interest of christianity, which is a supernatural truth, but to the good of human society, to which even nature will subscribe; and I do it the rather that you may not think Jesus Christ our lawgiver was bloody, or delighted in the destruction of men, when he required that all who would enter into his profession should hate their own lives when just and convenient reasons did call them thereunto. No, by this law he did not only try his servants, but preserved a principle of honesty in the world, and provided for the comfort of them, who being instruments of public good, do often make themselves objects of public hatred. Alas! what comfort could they have in promoting the good of the world, and venturing themselves magnanimously upon all dangers, if God had not provided some better thing for them? All that I shall add as to particular truths and duties is this, partly by way of caution to the persecuting world, that they may consider how much guilt they incur, when for questionable things (so I must speak to them) they run the hazard of opposing the most faithful servants God hath in the world. Usually it is the conscientious that suffer most; others can easily leap out of one sort of profession and practice into another, or else wriggle and distinguish themselves out of their duty by many crafty evasions, whereas the conscientious are held in the noose, meaning to deal with God and the world without equivocation or evasion, in all simplicity and godly sincerity. And shall these be the object of your hatred and severest persecution? It argueth a heart alien from God, and too full of venomous malignity against the better part of the world. Partly, by way of advice to the persecuted, which is double. First, Abate not of your zeal; for 'he that is not faithful in a little will not be faithful in much,' Luke xvi. 10. A good man dareth not allow himself in the least evil; the world counteth him more nice than wise, but God will not count him so; though he should fail in the application of the general rule, yet God will reward him according to his sincerity; it is a love error. Secondly, Not to censure others that see not by his light; in this case, *capiat qui capere potest*—he that can receive it, let him receive it. The general rule is the bound of our charity, but the particular application is the rule of our practice

as long as they own the general rule, though they have not insight into these lesser things: Phil. iii. 15, 16, 'Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall even reveal this to you. Nevertheless, wherunto you have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things.' They may sincerely oppose the same things that we assert; and we sincerely assert the same things which they oppose. Now, whether we oppose or assert, let every one be firmly persuaded in his own mind, and with a modest mind bear the dissensieny of others; nothing will allay the differences in judgment but a mutual submission to this rule, and meekly holding forth light to others.

[2.] By a due foresight of, and resolution against, all known dangers.

(1.) A due sight or forethought of the dangers. Christ will have us sit down and count the charges, and make him a good allowance, as men do in building and warring: Luke xiv. 18, 'For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he be able to finish it?' and ver. 31, 'Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and considereth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?' If we dream of nothing but ease and prosperity, we flatter ourselves; our very baptism implieth a notion of working and fighting; and we must consider what the work and warfare will cost us: Rom. vi. 13, 'Yield your members as instruments of righteousness unto God;' as arms and weapons of righteousness; and the graces of the Spirit are called 'armour of light,' Rom. xiii. 12, that is, our warlike attire. Christ himself, when he was baptized, was consecrated as the captain of our salvation; and therefore presently upon his baptism, he was assaulted by the devil. His baptism was an engagement to the same military work to which we are engaged; a war against the devil, the world, and the flesh. He engageth as the general: 1 John iii. 8, 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, *ὡς ἀποκαταστήσει*;' we as common soldiers. His baptism was the taking of the field as general; we undertake to fight in our rank and place. And can we expect that this conflict can be carried on without sore blows? You must know, therefore, what it is to irritate the prince of darkness, and the powers that join with him, and resolve to follow to the conflict even to death, or else we would be excused in a part of our oath of fealty to Christ.

(2.) By a resolution against all known dangers. It will cost us loss of credit: 1 Cor. iv. 13, 'We are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things unto this day.' Used as the unworthiest creatures in the world, as the sweeping and filth of the city; many were cast forth as unworthy to live in any civil corporation or society of men. It will cost us loss of estate: Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, *ἀρπαγήν*.' There was pretence of law against the christians, yet much rapine used in the execution of it—the word signifieth, it was violently rent and torn from them. Nay, not only so, but they suffered loss of life and limb, and were forced to seal their profession with their blood; and till we come to that resolution, we are not completely faithful with Christ: Heb. xii. 4, 'Ye have not

yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' As soon as we are regenerate, we renounce the devil and the world, and bid defiance to these things; our life is a continual warfare. Now, if we have a reserve, that as soon as it cometh to danger of death, we will give over, we are not as yet thoroughly resolved to be christians. The promise runneth, Rev. ii. 10, 'Be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' The same duty is required of us that was required of Christ. Now Christ was 'obedient to death,' Phil. ii. 7. Many may sustain some reproaches for Christ's sake, make some small losses, sacrifice their weaker lusts, hoping to satisfy God thereby; as Saul destroyed the weaker cattle of Amalek at God's command, but reserved the fattest. No, life and all must be laid at Christ's feet.

4. Thus to be prepared for death should be the great care of a christian, and many considerations are necessary to press this.

[1.] That God is lord of life, and will dispose of it at his pleasure. He that gave life is the lord of it; for he hath the free disposal of his own gift, to continue it, or take it back, as he shall think fit. It is a mercy that God only and properly hath *potestatem vite et necis*, the power of life and death; it is not in the power of enemies to take it away at their pleasure; for the sovereign disposal of his creature is in God's hand: Mat. x. 29, 'A sparrow cannot fall upon the ground without our heavenly Father.' It is not in the power of your own hands; for you cannot make one hair black or white; you are not lords of your lives, but guardians. Well then, it is in the power of God alone; and shall not he dispose of his own, and do with it what he pleaseth?

[2.] Many of the lives of birds and beasts go for us daily, and we would be troubled if we should be retrenched of this liberty when our necessities require it; and hath not God a greater right and power over us than we have over the birds and beasts? His right is original, ours by grant and free gift; his power is absolute, ours limited; for the good man is not cruel to his beast; and we sin when we destroy them in wantonness, and sacrifice them to our lusts. We are to give an account of ourselves, and all the creatures which we possess; but God giveth no account of his matters. Now if we count it no cruelty to take the life of the creatures, why should we think of God as cruel, and despising the life of his creatures, because he requireth them to lay down their lives upon just and convenient reasons? There is a greater distance between us and God than between us and the meanest worm.

[3.] If you deny him your life, he can snatch it from you in fury, and take it whether you will or no; if you sin to escape sufferings, you leap into hell to escape a little pain upon earth: Luke xii. 4, 5, 'And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.' Men may by God's permission kill the body, but God can cast body and soul into hell fire. You think it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of men; it is indeed φοβερὸν, Heb. x. 31, 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' The carriage of your very enemies

should awaken your faith; why should you fear them more than they are afraid of God? In persecuting they run the hazard of the wrath of God; in suffering persecution you run the hazard of the wrath of men: your fear justifieth their boldness; if you be afraid of men, they may as well contemn God. They run upon the greater difficulties, and you, by complying with them, incur greater misery than you avoid.

[4.] If the less be countervailed by a greater gain, you have no reason to stick at it. In the general, it is gain to a believer to die: Phil. i. 21, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;' and 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Much more to a martyr God is able to make it up: Mark x. 29, 30, 'Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake and the gospel, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, and in the world to come life eternal.' When he calls for you to come home to him by a persecutor's hand, you have death abundantly recompensed. Therefore you may die with the greater confidence and joy; it is not an ordinary place is reserved for you in heaven. The promise is certain, and your dying upon this occasion maketh your claim sure.

Secondly, The absoluteness of their conquest and victory—'We are more than conquerors.'

But there seemeth to be a contradiction between the two branches, the greatness of the trial, and the absoluteness of their conquest: they are killed all the day long, how then are they conquerors, and more than conquerors?

Answer 1. Some refer it to the kind of the conquest; they have a nobler victory than if they conquered them by the sword. The conquest of faith is more than a conquest gotten by a temporal force, and the power of the long sword: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?'

2. Others to the degree of victory.

[1.] It is a conquest when we keep what we have: as Job i. 22, 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.' They are conquerors under trouble who are kept free from sin and provocation; in the hour of trial they stand their ground; however assaulted, their bow abideth in its strength, Gen. xlviii. 24.

[2.] It is more than a conquest when we gain by it. That is, first, when graces are strengthened, that is, a greater spirit of faith cometh upon them: 2 Cor. iv. 13, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.' Their love is more fervent; as fountain water is hottest in coldest weather usually: Mat. xxiv. 12, 'The love of many shall wax cold;' but when their love groweth hotter, and their zeal for God is so great that the minds of persecutors are daunted, then they are more than conquerors. *Secondly*, When experiences are enlarged, and they have a fresher and more lively sense of God's love to them: Rom. v. 5, 'Because the love of

God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us ;' 1 Peter iv. 14, ' If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you ; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.' So one in prison said, *Se divinas martyrum consolationes sensisse* ; when they are more secured in the love of God. Thirdly, Their reward is increased. Certainly it is above their trouble : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' It is likely they have more, Mark x. 29, 30. In the day of judgment more honour and praise : 1 Peter iv. 6, 7, ' That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Christ Jesus.'

Thirdly, The author or cause of the victory, or the power by which they conquer, *διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος*, through him that loved us. Here observe—

1. That Christ is not estranged from his people by their afflictions, but rather is more tender of them the more they are wronged by others.

2. That loving them, he doth overrule these things, and cause them to become a means to do them good.

3. He doth not only overrule these occurrences of providence, but doth give them the Spirit of grace.

4. That giving them the Spirit of grace, they overcome in his strength, not their own.

5. That Christ's love is more powerful to save us than the world's hatred to destroy us.

Doct. 2. That a true believer doth not miscarry under his troubles, but overcome them—yea, more than overcome them. Here I shall show—

(1.) The nature of the victory. (2.) How more than conquerors.

(3.) Who is this true believer that will be more than a conqueror.

(4.) Reasons why more than conquerors. (5.) Application.

First, To explain the nature of this victory ; it doth not consist in an exemption from troubles, or suffering temporal loss by them, or utter perishing as to this world, but keeping that which we contend and fight for ; we do not vanquish our enemy so as to cause all opposition to cease ; yea, or that we shall not temporally perish under it. No, the world needeth not suspect this holy victory of the saints : it is not conquering kingdoms, and becoming masters of other men's possessions, nor seeing our desire upon our enemies. I prove it—

1. From Christ's purchase : Gal. i. 4, ' Who died, that he might deliver us from the present evil world.' How so ? That we should live exempt from all troubles ? That the world should never trouble us ? No, but that the world should not ensnare and pervert us. His word was to ' save us from our sins,' Mat. i. 21 ; to ' deliver us from wrath to come,' 2 Thes. i. 10 ; and to justify and sanctify and glorify us. We have the victory that he hath purchased for us, if the devil and the world do not hinder our fruition and possession of eternal glory.

2. I prove it, partly from the way of dispensation of it, that is intimated in the first promise of the Messiah : Gen. iii. 15, ' I will put

enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Misery being brought into the world by sin, God ordereth it so that some temporal calamities shall remain on those that are recovered by grace; indeed it is our Redeemer's work so to moderate these sufferings, that our heel may be only bruised, but our head safe.

3. I prove it from the way of our conflict and combat and conquest. It is not by worldly greatness, visible prosperity, or the strength of outward dominion; but by patience, and contentedness in suffering, even to the very death. Those that are as sheep appointed to the slaughter, and killed all the day long, are more than conquerors. This is a riddle to carnal sense: we do not call them conquerors in the world who are killed, oppressed, kept under; but yet these are killed all the day long, and yet are more than conquerors, *Scias hominem Christo dicatum, saith Jerome, mori posse, vinci non posse.* A christian may be slain, yet more than a conqueror. The way to conquer here is to be trodden down, and ruined: 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 'We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken: cast down, but not destroyed.'

4. Our main party and enemy is Satan. You have not only to do with men, who strike at your worldly interests, but with Satan, who hath a spite at your souls: Eph. vi. 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' God may give men a power over your bodily lives, and all the interests thereof, but he doth not give the devil a power over the graces of the saints, to separate them from God's love. The devil aimeth at the destruction of souls: he can let you enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, that he may deprive you of your delight in God and celestial pleasures. He can be content you shall have dignities and honours, if they prove a snare to you. The devil seeketh to bring you to troubles, and poverty and nakedness, to draw you from God: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Satan's temptations are conveyed to the godly by afflictions, by which he seeketh to make them quit the truth, or their duty, or to quit their confidence in God; otherwise he would let such have all the glory in the world, if it were in his power, so you would but hearken to his lure: as he offered it to Christ: Mat. iv. 9, 'And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Therefore our victory is not to be measured by our prosperity and adversity, but faithful adherence to God; if he get his will over our bodies, if he get not his will over our souls, you conquer, and not Satan.

5. The ends or things we contend for. The victory must be stated by that; for we overcome if we keep what we fight for. Now our conflict is for the glory of God, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, our own salvation, and to maintain and keep alive present grace.

[1.] The glory of God. God must be honoured by his people in adversity: 2 Thes. i. 11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray always for you, that

God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you ;' John xxi. 19, 'This he said, signifying by what death he should glorify God ;' Phil. i. 20, 'Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.' When we suffer for his cause, our very sufferings are conquering : 1 Peter iv. 14, 'On your part he is glorified.' When they are reviled, reproached, persecuted : God can bring more honour to himself by the constancy of his people in their troubles and sufferings, than by permitting them to live in prosperity, and scandalise others by their vanity, sensuality, and pride of conversation. God is usually more honoured by his people at such times when his graces are exercised in the eye of the world, and his people confess him in the midst of persecutions.

[2.] The advancement of Christ's kingdom, in the propagation of the gospel : Rev. xii. 11, 'They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives to the death.' There is an overcoming, indeed, you will say, to die in the quarrel ! Yes, as long as Christ overcometh, a christian hath that which he looketh for. If their blood may be the seed of the Church, they are content ; some convinced, others converted, brethren strengthened and confirmed : Phil. i. 12, 'Those things which happened to me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.' His sufferings conduced thereunto as much as his preaching.

[3.] Our own salvation. It is not worldly prosperity and greatness and dominion that we should seek, but that the soul may be saved in the day of the Lord. Indeed, if our aim were at worldly prosperity, and carnal honour and pleasure, then were we clearly overcome when we hazard our worldly interests ; but it is heaven that we aim at : and therefore, as Christ 'endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the glory set before him,' Heb. xii. 2, 3 ; so we must despise the cross for the same ends. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work in us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;' Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us ;' Heb. x. 34, 'They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, as knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' At length we shall have our promised crown.

[4.] To maintain and keep alive present grace. First, Our faith : 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'I have kept the faith ;' when we abide faithful with God, and are not drawn to apostasy by all the flatteries or threatenings of the world. Secondly, Our love to God. Satan's design is to make a breach between God and us : Rom. viii. 38, 39, 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ ; unclasp these mutual embracements whereby Christ and the soul held fast one another : you are in Christ's arms, and Christ in yours. The devil would count it a greater victory to conquer your love than to get a power over your bodies and bodily

interests ; his design is to keep men from God ; if therefore adversity bringeth you the nearer to him, then you conquer. The souls of the faithful are kept closer to God in suffering times than in prosperity, being sensible of the vanity and emptiness of all worldly things, and weaned from them. Whatever befall the body, you keep nearer to God, and have most of his love. Thirdly, Our patience ; that is not overcome by the storm and tempests of temptations : Luke xxi. 19, 'In patience possess your souls.' A man keepeth himself as long as he keepeth his patience : James i. 4, 'Let patience have its perfect work.' This is necessary that we may receive our crown : Heb. x. 36, 'For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.' Well then, a christian overcometh, not when he gets the best of opposite interest in the world, but when he keepeth himself in a capacity to enjoy the heavenly inheritance.

Secondly, How more than a conqueror ? When he doth not only keep his standing, but gets ground by the temptation : Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God ;' not only bear them, but groweth the better for them. (1.) More holy and more heavenly ; as graces, by being exercised, are improved and increased : Heb. xii. 11, 'Wherefore, lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees ;' more sensible of the folly of sinning, than at other times. (2.) More joyful ; comforts are increased : Rom. v. 3-5, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us ;' 2 Cor. xii. 10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, and distresses, for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak, then am I strong ;' Acts v. 41, 'They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name ;' and so triumpheth most when he seemeth to be most overcome. (3.) More resolute in the profession of godliness : 2 Sam. vi. 22, 'If this be to be vile, I will be more vile and base in mine own eyes.' Courage groweth by sufferings, as trees are more rooted by being shaken : Ps. cxix. 126, 127, 'It is time for thee, Lord, to work ; for they have made void thy law. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold.' As a staff is holden the faster, the more another seeketh to wrest it out of our hands.

Thirdly, Who is this true believer that will be more than a conqueror ? The victory is sometimes ascribed to faith, 1 John v. 4, 5 ; sometimes to love : Rom. viii. 35, 'What shall separate us from the love of Christ ?' Love is not only taken passively, for the love wherewith Christ loveth us, but actively, for the love wherewith we love Christ. I can exclude neither, for the success is here ascribed in the text to Christ's love to us ; but there, our love to Christ must be understood also, for 'what shall separate us from the love of God ?' Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Tribulation is not wont to draw God from loving us, but to draw us from loving of God. And in the text, it is said, 'We are conquerors,' not God is a conqueror. It is we are assaulted, not Christ, and it is our love which the temptation striketh at. Both

must be included. Christ hath hold of a believer in the arms of his love, and a believer hath hold of Christ, 1 John iv. 14. Well then, it is faith; but 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6. Christ is rather held by the heart than the hand only. Go to them that make a religion of their opinions, and you will find no such effect. If they have a faith, it is that that never went deeper than their brains and their faucies; but where Christ dwelleth in the heart by faith, there he remaineth constantly, Eph. iii. 17, and flitteth not thence; he resideth as in his strong citadel and castle. A christian, because he loveth Christ, he will not leave him; as a sinner will not leave his lusts and worldly profits because he loveth them. Faith reports the great love of Christ, what he hath done to pacify God, to bring home the sinner; what in a way of satisfaction, what in a way of conversion; therefore a christian is loth to leave Christ, who hath so loved his soul, and whom his soul so loveth. A bare belief is only in the head, which is but the entrance into the inwards of the soul; it is the heart is Christ's castle and citadel; a superficial bare assent may let him go, but it is faith working by love that produceth this close adherence.

Fourthly, I come now, in the fourth place, to the reasons why more than conquerors.

1. On God's part.

2. On the believer's part.

1. On God's part. The keeping of the saints is partly a matter of power, and partly a matter of care. Now, if God take the charge of us, surely we must be kept; for God is invincible in his power, and unchangeable in the purposes of his love; or, which is all one, Christ is mighty to save, and ready to save: Isa. lxiii. 1, 'I that speak in righteousness am mighty to save.'

[1.] He is in God's hand, and Christ's hand: John x. 28, 29, 'I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: my Father is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.' They may have many shakings and tossings, as to their spiritual condition, yet their final perseverance, till they come to eternal life, is certain. Surely God and Christ are invincibles; no other creature hath any power but what God gave them at first, and consequently may be taken away at God's pleasure, and is limited by him in the meantime. Therefore, though in themselves they might fail, and be left for ever, yet his power and everlasting arm is able to sustain them; therefore nothing is to be feared if God desert us not; they are in his hand, that is, under his powerful protection. You will say, While they keep close to God, nothing shall ruin them; but God hath undertaken that: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'He will put his fear into their hearts, that they shall never depart from him.' The whole business of our salvation, and all the conditions of it, are in God's hand. God, seeing how man had wasted that stock of grace which he had put into his hands before the fall, resolveth to provide for him in time to come, to keep his heart and will in his own hand, and to guide it by his Spirit, that he might not hazard his estate any more, or be cheated of it by Satan. In man's restitution after the fall, his estate is impaired with respect to the perfection of it in this present life. He is bruised in his heel with divers

temptations and slips into sin ; but it is much better in regard of the firmness of it. Man having power in his own hands, lost it quickly, therefore now his whole salvation is in God's hands ; both end and way and means, and all that conduceth thereunto : Col. iii. 3, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God ;' not only in point of obscurity, but security ; not left any longer to our own keeping ; it is in safe hands.

[2.] As God is invincible in his power, so he is unchangeable in the purposes of love ; for, according to his unchangeable nature, 'whom he loveth, he loveth to the end.' His new-covenant gifts are 'without repentance,' Rom. xi. 29. The matter is made sure between God and Christ : John vi. 39, 'This is my Father's will, that of all that are given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' They are given him by way of recompense, and by way of charge ; if he take them into his custody and charge, he will be faithful ; for he is to give an account for them at the last day by head and poll : Heb. ii. 13, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' Christ hath a special charge to keep all those safe whom God hath given him ; and surely he hath sufficient power, and will be careful of his charge to keep them safe.

2. On the believer's part.

[1.] His relation to Christ : he is united to Christ, married to him in the covenant : 1 Cor. vi. 17, 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.' *Impossibile est massam a pasta separari*—leaven kneaded into the dough cannot be got out. Certainly it is a great means of our preservation. Why? First, Partly because from this union of Christ with believers there floweth life, which is not, like the animal life, obnoxious to death and corruption ; it is *σπέρμα μένον*, 1 John iii. 9 ; 'an incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 23 ; 'a fountain of living waters always springing up to eternal life,' John iv. 14. Secondly, From this life resulteth a double inclination, which serveth to preserve it and keep it up ; which is—(1.) A careful avoiding of what is contrary to it ; none more tender and timorous of their own infirmities than they who are endowed with it, Prov. xxviii. 14, more watchful against occasions of revolting : 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Therefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' More diligent in using sanctified means of confirmation : 1 John v. 18, 'He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that evil one toucheth him not.' They are chary of that life they have, and those hopes they are called unto : 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.' This being their disposition, the Lord by it fulfilleth the purposes of his grace. (2.) A desire to maintain, promote, and increase this life by the use of all gospel means : 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby ;' and James i. 18, 19, 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved, let every man be swift to hear.' (3.) The new nature is thus acting as under the care and protection of God, and most especially when we are most in danger to miscarry : Ps. xciv. 18, 'I said, My foot slippeth ; then thy right hand held me up ;' so Ps. lxxiii. 23, 'Nevertheless, I am continually with thee : thou hast holden me by

thy right hand.' When was that? See ver. 2, 'But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped.' God supports us by his grace when the temptation is apt to make too great a shock and impression upon us.

[2.] There is something more on the believer's part; there are two graces which have a great influence upon our adherence to God, faith and love.

(1.) Faith hath a great influence upon our victory: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' For though God keepeth us, yet he keepeth us by our faith: 1 Peter i. 5, 'And are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation.' The love and power of the principal cause doth not exclude the means of our preservation. When we consider our great trials, we are apt to apprehend much matter of fear and uncertainty. As heaven is kept for us, so are we kept for heaven, that we may not be lost in the way thither. But how are we kept? By the power of God as the principal agent, through faith, depending upon his promises both for assistance and pardon; for it is a firm, cordial believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and so the great lawgiver of the church, and the fountain of grace to all his people. As a lawgiver, so we make conscience of his precepts, because his threats and promises are greater than all the terrors and allurements of sense. We can set hell against all the terrors of the world, and heaven against all the delightful things of the world, and so are not greatly moved with what befalleth us here. Faith layeth these things before the soul, as if they were before our eyes. Yea more, here is a prison, there is hell, *Domine imperator, tu carcerem, ille Gehennam*; here torments for the body, there God is ready to cast an unfaithful, fearful christian, both body and soul, into hell fire: here is pomp of living, contentments for the flesh; there are pleasures at God's right hand for evermore: here is worldly glory; there the glory, honour, and immortality of the other world, Rom. ii. 7: here is escape from present torments, there is a better resurrection, Heb. xi. 35. All this belongeth to Christ as a lawgiver. But as he is the fountain of spiritual life and grace, so we receive Christ that he may live in us, and we in him; and so are fortified against inward weakness, and look upon Christ as able to defend us, and to maintain us in the midst of temptations. We have a weak nature; our God is unseen; our great hopes are to come; the flesh is importunate to be pleased, loth to hold out against so many trials. But look to Jesus, the captain of our salvation, and the fountain of our life; we are encouraged, and receive supplies from him: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' The Lord enableth us to abound, or to be abased; to undergo any condition, so we may discharge our duty to Christ. He strengtheneth our staggering resolution, and helpeth us to be strong in the power of his might for all encounters, Eph. vi. 10. Thus you see how faith helpeth us.

(2.) Love is another grace, and of chief regard in this place. Now I shall show you that love hath an unconquerable force and power in

itself, especially where it is accompanied with desire, hope, and delight, as it is in a sincere, gracious heart.

(1st.) There is an invincible force in love itself: Cant. viii. 6, 7, 'For love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned.' Love is of such a vehement nature that we cannot resist it and break the force of it, no more than we can resist death or fire; nothing but the thing loved can quench or satisfy it. Such a vehement love is there kindled in the heart of a believer towards Christ. It maketh such strong and mighty impressions on the heart, that they cannot endure any separation and divorce from Christ. No opposition can extinguish it, no other satisfaction can bribe it, and entice it away from Christ. No opposition can extinguish it; if many waters cannot quench love, nor can floods drown it; waters will quench fire, but nothing can quench love. By waters in scripture are understood afflictions, crosses, and seeming hard dealing from Christ—'All his waves and billows have gone over me,' saith David. Now a sincere love doth so clasp about Christ, that no cross, no rod, nor the blackest dispensations can drive us from him; neither sword, nor famine, nor pestilence. If all the floods of trial and opposition were let out upon it, it cannot quench love; so, also, nothing can satisfy it. Nay, it rejecteth the offers of all enticing objects, which would intrude themselves into Christ's room in the heart. There are two sorts of trials which carry away souls from Christ; left-hand temptations, as crosses and afflictive evils; and right-hand temptations, such as the cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and voluptuous living. When the one sort of trials do not prevail, the other may. The thorny ground could endure the heat of the sun, but the good seed choked in it. But true love to Christ will be prevailed over by neither. If a man would give all the substance of his house, that is, all that can be given, to buy away a soul from Christ, it will not do; all this proffer is utterly contemned, with a holy disdain and indignation. No, all things are dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of our Lord, Phil. iii. 8, 9. All essays to cool it, or divert or draw it away, are fruitless. A slight love may be overcome, but a fervent strong love will not. It is a warm love to Christ which maintaineth his interest in the soul; and then neither waters nor bribes, heights nor depths, advantages nor losses, preferments nor persecutions, will cool the believer's affection to Christ. He dare not entertain anything in Christ's room, nor slacken his love to him. No; pleasures and riches and honours will not satisfy him; and troubles and afflictions will not discourage him. Thus a true and sincere love is unconquerable, and will hold out against temptations on all hands.

(2dly.) This love to Christ is accompanied with desire, hope, and delight. So far as we want the thing which we love, there is desire; and so far as it is likely to be obtained there is hope; and so far as we enjoy the thing which we love, it is accompanied with delight. Now all these are to be found in the love of Christ; and if they be high and strong, the believer overcometh the violence of the temptation.

(1st.) It is not easy to draw off a man from his strongest desires. If a man's heart be set upon Christ, he must be with Christ for evermore. What can separate him? Will he be discouraged with tribulation or distress? Nay, those inflame him. Shall he lose all that he hath longed for because of a little inconveniency to the flesh? No; Paul's groanings for Christ, and desires to be with the Lord, made him labour and strive and endure all the afflictions of the gospel, 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. Death itself may then be borne; for it is but the key to open the prison door, and let out that soul that hath long desired to be with Christ, Phil. i. 23. *Gratias agimus vobis, quod a molestis dominis liberamur*—you do them a favour to send them home to their dear Lord.

(2dly.) It is accompanied with hope; they expect within a little while to have their desires accomplished. And will a soul that is at heaven's gates lose all that he hath waited for because the entrance is troublesome? When men have crowded to any mask or show, and have waited long, they will not lose their waiting, though they venture many a knock or broken pate to get in; so when salvation is very near, will a christian give over his waiting, seeking, and striving for it? Mat. xi. 12, 'Even from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

(3dly.) Delight. We have gotten in part a taste and earnest of our fruition and enjoyment of God and Christ hereafter, and it is very pleasing to the soul; so that the tempter must needs have a hard task to draw off the soul from him in whom he delighteth. Worldly men will not let go their vanities, nor sinful wretches their foulest sins, because they delight in them. Many who never knew what it is to love Christ, and delight in his salvation, do not so earnestly long for, and fixedly hope for the promised blessedness. Now these may be easily taken off, but the other will venture upon the greatest difficulties.

Obj. But may not a sound believer be foiled as to his inward man by these afflictive temptations?

Ans. Yes, the experience of the saints showeth it too often. But—

1. It is not totally and finally. Their heel is bruised, not only as the outward man is molested by afflictions, but as they may be drawn to some sinful slips and temptations. The heel is the lowest and basest part of the body, far enough from any vital part, the wounds whereof endanger not the life at all. The devil may draw them into some sins, which may cause much unquietness and affliction of spirit; but these wounds are not deadly, and do not quench the life of grace in them; these wounds may be painful, but not mortal—'They shall not be hurt of the second death,' Rev. ii. 11.

2. Upon recovery by repentance. The Lord sanctifieth these falls to them, to make them the more cautious and watchful; so they grow wiser and better, and more resolute, as being warned before by their own bitter cost; as a ball, with the more force it is beaten down, it rebounds the higher; or as a child that hath gotten a knock, or been bitten by a snappish cur, groweth the more wary: Josh. xxii. 17, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us?' They were not yet whole of

the iniquity of Peor, and therefore should be careful not to wound themselves again.

3. All ends in final conquest over Satan: Rom. xvi. 20, 'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly.' We are now in our combat; it is some conquering to keep up our resistance; but our full triumph is hereafter.

Obj. 2. But will it not hurt to press believers to this confidence? Will not this weaken their care and diligence? No.

1. This is pleasing and acceptable to God, to believe that he will perfect and maintain his begun work: Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this, that he that hath begun a good work in you will perfect it to the day of Christ.'

2. It is honourable unto God, and doth excite us to praise and thanksgiving, when we can trust our interests in his hands with a quiet and well composed mind: 2 Tim. i. 12. 'And I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him.' A christian, in all respects of time, can bless God for what he hath done: called us when strangers and enemies, 1 Peter ii. 9; what he doth do: 'keepeth the feet of his saints,' 1 Sam. ii. 9; for what he will do: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, 'Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.' To be satisfied in God's conduct, is certainly very honourable to him.

3. It is very profitable to the children of God.

[1.] To keep us from falling. God promiseth to keep us, but in his own way; and that engageth us to an entire dependence upon him in the use of means: John xv. 4, 'Abide in me, and I in you;' so 1 John ii. 16, 17, 'Ye shall abide in him;' and then he presently addeth, 'Little children, abide in him.' First a promise, and then an exhortation; and then we use the means with the more diligence and encouragement; as Paul had a promise that not one should perish, Acts xxvii. 23, but yet they must all abide in the ship, ver. 31.

[2.] To encourage us to return when fallen. We have some hold-fast on God, when we seek to recover ourselves by repentance: Ps. cxix. 170, 'Let my supplication come before thee; deliver me according to thy word;' and Jer. iii. 4, 'Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, the guide of my youth?'

4. It is very comfortable, and breedeth that everlasting joy that should be in God's redeemed ones: Isa. xxxv. 10, 'And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads.' Nay, it begets a heroical spirit when we can bear up on the love of God in the sorest trials; as here, *πέπεισμα*.

Use. It cautioneth us not to be dismayed when the people of God seem to be run down by oppositions and reproaches, and the cause of religion to suffer loss, and visibly to go to ruin. No; Christ hath promised that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church,' Mat. xvi. 18. All the powers which the devil can muster up cannot destroy Christ's interest in the world; his kingdom is like a rock in the midst of the sea, which, being beaten on every side with waves, standeth unmovable. His people many times may be scattered, oppressed, their profession discountenanced and opposed everywhere, seemingly beaten

out of the world ; but then the church groweth inwardly, the graces of his people are strengthened and increased, and their hearts bettered, their glory hastened, their profession more honoured and revered in the consciences of men ; some converted, others confirmed, when the christians were butchered, and went to wreck everywhere. Oftentimes it falleth out so. When God breaketh that temporal interest to which we lean, he provideth for his own glory and the advancement of the gospel by other and better means ; and religion gaineth when it seemeth to lose ; as in the primitive times, when the slaughters were frequent, they sought to drive christians to deny Christ, but they confess him the more ; they fumed and chafed, because they could not get their will, and increased their fury, but still the other grew more resolute. Enemies have confessed themselves overcome ; so, 'What shall we do to these men?' Acts iv. 16. When they imprisoned and scourged them, they were at a loss. Sozomen saith of Sapoires, that he was tired with destroying the christians, and at length caused the troubles to cease ; so Dioclesian leaves his empire because he could not root out the christians, but that they still continued.

Use 2. Is to persuade us to get such a degree of faith and love and patience that we may be more than conquerors in all our trials. It is a great degree of heroical fortitude, or a high christian pitch, which is here described ; for mark—

1. Here is not one sort of trials, but many : Col. i. 11, 'Strengthened with all patience.' It is not enough to overcome one evil, but all ; crosses of all kinds—'In all these things.' A little distress a man might bear, but famine and nakedness and sword terrifieth our thoughts ; but nothing must be excepted out of our resignation to God.

2. Here is conquest. It ill becometh the godly to faint in affliction : Prov. xxiv. 10, 'If thou faintest in affliction, thy strength is small.' Affliction will try what our strength is. It is one thing to talk of it, another to bear it ; there is a great difference between a trial apprehended in our judgment, and felt by sense : Job iv. 3-5, 'Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands ; thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees ; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest, it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.' We are other manner of persons in trouble than we seemed to be out of trouble. The well will give good counsel to the sick ; it is easy for them that stand on the shore to say to those that conflict with the waves and tempests, Sail thus. When troubles come upon ourselves, we are restless and impatient ; the self-confident and presumptuous will find it another thing to bear trouble than to talk of it ; but the humble, and those that are sensible of their weakness, will find, that though they are weak, yet the power they are assisted by is mighty ; and that God's power is perfected in their weakness ; when weak, then strong. That evils, dreadful in the hearing, are not so grievous when God layeth them on us, and giveth us strength to bear them : 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' They have a quite contrary experience ; when

weak, then strong; as the other, who conceited themselves strong, are then weak.

3. We are not only to be conquerors, but more than conquerors. That is—

[1.] As to the frame of your hearts; to be not only patient, but cheerful under the cross upon right grounds: Col. i. 11, 'Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness;' so Mat. v. 12, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad;' and James i. 2, 'Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' If we have no other burden upon us than the affliction itself, let us bless God rather than repine.

[2.] As to the success.

(1) You must not only keep from miscarrying, but get good by the affliction and persecution. It must purge out sin: Isa. xxix. 9, 'By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged out; and this is all the fruit, to take away his sin.' Make you more pliable to God's will, and careful to perform your duty: Ps. cxix. 67, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept thy word;' ver. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.' Retrench your carnal liberty and complacency, and bring you to a greater contempt of the world: Gal. vi. 14, 'But God forbid that I should glory in anything, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.' Quicken you to be more frequent and fervent in prayer: Isa. xxvi. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' From what hand soever the evil cometh, these must be the effects of it; this is to be more than a conqueror.

(2.) If you mean to be so, you must get a holy obstinacy; that is to say, an invincible resolution to adhere to God. (1.) A holy obstinacy of faith: Job xiii. 15, 'Though he kill me, I will trust in him.' Satan's great design in all temptations is to crush our confidence. Now, to cast away our confidence is to do ourselves as ill a turn as Satan can wish for: nay, however God deal with you, resolve to cleave to him; let my trouble be what it will, yet I will depend upon God. (2.) A holy obstinacy of love; as he told his master that he should not have a club big enough to drive him from him: Isa. xxvi. 8, 'Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee: the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.' They are resolved to desire and seek after and delight in God. (3.) A holy obstinacy of obedience: Job xvii. 9, 'The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' When opposed, vexed by the hypocrite, by disadvantages and pressures, he gathereth strength. (4.) An obstinacy of patience: Luke xxi. 16-18, 'And ye shall be betrayed, both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death: and ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.' Whatever befall you, either by persecution or death itself, it shall not turn to the least disadvantage to you, but greatest gain; for those that suffered death were eternally crowned, and others are under the protection of God; therefore endure with constancy. Lastly, an

obstinaey of zeal: Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'Our God is able to deliver us; but if not, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.' Godly resolution is ever requisite in point of religion, and it should not be weakened in us by the greatest sufferings.

Doct. 3. That it is the love of Christ which secureth believers in their conflicts, and maketh them triumph over temptations. All their victory is, *διὰ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντος*.

1. Let me give the emphasis of the expression.

2. Give you the proof of the point.

[1.] It is not power that is here spoken of, but love; it is not 'through him that strengthened us,' but through him that 'loved us;' elsewhere it is *διὰ τοῦ ἐνδυναμοῦντος*, Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.' The effect indeed cometh from the influence of his power, but it is his love which sets his power a-work. The ground and bottom of all his mediatorial dispensations is love, which is more comfortable to us than bare power; for we do not know whether he will exercise that or no.

[2.] It is not our love to Christ, but his love to us which is spoken of; no question but the great manifestations of his love in reconciling God to us by redemption, and us to God by conversion, do leave upon a gracious heart a forcible impression and inclination to love him again, who hath loved us at so dear a rate, and in so tender a manner; and this love is not unserviceable in our preservation. Men are not so easily drawn from him whom they dearly love, and love upon such good and powerful reasons. But the strength of a believer lieth not here, in his love to Christ, but rather in Christ's love to us, which both began, and still continueth our salvation. It began it: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And continueth it: 2 Thes. ii. 16, 17, 'Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.' Christ's love continueth to his people till they enjoy the full effects of it: and therefore carrieth them through all temptations till they come to their eternal rest. There lieth our stability, in the unchangeableness of his love.

[3.] It is not barely, Who loveth us now, but Who hath loved us. He speaketh of the past time; it is true, he retaineth still his loving and kind affections to us, but the foundation was long since laid in our redemption and conversion to God. In our redemption—'He hath loved us, and washed us in his blood,' Rev. i. 5; in our conversion: Eph. ii. 4, 5, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.' In these two acts the foundation was laid of our victory and triumph. By his redemption he purchased all that grace which is necessary for us till we are fully brought home to God; by conversion we are actually instated in it. By the one, *jus ad rem*, our right to this grace was acquired; by the other we have *jus in re*, we are actually possessed of it. By the one he doth pacify the wrath of God, by the other he doth take us into a near relation to himself, that we may become his own, and so actually under his care and pro-

tection. Therefore in these two acts lieth our safety, in that of redemption and conversion. In short, these two acts do both endear us to Christ, and Christ to us. They endear us to Christ; by redemption his people are his dear purchase; if they miscarry, his purchased people miscarry, therefore he will not lose them; they are his own, being bought with the price of his blood, and every one will provide for his own, 1 Tim. v. 8. The world will love its own, John xiii. 19. Besides, by conversion we are his own by covenant and near relation. We are his spouse; the kindness of espousals is above other kindness: Jer. ii. 2, 'I remember the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.' The day of conversion is the day of espousals, Cant. iii. 11. Then we are married to the Lord, that we may bring forth fruit unto God. And both these acts doth endear Christ to us; for the glory of his grace and love to sinners doth eminently appear in our redemption; then he commended his love to us in the great things he purchased and suffered for us. Besides, in conversion, then his love is applied to us, and he taketh us with all our faults; he spake comfortably to us in our ears, and sanctified our souls, and brought us back again to God, and so to our duty and happiness. We can never forget this kindness of his espousals.

[4.] He hath loved us; it not only compriseth the foundation laid, but implieth also some experience on the saint's part. When we consider what he hath done for us already, we may be the more confident of what he is now, and will be to us hereafter. Christ's love is not only seen in our first entrance into covenant, and the eminent passages of our redemption and conversion, but there is an uninterrupted course thereof, from the time of our first closing with him till our final perfection in glory. His whole dealing with them is love; it is to be read in every dispensation of his and condition of ours; it is to be read in the continual supports, gracious helps, daily pardons, which he constantly vouchsafeth to us. Now the saints promise themselves more, because God hath done such great things for their sakes already: 1 Cor. i. 9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;' and 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, 'Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.' When you have tried Christ so often, cannot you yet trust in him? How often hath he performed promises to thee, heard thy cries, helped and saved thee in thy distresses, confuted thy unbelief, and shamed thy disgraceful tears and cares? Shall all these experiences of his love be forgotten? Nay, one mercy is the pledge of another: 2 Cor. i. 10, 'Who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.' Therefore whatever troubles come upon us, we are more than conquerors from him that loved us.

[5.] This triumph is put into the mouths of a people deeply afflicted, or exposed to tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword; it is these say, 'We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' Partly, to show that Christ is not estranged from his people by their afflictions and troubles; these do not vacate their interest nor cause his affection to cease—'Whom the Lord loveth, he

rebuketh and chasteneth,' Rev. iii. 19. He doth not cease to love them, but rather is more tender of them, more willing to let out more of his love to them, the more they are wronged by others. And partly, also, to beget confidence. Christ's love is more powerful to save us than the world's hatred to destroy us; for here, to the most direful effects of the world's hatred is opposed nothing but the love of Christ as a ground of triumph. We make too much of the world's hatred, if we think we are not safe enough in Christ's love: John xvi. 33, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace;' and surely Christ's peace should counterbalance all the world's troubles. Judge you where we are best provided for, by the world's friendship and Christ's hatred, or by the world's hatred and Christ's friendship.

2. The proof of the point—

[1.] By scripture. And there I shall produce two metaphors; the first where Christ's love is compared to a banner: Cant. ii. 4, 'His banner over me is love.' A banner is a military ensign. The church is elsewhere described to be terrible as an army with banners, because of its order and strength. Now what is the banner under which the church fighteth with joy and victory, against sin, Satan, and the world? Christ's ensign is his love to her, that love by which he redeemed us, and converted us, giveth us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace; this is the love that giveth us victory over all temptations. The other metaphor, where Christ's love is compared to the lining of a chariot: Cant. iii. 10, 'His chariot is paved with love;' meaning that chariot wherein the saints ride in triumph to heaven. Love doth all for us; all the promises run like pipes with streams of love; all providences, or Christ's dispensations towards his people, are nothing else but love.

[2.] By reasons taken from the properties of Christ's love.

(1.) It is a transcendent love. All love, where it is real, is earnest and vehement. Much more the love of Christ, for that is not to be measured by an ordinary standard, for the apostle saith, Eph. iii. 19, 'That you may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' The love of Christ to lost sinners is so vast, boundless, and infinite, that there is no parallel whereby we may come to the knowledge of it, Rom. v. 17, 18. We may know it as to admiration, but we cannot know it as to comprehension to the full. Somewhat we may know by what is spoken of it in the scripture, somewhat by what we feel in ourselves of the effects of it; yea, we not only may know it, but we ought to know it so far as may inflame our hearts with a love to God, and enable us to be faithful to him, whatever troubles we endure for his sake. Now what may we not promise ourselves from such a love, as is not only above our expression, but above our comprehension? He that died for sinners, will he not be kind to his people?

(2.) It is a tender love, and such as maketh him solicitous for our welfare. We use to say, *Res est sollicita, plena timoris amor*—Love is a solicitous thing, feareth not the danger or trouble of what is beloved. As Jacob was solicitous about Benjamin, lest mischief should befall him in the way; as Epaphroditus had a solicitous care of the Philippians, and of any trouble or sorrow that might happen to them, Phil. ii. 26; such is the care of Christ over his people, especially when they are

most in danger ; then his love is most at work for them, to provide help and cordials against all temptations. He knoweth our weakness and infirmities ; for his people are ‘ engraven on the palms of his hands,’ Isa. xlix. 16 ; yea, carried in his heart, as the names of the tribes on the breast of the high priest. So Christ ‘ calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them,’ John x. 3. Now, knowing the danger to which they are exposed, his love doth incline him to pity them, and give them renewed proof of his affection and care over them in their extremities, and doth strangely preserve them in manifold dangers.

(3.) It is a constant and an immutable love : Jer. xxxi. 3, ‘ With an everlasting love have I loved thee.’ God’s love is a love of perpetuity, or eternity ; his love and affection continueth still the same to us, and shall do so for ever. God reserveth a liberty in the covenant, for correction : Ps. lxxxix. 32, 33, ‘ Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.’ The sharpest rods and sorest stripes do stand with loving-kindness to them ; yea, are rather effects of his love than hatred. But this new covenant-love is immutable.

(4.) It is an operative and effective, not an idle and hidden love. If Christ’s love were only an affection in the heart, a well-wishing love, there were less comfort in it ; but it is a love that breaketh forth in action and real performance. He will readily do good to his people whom he loveth ; not only hereafter, when he will accomplish our glorious hopes, but now his love is not without effects. Two I shall mention.

(1st.) His ordering all dispensations of providence for our good ; this God doth for them that love him, Rom. viii. 28. And surely it is a great testimony of his love to us. They know nothing in religion that know not that Christ’s external government is necessary to the preservation of the saints, as well as his internal grace. See Ps. xxv. 3, ‘ Let none that wait on thee be ashamed ; let them be ashamed that transgress without cause ;’ 1 Cor. x. 13, ‘ There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’ He withdraweth temptations, that they may not be too strong for feeble souls, and cause despondency in them, and moderateth our afflictions, that they may not trouble or discourage us, but only correct, and keep us from security, vanity, and contempt of holy things. These temptations by troubles and afflictions are let loose to check other temptations to ambition, worldliness, and sensuality ; but when they are like to prove temptations themselves, the love of Christ is much seen in his wise and gracious mitigation and removal of them.

(2dly.) The assistances of his grace, or the operations of his Spirit Surely the property of love is, *velle amato bonum*. And God giveth the true good to his children ; the good we are capable of in this life is the gift of his sanctifying Spirit. Tempted souls find it a needful benefit ; and when they seek it, will Christ deny it to them ? No, he hath assured them of the contrary : Mat. vii. 9–11, ‘ Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ?’

or if he ask fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? God will not deal worse with his children than men do with theirs; and that good thing is the Spirit, Luke xi. 13.

Use 1. Information.

1. That we cannot secure ourselves by ourselves. The devil is too strong an enemy for sinful, lapsed men to deal withal. He conquered us in innocency; and what may he not do now, when we are divided in ourselves, and have something in us on both sides? much earthliness, carnality, averseness from God, as well as love to him? Therefore we subsist every moment by the love of Christ, who became the captain of our salvation, Heb. ii. 10, and in whose cause we are engaged, and who giveth us the Holy Spirit, to move us to good, and to restrain us from evil.

2. What confidence we have, or may have, in Christ. The saints overcome by his love; and if you will adhere to him in the greatest hazards, will he fail you? Surely he is kind to his people, and hath given not only such assurance of it in his promises, but such experience of it in the course of his dispensations, that we are still encouraged to wait upon him. He is willing to help his people, for he loveth them; he is able and sufficient, for infinite power is at the beck of his love. And you have tried him, and he never forsook you; will he fail at last? Was all this to trepan men into a deceitful hope?

3. How little we should suspect his love, when to appearance all things go against us. There are two dispensations Christ useth: either disappointing the temptation, or strengthening his people under it. For the first we have cause to bless him, and many times more cause than we are well aware of. *Plures sunt gratiæ privatiæ quam positivæ*, say divines in general; in our case, that of the prophet is verified — 'I led Ephraim, but he knew it not.' In preventing our temptations we know not what the love of Christ hath done for us. But for the second, in what he will try us, take heed of misconstruing any act of Christ's love towards us. You think there is some want of love when he permitteth you to furious and boisterous temptations; no, then he meaneth to give you some supereminent grace of the Spirit: 1 Peter iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.' He loveth you still, but will not manifest his love this way or that way which the flesh pleaseth.

4. It showeth us how much we should love Christ, and adhere to him in the greatest difficulties. Love doth attract and draw love. Ordinary love should be mutual and reciprocal: 2 Kings x. 15, 'Is thine heart right, as mine is with thee?' That is, dost thou affect me, as I do thee? Paul pleadeth it, 2 Cor. vi. 11–13, 'O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels; now for a recompense in the same, be ye also enlarged.' This showeth the justice of it, that we should retaliate; be as kind and affectionate as Christ is to us. But alas! usually Christ may complain, 2 Cor. xii. 15, 'The more abun-

dantly I love you, the less I am beloved.' Shall we lessen our respects to him?

Use 2. Is to persuade us to give all diligence to this, that we be assured that Christ loveth us. This is known, partly by an external partly by an internal demonstration.

1. The external demonstration is in redemption; surely there is no doubt of that, that Christ came to show the loveliness and goodness of God to the forlorn world. This only needeth consideration and improvement. He that loved us at so costly a rate, will he desert us if we choose his ways, and resolve to adhere to him?

2. The internal demonstration is in conversion, or our receiving the atonement; entering into peace with God, and adopted as children of the family. Sure if you get this one evidence, you shall be brought to glory. When he hath pardoned thy follies and the frailties of thy youth, and called thee when he passed by others, and left them in their sins, what will he not do for thee?

SERMON XLVII.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—ROM. viii. 38, 39.

THESE words render a reason why believers are more than conquerors in their sorest trials, and do further carry on the apostle's triumph to a fit conclusion of such an excellent discourse.

In the text observe—

1. The assailants—*Death, life, angels.*

2. The attempt and design—*To separate us from the love of God.*

3. The fruitlessness of it—*No creature shall be able to do this.*

4. His confidence—*For I am persuaded.*

1. The aggressors and assailants are set forth, either by a particular distribution, or wrapt up in a general expression.

[1.] The particular distribution is made by four pairs or couples.

(1.) Neither death nor life; that is, neither the fears of death nor the hopes of life; this pair is mentioned because death is the 'king of terrors,' Job xviii. 14. And among all desirable good things life is the chiefest, and that which maketh a man capable of enjoying all other good things; expressed Job ii. 4, 'Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life.' Now all assaults from this first pair are in vain, as they tend to separate us from the love of God in Christ. Will you hope to do it by threats of death? A believer will tell you that Christ threateneth eternal death; and this temporal one, be it natural or violent, is but a passage into life eternal. Will you entice him by the baits of life? They have learned to prefer everlasting life