

SERMONS UPON JOHN XIV. 1.

SERMON I.

Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.—
JOHN xiv. 1.

THE disciples had heard our Lord Jesus discoursing of his death and departure, and the great trials which they were to undergo; and that one disciple should betray him, another eminent among them deny him, and all take offence and leave him; therefore fear and trouble seized upon them. Our Lord, perceiving this distemper growing upon them, seeketh to relieve and ease them. He had sorrow and agonies of his own to think upon, but he is so taken up with comforting his disciples, that he seemeth to forget himself and his own approaching death, and wholly applieth himself to them, 'Let not your heart be troubled,' &c.

In these words we have—(1.) An evil dissuaded, 'Let not your heart be troubled.' (2.) A cure prescribed, and that is the exercise of faith, set forth by its double object, God and Christ, 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' In God, as the supreme fountain of all blessing; in Christ, as mediator, or the only way to come to God. In God, as the creator and preserver of all things; in Christ, as the redeemer, to whom the care and conservation of the church belongeth. They did believe in God, they were trained up in that as Jews, but they had not hitherto so clear, so distinct, so strong a faith in Christ as they should have; their faith was but dark and weak as to the dignity of his person. Therefore he presseth them to believe, not only in God, as Jews, but in himself, as christians; that was the point, the faith of which would be now assaulted by his ignominious death and sufferings.

There are two points—

1. That christians should carefully guard themselves against heart-trouble.

2. The proper cure of heart-trouble is faith.

Doct. 1. That christians should carefully guard themselves against heart-trouble.

I. What is this trouble of heart that is here spoken of? There is a twofold evil—natural evil, which is misery; and moral evil, and that

is sin. The one we act of our own accord, the other we suffer against our wills; the one ariseth from something within, the other from something without. This text speaketh not of troubles for sin, but of troubles in the flesh, which being many, and grievous to be borne, it cannot be supposed but that the heart will be touched with them: 2 Cor. iv. 8, 'We are troubled on every side.' Yet, 'let not your heart be troubled.'

A sense of them is not only lawful, but necessary. The two extremes must be both avoided, slighting and fainting: Heb. xii. 5, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' Without a sense of them they cannot be improved, neither do we show that reverence that is due to our Father's anger, as not to be afflicted and humbled under his mighty hand: Num. xii. 14, 'If her father had spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?' Some kind of spirits are stupid and senseless, neither affected with sin nor misery. Not with sin; though they provoke God to his very face with their continual brutish practices, yet they never lay their condition to heart; conscience is seared, or at least benumbed; they are 'past feeling,' Eph. iv. 19. Shall we say to these, 'Let not your hearts be troubled?' No; these usurp a peace and exemption from trouble, as if joy and comfort were their portion. The only way for such is to be troubled, that their trouble may prepare them for comfort. Christ came to save sinners, but they are penitent and broken-hearted sinners, that are weary and heavy-laden under the burden of sin: Mat. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' Not the heart that is whole, but the heart that is wounded. These he calleth, and calleth to repentance: Mat. ix. 13, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' Not with misery, neither with their Father's anger, nor their brethren's misery: Jer. v. 3, 'O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return;' Amos vi. 3, 'Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near.' Fall out what will, they set their hearts for ease and pleasure, and carnal delights, and are given altogether to mirth and jollity, riot and revelling, and all manner of vanity. Should we say to these, 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' and lull them more asleep in carnal security, by tincturing their sensuality with religion, and adding a drachm of spiritual comfort to make their carnal portion more effectual? No; Christ speaketh not to such kind of persons as mind neither his presence nor absence, and regard not whether he do good or evil. No; to such we must rather say, 'Be afflicted, and weep, and mourn; let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness,' James iv. 9. We call not upon them to rejoice, but to howl for the misery that is coming upon them. A sense there must be.

Quest. What is then dissuaded?

Ans. A perplexing oppressing trouble about sensible and worldly things.

Here I shall show you—(1.) The causes of this trouble; (2.) The nature of it.

First, The causes of this trouble, which are—

1. Carnal self-love, which is all for bodily ease and welfare, or the pleasures, and honours, or profits of the world. They that are under the power of it seek great things here, and the disappointment of their carnal expectations breedeth trouble. Solomon telleth us what was the result of his accurate and deep search into all worldly and human affairs: Eccles. i. 14, 'I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' He found all worldly things not only vain and ineffectual to confer happiness, but, which is worse, apt to bring much trouble and affliction upon the hearts of those who are too earnestly conversant about them. Therefore the best way to be free from trouble is to look for no great matters here in the world.

2. The life of sense, which only looketh to the present state of things, and if we have not all things which we affect under the view of sense, trouble filleth our hearts: Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.' There are two emphatical words, *πρὸς τὸ παρὸν*, 'for the present,' and *δοκεῖ*, 'seemeth;' they both intimate the causes of our trouble, present sense and false appearance. Of the latter I shall speak in the next head, the former is to our purpose now. All affliction is ungrateful to flesh and blood, and so cannot but be troublesome to us if we look only to the present; but then in the end it giveth us a full recompense for all our patience, namely, such an increase of grace as bringeth peace along with it.

3. Fancy, vain conceit, and false appearance; and so we are often troubled at what may afford joy. The sad point which the disciples could not digest was Christ's departure; yet our Lord telleth them how necessary it was for his own honour and their comfort. His honour: John xiv. 28, 'Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again to you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I.' If ye were kind to me, ye would have looked upon it with joy, because his going to the Father was the advancing him to a higher condition than that in which he was now; the ignominious cross was the way to dignity and honour. Again, it was for their comfort: John xvi. 7, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' They were full of sadness at the thought of his departure, as if it were their utter ruin and undoing; but the coming of the Holy Ghost would be of more advantage to them than his staying with them; it was for his glory and their benefit. Thus we often misinterpret God's dispensations; those hard trials which are ordered for our comfort and peace increase our troubles and perplexities. We judge according to appearance, and therefore do not judge righteous judgment; so we wound ourselves by our own fancies, and make our evils much worse than they are by our vain conceit.

All these concurred in the present case. They had dreams of sharing honours in Christ's kingdom, all which would be disappointed by his ignominious death; and they looked to the present face of things, and so could not see glory in this shame. And besides, they did quite mistake the dispensation.

Secondly, The nature of this trouble, wherein it consisteth in three things—(1.) A fear of danger, or evils to come; (2.) Sorrow for evils present; (3.) A fretting indignation or dislike of God's dispensations. It is distrust to be troubled about what is to come; despondency or uncomely dejection to be troubled about what is present; impatience and murmuring to dislike God's way of dealing. All these constitute that trouble of heart from which Christ dissuadeth his disciples.

1. There was fear in it of approaching dangers. Christ was to depart, and they were to be left to an unquiet world: John xiv. 27, 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' They were afraid what should befall themselves when their master and guide was gone, from whose direction and protection they promised themselves so much comfort and safety. Future things are to be left to God's providence. Every day that bringeth its cares and difficulties bringeth also its incident comforts: Mat. vi. 34, 'Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself: sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' We must not be over-solicitous about future contingencies, nor be anxious for that to-day which may be soon enough cared for to-morrow. But we usually anticipate our troubles, and make our present condition more grievous by bearing the charge and burden of the future also; and so by our cares and fears about futurity, oppress, and so both overwhelm ourselves, and take God's work out of his hands.

2. This trouble did arise from sorrow and immoderate dejection, because of the loss of Christ's bodily presence: John xvi. 6, 'Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your hearts.' Usually upon the loss or absence of some prized comfort we let loose the reins of our affections, and keep no moderation in our sorrow and grief, as if God could not supply the loss of the creature by the presence of his Spirit.

3. Indignation, or a fretting dislike of God's dispensations. That this was a part of the disciples' trouble appeareth from Christ's whole discourse with them. The bodily presence of Christ was comfortable to them upon a spiritual account, as they enjoyed many a sweet instruction by it; but they also looked for great things in the world, and were confounded with the disappointment of their expectations. The temporal kingdom ran in their minds, and therefore the news of his ignominious death was so afflictive to them. Our Lord taxeth them for this, but in a gentle condescending manner, that for want of faith and love they were so unsatisfied with God's design, which was so expedient and useful for them and the world. Now this is the usual ground of our troubles: we set up an anti-providence in our hearts, and obtrude some model and scheme of our own upon God, which if he doth not comply with, we are troubled. But God's way is more for our real good, though our own way suiteth better with our fancy and vain opinion.

II. Why christians should not let their hearts be troubled.

1. It is very incident to us. We have somewhat within us and without us which will always be an occasion of trouble. There is corruption within, and an evil world without. A believer is not to become a stock or stone, or cease to be a man; our flesh is not as the strength

of brass, nor are our sinews iron. Our Saviour himself was troubled: John xii. 27, 'Now is my soul troubled.' But his trouble was like the shaking of pure water in a crystal glass, there was no mud at bottom. Certainly it is lawful and requisite to be sensible, and to be affected with our condition; but we are apt to exceed in our fear and grief, and so it becometh a fault. There is a dejection and discouragement which cloggeth us in our duty, and causeth sinful negligence and deadness of heart; this is a distemper which we should oppose by all spiritual means.

2. This is contrary to our duty and obedience, which consisteth partly in a subjection to God's governing will, revealed in his laws; partly in a submission to his disposing will, discovered in his providence.

[1.] For the first. The case is clear there; if God hath forbidden cares and fears and immoderate sorrows; if he hath said, 'Be careful for nothing,' Phil. iv. 6; and 'Fear them not therefore,' Mat. x. 26; and ver. 28, 'Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul;' and again, 'Weep as if you wept not,' 1 Cor. vii. 30; and 'Mourn not as men without hope,' 1 Thes. iv. 13. But such is the goodness of our God, that he hath said all this and much more, and so made our comfort and cheerfulness a great part of our work, and hath made it unlawful for us to be miserable, and to pierce ourselves through with divers sorrows. The Lord foresaw what sinful anxiety was incident to us because of our difficulties and discouragements, and how we would be distracted in our duty if he should leave the burden of care and sorrow upon us; therefore he would only have us mindful of our duty, leaving all success and events to him. A small matter occasioneth much vexation of spirit to us when we take the care of it upon ourselves; therefore it is not only our privilege that we may, but our duty that we must, disburden ourselves of these distrustful fears and cares and sorrows. It is his peremptory command, which his people must not disobey, unless they will incur his displeasure.

[2.] A submission to his providence. He is absolute Lord, to dispose of our persons and conditions as it shall seem good in his sight; for he is our potter, and we are his clay: Isa. xlv. 9, 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker: let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that formeth it, What makest thou?' Therefore we must not be troubled when he exerciseth this his sovereignty: Job xxxiii. 13, 'Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not an account of any of his matters.' Who shall be judges and arbitrators to take the account of his proceedings? and before whom will you call him to render a reason of his actions? No; he ruleth with absolute dominion and sovereignty, but yet showeth himself a loving and tender Father to his people: Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth you have need of all these things.' The Lord will keep off dangers, provide everything needful, and is more solicitous for your well-being than you can be yourselves. There is a constant fatherly providence watching over his people for good; if we do believe it, why are our hearts troubled? Let our Father take his own way to bring his children to glory: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' That clause concerneth not only our final blessedness, but all the ways and means which conduce thereunto.

3. It is contrary to that peace, comfort, and happiness we might otherwise take in the rich provisions and preparations of grace which God hath made for us. It is said, Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.' It is a great point of sincerity to comfort ourselves with God's comforts, such as he alloweth to us, provideth for us, and worketh in us. Many careful troubles and perplexing thoughts are apt to arise in our minds in a time of danger. Now where is our ease and relief but in God's comforts? These will yield not only support, but delight; they have a power to revive and cheer the soul. All the business is to inquire what are God's comforts? The comforts of the gospel, such as result from the sense of our reconciliation with God: Rom. v. 11, 'Ye joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.' The pardon of our sins: Mat. ix. 2, 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.' Our adoption, or being taken into God's family: Heb. xii. 5, 'Ye have forgotten the exhortation that speaketh unto you as unto sons.' It cannot be otherwise with those that have a Father in heaven, but they may have some comfort; if not in the creature, yet in God; if not on earth, yet in heaven. Besides this, there is the hope of glory: Rom. v. 1, 2, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Sin hath woven calamity into our lives, and filled us with troubles, griefs, and fears; but God hath sent his Spirit, not only a sanctifier, but comforter, into our hearts, 'to fill us with all joy and peace in believing,' Rom. xv. 13. Now, shall God make all this provision for our comfort and we never the better? Luke xxiv. 38, 'Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?' Surely the comforting work of the Spirit should not be interrupted by us. It is our sin if these comforts be despised, our infelicity if they be not enjoyed, they being necessary for us, for our encouragement in the way of holiness, and to quicken our praise and thanksgiving, and raise our hearts in love to God.

Use. Let us all take heed then of the evil of a troubled and uncomfortable spirit. What shall we do to prevent it?

1. Something is pre-required, that a man be upon good terms with God: 1 Sam. xxx. 6, 'David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' He was in a great distress at that time; the city wherein he left his family, and the families of his followers, was taken and burnt, their wives and children carried away, and all gone; so that David and those that were with him lifted up their voices and wept till they had no more power to weep; and to make up the calamity, his soldiers were ready to stone him. In this desperate condition, David 'encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' So Ps. xlii. 11, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.' David speaketh this when he was deprived of ordinances and his constant recourse to God's solemn worship, which was a sad reflection to him; yet he rebuketh himself for being utterly cast down or immoderately disturbed; and why? Because he had some supports in the midst of all this sadness. 'God is the health of my countenance;'

and he did not despair but God would return in mercy to him, and he should find some way of escape, because God was his God. This is a stay to our drooping souls, that we be not too much dejected and disturbed, that God is our loving Father when we are under his sharpest chastisements. If God be ours in covenant with us, why should we be troubled? If you have consented that God shall be your God, your portion, and saviour, and sanctifier, there needeth no more for your comfort. Are you resolved of this?

2. See that your hearts be mortified to the world, and fixed on heavenly things. Whilst you have too great a value for worldly things, your hearts will be overwhelmed with griefs, and cares, and troubles. Our affections increase our afflictions: Job i. 22, 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly;' 1 Cor. vii. 30, 'And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;' 2 Cor. vi. 7, 'By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness, on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report;' Phil. iv. 12, 'I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.' A man must learn both lessons, or he learneth neither. The prevalency of any earthly love will always expose us to disquiets, and we should have more in God if we looked for less in the creature; but whilst we dote upon these things, we are more solicitous about getting or keeping, and troubled at the want or loss of them.

3. The great cure is in the text about the exercise of faith on God and Christ: 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Sense is the cause of trouble, faith of comfort. Christ, who is the true physician of souls, knoweth what cure is proper to the disease. Mountebanks would prescribe another cure, spare the flesh or feed men with carnal hopes. No; 'ye believe in God, believe also in me.' Though God should not prevent the evil feared, or remove the affliction, yet if we can believe, we are well enough. Faith represents more grounds of comfort than sense can of trouble, whilst it carrieth off the heart from things seen to things unseen, from things present to things future, from the creature to God, who can give better things than the world can give or take from us. Here are two objects of faith—God and Christ: 1 Cor. viii. 6, 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' One supreme God, from whom we derive all our graces, and to whom we direct all our services; and one mediator, by whom, as a golden pipe, all our mercies are conveyed to us, and by whom also we have access to God for all that we stand in need of.

4. Let us labour to keep our consciences pure, if we would not have our hearts troubled. Sin will bring on trouble, both inward and outward; for it is the cause of sufferings, and it maketh them more grievous; as we shall always walk in pain till the thorn be pulled out of our foot. Righteousness bringeth peace, and the oil of grace maketh way for the oil of gladness. The apostle bringeth this out of Melchisedeck's name and title, Heb. vii. 2, 'First being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is

king of peace.' Elsewhere the scripture doth attest it: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God;' and 2 Cor. i. 12, 'Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.' David interposeth a caution, Ps. lxxxv. 8, 'I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace unto his people and to his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.'

5. There are certain ordinances appointed to fortify us against soul-trouble. The word: Ps. cxix. 50, 'This is my comfort in mine affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.' There are the fixed grounds of that hope and comfort which will support and enliven us in the greatest pressures. God's covenant and promised mercies are portion enough, what distresses soever he sendeth. So prayer, if it be ingenuous thankful prayer: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' The Lord's supper, it is our *viaticum, non morientium*, not when we come to die. Papists think so, and therefore thrust the sacrament into the mouths of those that die; if this be neglected, they almost despair of their salvation; but it is *viaticum viventium* of those that live. Death is not a journey, but the end of a journey, a passage in a moment, a cessation from our journey in this world, which needeth no *viaticum*; a going out of the world, like the putting out of a lamp in a moment, as the lamp needeth no more oil when it is to be extinguished. We need this for our journey in the world, not our departure out of the world: Acts viii. 39, 'He went on his way rejoicing.' As it is our antidote against the corruption that is in the world through lust, so it is our cordial against the troubles of the world, to give us more joy of faith, more sense of God's love. It is the feast provided for the refreshing of the weary, and cherishing of the mournful soul.

SERMON II.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.—
JOHN XIV. 1.

DOCT. 2. One great means of easing our hearts from trouble is believing in God and Christ.

To evidence this, I shall consider—

1. The act.

2. The object, which is double—(1.) One part taken for granted, 'Ye believe in God;' (2.) The other part of the object they were now invited and recommended unto, 'Believe also in me.'

1. For the act. Faith in the general hath a comforting property, and a power to allay trouble. As here the disciples, being in trouble,

are exhorted by Christ to believe, that is, to renew their faith. David felt a blustering in his spirit, and how doth he allay the storm? Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God.' There is no such ready way to still unquiet thoughts as to set faith on work, and to cast anchor within the veil, hoping for and expecting relief from God. So the primitive christians, when they were under great heaviness in divers trials, how did they get any comfort to keep themselves alive? 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' A lively exercise of faith will bring in much joy to the soul in hard times and under sore trials, and not only keep it alive, as Hab. ii. 4, 'The just shall live by faith,' or make a believer not barely to subsist, but he fareth high, and liveth at a wonderful rate of comfort, such as is for nature and kind, though not degree, somewhat like the joy of the blessed. Look into the book of God, and you shall find that all our fears and troubles are for want of faith. As for instance, Peter, when he walked to Christ upon the waters, his feet never sunk till his faith failed: Mat. xiv. 31, 'O thou of little faith! wherefore didst thou doubt?' The wind was boisterous, but there was Christ at hand. He looketh at the wind too much, and at Christ too little, and therefore was full of fears, and began to sink. So the disciples were afraid to perish, though Christ himself were in the ship: Mat. viii. 26, 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' It is, Mark iv. 40, 'How is it that ye have no faith?' A little faith is as no faith in great trials. Well, then, there is no way to ease our hearts of trouble but by exercising faith. To make this more expressly to appear to you, I shall consider again what is trouble, the nature of it, and what are the causes of it, and then you will discern that faith is the proper remedy.

First, For the nature of this trouble. It consisteth—(1.) In a fear of danger; (2.) Sorrow for some disappointment in the creature; (3.) A fretting dislike of God's dispensations.

1. Fear is vanquished by faith. That appeareth by that opposition: Prov. xxix. 25, 'The fear of men bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be safe;' or, as it is in the Hebrew, 'shall be set on high.' There is no conquering either the allectives or terrors of sense, till faith represent something greater to be feared and loved: 1 John v. 4, 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' It much outweighs all temptations. What is a prison to hell, a fiery furnace to everlasting burnings, the creature to God, or the threatenings of men to the Lord's promises? Do but shut the eye of sense and open that of faith, and you will see that God is only worthy to be feared and trusted, and then the creature will be nothing to you; we shall comfortably do our duty, and not fear what man can do unto us. We have more encouragement to be faithful to Christ than the world can present allurements or affrightments to the contrary. If man be our enemy, and God be our help and second, what need we fear? Ps. xvi. 8, 'I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. God is set before us either in a way of reverence or in a way of dependance; either for seeing him in all our ways, making him our witness, approver, and judge, so it is an act of

holy fear; or as looking up to him as our helper and deliverer, so it is an act of faith and confidence. And he that thus often looketh to God is carried through all his fears and cares, and may easily despise all the frightful things in the world. Therefore why should your hearts be troubled? believe in God, and believe in Jesus Christ. It is a fault in christians to be immoderately fearful in times of trouble and danger. Faith puts itself under God's special protection upon a twofold persuasion of God's power and presence.

[1.] His power: God is greater than the creature, and all the terrors which sense can present to us from the creature: Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king; but if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.' If men bind, God can loose; if they threaten to kill, God can save.

[2.] His presence: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' The Lord will stand by his people, and deliver them, when it shall be for his glory. Now, till we come to this courage and constancy of mind, and fearlessness of men, we never have the generosity of christians.

2. Sorrow is vanquished by faith.

[1.] As it diverteth the heart from present things to future, and maketh things absent present, and recompenseth losses and disappointments in the world with the hope of greater things in the world to come. Faith showeth better things to be enjoyed: Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' Spoiling of your goods is either by violence or by fire and confiscation. It goeth near to the hearts of worldlings to part with their necessary and convenient earthly comforts; but to a believer it is more easy, for heaven is infinitely better and more precious than all the wealth of the world. If the world be our darling, or any created comfort be overvalued, it will fill our hearts with sorrow to be deprived of it. A christian, that hath heaven in hope and reversion, cannot be poor; he is richer than all worldly men, though God's providence hath given him little, or left him little.

[2.] The sting of present evils is removed by the pardon of sins and the sense of God's love. You are secured from death and wrath, and God in Christ is your father: Rom. v. 1-3, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also.' If his love be shed abroad in the heart, it is no great matter what we feel in the body. The venom of the affliction is the curse due for sin; that is gone when we have first made sure of our personal reconciliation with God and acceptance with him in Christ.

[3.] Not only is the venom gone, but every condition is useful, and hath a blessing in it to the godly. We know this by faith: Rom. viii.

28, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,' Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;' and ver. 25, 'I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.' Our wise and faithful God would not bring it upon us if he did not know how to make a good use of it. By this we may discern whether God chasten us in anger, yea or no, whether our crosses be curses. The cross which maketh thee better than thou wert, it cometh with a blessing, and as a blessing. It is not the sharpness of the affliction that we should look to, but the improvement. If it be improved, the bitter waters are made sweet; if we are more godly, wise, and religious. All God's dispensations to his people are good, and tend to good. Luther hath a saying, *Qui tribulantur sacras literas melius intelligunt, securi et fortunati eas legunt sicut Ovidii carmen*—Those that are in trouble understand the scriptures better; the secure and prosperous read them as a piece of Ovid. It maketh us more serious, keepeth us in a relish of spiritual things. While God is striking, we feel the grief, and would fain shift off the cross; but when we see the end, then we acknowledge it is good to be afflicted. If God write his law upon our hearts by his stripes upon our backs, and so light a trouble maketh way for so great a benefit, we should not grudge at it. Our happiness doth not consist in outward comforts, riches, health, honour, civil liberty, or comfortable relations, but in our acceptance with God and enjoyment of God. Good is to be determined by its respect to true happiness. Affliction therefore taketh nothing from our happiness, but addeth to it, as it increaseth grace and holiness, and so we are more approved of God, enjoy more of God.

3. Impatency at what is past, or a fretting dislike of God's dispensations. Now by faith we are persuaded both of the greatness and goodness of God, and so our murmuring is prevented.

[1.] Faith has an esteem of the greatness of God. God is too great to be questioned. The more we see the greatness and majesty of God, the more is our pride checked: Job xxxv. 5, 6, 'Look unto the heavens, and see, and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what dost thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him?' It is a swelling against God's sovereignty, that he should have the disposal of us at his pleasure. Hab. ii. 4, 'Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.' The lifting up of the heart is opposed to living by faith. The lifting up of the heart is a proud, murmuring, conceited disposition under trouble, taxing and censuring his proceedings; such a soul will make defection: Heb. x. 38, 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' Pride will not suffer the heart to submit to the will of God, and so scorneth to bear the cross of Christ. But now faith, that relieth upon God and his promises, suffereth God to take his own way, and that waiting upon God in his way is a sure path to a blessed issue. Pride is conceited of its own wisdom and power, as if we could secure ourselves better than by waiting upon God. Pride hath no opinion of God, or his dealings; but faith, which is an high esteem of God, referreth all to him.

[2.] Of the goodness of his conduct. Faith persuadeth us, with quietness and security, to cast ourselves into God's hands, who will guide all things well. Observe Christ's submission in his trouble: Mat. xxvi. 39, 'He prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;' And David's, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26, 'The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.' All discontents come from unbelief; we do not believe God's providence and fatherly care, but act as gentiles; nor his love in Christ; for if we did, we would let him alone to bring his children to heaven in his own way. Many times that is best for us which we do not think best for us. Peter was best pleased when upon Mount Tabor: Mat. xvii. 4, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.' But Christ had other work for him to do.

Secondly, The causes of trouble are removed by faith. As (1.) Self-love; (2.) The life of sense; and (3.) Fancy or vain conceit. A man that is governed by these, and is under the influence of these, will never be free from trouble. But now faith persuading us of the love of God in Christ, cureth our self-love: 1 John iv. 16, 'We have known and believed the love that God hath to us;' and showing us better things to come, weaneth us from present sense: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.' And depending upon the wisdom and care of God, referreth the choice of our condition to him, and the carving of our lot and portion, as it maketh most for his glory: Phil. i. 20, 'Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death;' whether by things adverse or prosperous, whether the way be fair or foul. In short, there are certain propositions and conclusions, which are absolutely necessary to exempt us from trouble; and carnal self-love, the life of sense, and fancy or vain conceit, will never submit to them, but are only granted by faith, are the results of faith.

1. That spiritual benefit doth abundantly recompense and make amends for the loss of temporal interests. If an healthy soul be in a sickly body: 3 John 2, 'I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.' If the inward man may be renewed, though the outward man perish: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' That a little faith discovered to be sound and saving is of more worth than the best gold upon earth: 1 Peter i. 7, 'That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.' If sore trials discover reality of grace, better undergo them than be without them; and we should esteem and prize these seasons of exercising and trying grace more than times of the quickest and greatest gain in the world. A little comfort in a trial should make up all the pain, shame, and loss that attendeth it. Now self-love, sense, and fancy will never subscribe to this.

2. That God will never leave us wholly destitute, or to difficulties

insupportable : 1 Cor. x. 13, ' God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Alas ! many times, in the eye of sense, they are left and see no helper.

3. That all the bitter of outward trials is nothing to the sweets of inward communion, which the soul hath or may have with God thereby : Heb. xii. 11, ' Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.'

4. That hope against hope, and patience above strength, is the truest life of faith, and never wanted a most comfortable issue : Rom. iv. 18, ' Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations ;' James v. 11, ' Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.'

5. That all the dispensations of God to his people, whatever harshness or hard aspect they have at first view, are yet stamped and marked with covenant mercy, love and faithfulness : Ps. xxv. 10, ' All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.' There is merciful and faithful dealing with him in every condition ; for all this is but God's way to make them partake of his promises.

6. That every condition is useful, and hath a blessing in it to the godly : Cant. iv. 16, ' Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' Out of what corner soever the wind bloweth, it is beneficial to Christ's garden, whether the bleak north wind, or hot south wind. The same Spirit sanctifieth afflictions who teacheth us how to serve God cheerfully in our prosperous condition. Whatever changes come upon us, a christian should be a christian still, and the savour of his spices should flow forth. The north and south wind be of contrary qualities, as cold and hot, moist and dry. The church needeth sometimes sharp rebukes, sometimes calm and gentle consolations.

7. That those things which seem to be for our temporal hurt do in the issue turn to our eternal good : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Carnal self-love, sense, and fancy are all for our temporal benefit, and would fain be rid of temporal evil ; but this would gratify our flesh, which feelth what pleaseth it for the present, and so be for our eternal ruin ; but faith owneth God's wisdom and gracious ordering, and can see an eternal benefit in a temporal loss. As a prudent sick man obeyeth his physician before his appetite and against his appetite, because he is persuaded of his skill and faithfulness, we trust God because he is wise and faithful, and taketh the best course with us, though if we consult with fancy and appetite, no such thing doth appear. Some afflictions fit us for glory, as they better our hearts ; others hasten our glory, as they shorten our lives. In the eye of faith, persecution is the nearest way to heaven, and the sword of the enemy is but the key to open the prison-doors, and let out the soul that hath long desired to be with Christ.

II. The object.

1. Much of the triumph of faith ariseth from its object : 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' The strength of the ivy lieth in the oak or tree about which it claspeth. Much comfort dependeth upon the act of faith, as it seeth things that cannot otherwise be seen, maketh things absent present, raiseth the heart above its present condition ; but most of the strength of faith is in its object. Other graces, their strength is more in the subject wherein they are seated, but faith and hope derive their strength from the object, because their nature lieth in adherence and expectation, and if this have not bottom enough to support it, all is vain.

2. Here is a double object propounded. And so, before we go deeper into the argument, we have the more advantages than if it were single and alone, for two is more than one. So Gen. xli. 32, 'For that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.' The object is doubled, that faith may be more full. This double prop for our faith should give us double strength in believing, when we have God to trust in and Christ to trust in. We that have sinned with both hands earnestly have a double ground of comfort and hope, the infinite mercy and power of God, and the infinite righteousness and everlasting redemption of a mediator. God alone is enough for our happiness ; there is in him abundantly more than enough to satisfy all the capacities of the creature ; but without a mediator, how shall we come to enjoy him ? Though there be a sufficiency in the object of our happiness, yet as to the means, something else besides this is requisite. If man had kept innocent, one object of faith had been enough, but to man fallen a mediator is necessary : and it is an unspeakable mercy that God hath given us his Son, that by Jesus Christ we may come to him : John iv. 6, 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' And, on the other side, by the mediator Jesus Christ we come to the Father : John xii. 44, 'He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.'

3. Respect to one of these objects is taken for granted, the other is expressly recommended to us. Why is faith in Christ especially required ? Partly upon a special, and partly upon a general reason.

[1.] The special reason was because their faith in Christ, as the promised Messiah, was not so well established as their faith in God. He was shortly to undergo ignominious sufferings, yea, death itself, which would tempt them to cast off the faith of his promises ; therefore, to fortify them against the scandal of his sufferings, he saith, 'Believe also in me.' They would be troubled if they looked only to appearance, and did not believe in him, or look upon him in that quality and relation in which God sent him and he came into the world : Luke xxiv. 21, 'We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel.' It saveth a great deal of trouble to be established in the present truths, and to understand what God is a-doing in our time. We should fortify our faith where it is likely to be most assaulted.

[2.] More general. Besides a faith in God, a faith is necessary which

closeth with and embraceth Christ as mediator: John vi. 29, 'This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.' He is sent of his Father to do us good, and authorised by God to exercise that office for us, and to us. Yea, we cannot believe in God unless we believe in Christ, for the distance between God and us is so great, that we cannot immediately converse with him, nor trust in him for any benefit, without a mediator: 2 Cor. iii. 4, 'Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.' So it is said, 1 Peter i. 21, 'Who by him do believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope may be in God.' God was offended with man, and is fully satisfied with the ransom paid for sinners by Jesus Christ; he is pacified towards all those that flee to him by Jesus Christ, so that poor penitent sinners may now come and rest upon him.

4. Faith seeth many grounds of comfort, yea, of complete and full satisfaction in this double object. What will content you if God and Christ will not content you?

[1.] Here is God to satisfy us. There is an infinite latitude in the object of faith, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with all their powers and capacities to do us good. No pain so great but he can mitigate or remove it; no danger so dreadful or so likely but he can prevent it; no misery so deep but he can deliver us from it; no enemies so strong but he can vanquish them; no want that he cannot supply: Gen. xvii. 1, 'The Lord appeared to Abraham, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' When we have a want that God cannot supply, or a sickness that God cannot cure, or a danger that he cannot prevent, or a misery that he cannot remove, or can produce any enemies or creatures that are too hard for God, then we have leave to yield to trouble and despondency of heart. Choose God as your portion and chief happiness, and you shall want nothing: Ps. xxiii. 6, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.' Surely could we more believe in God, our hearts would be more balanced and kept steady, not tossed up and down with various occurrences. Whatever falleth out, we have a God still to rejoice in and depend upon: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He supposeth himself not only in some necessity, but in extremity; not only kept bare, but reduced to nothing: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' You have all things in him.

[2.] Here is Christ as mediator. We have great advantage by that consideration.

(1.) Hereby we see God in our nature, and so near at hand, and ready to help us, and more accessible for us to come at, than as God considered in the mere deity: John i. 14, 'The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' God is come down, and become our neighbour, yea, like one of us, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Though he has removed his dwelling again into heaven, yet it is for our sakes; our nature is there, though our persons be not. He is sat down as our agent: Heb. viii. 1, 'We have such an high priest, who is sat on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens;' Heb. iv.

15, 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' God in our flesh will not be strange to us. We are bidden, Isa. lviii. 7, 'not to hide ourselves from our own flesh;' Gen. xxix. 14, 'And Laban said unto him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh; and he abode with him.'

(2.) In the mystery of redemption, all the divine persons put themselves in an order for our faith to take hold of. Faith may close with any one of the persons of the blessed Trinity, provided we divide not the divine essence in our thoughts; but in the mystery of redemption all is made obvious and handy to our faith; the Father considered as the fountain of the deity, to whom we come for grace and mercy; the second person clothed with our flesh, through whom we come; being assisted and enabled to come by the Holy Spirit, who is the third person: Eph. ii. 18, 'For through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father.' This is that full and satisfying object with which faith closeth when it acteth most distinctly. In the Father, there we see original love or original authority, and infinite free grace: John iii. 16, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.' In the Son, everlasting righteousness and redemption: Heb. ix. 12, 'Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.' In the Spirit, infinite virtue and power, for the applying of Christ's purchase; for he createth a new spirit in us, he createth the fruit of the lips, Peace, peace. It is God that must be satisfied, and by God must this satisfaction be made, and by him that is God must this satisfaction be applied, before we can have the comfort of it. You have all in one verse: 1 Peter i. 2, 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' So ver. 21, 22, 'Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God, seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.' In the Father we see elective love, in the Son there is full redemption, and by the Spirit effectual application. The Father appoints blessedness to us, the Son purchaseth it for us, and the Holy Ghost carrieth it on powerfully and invincibly. The salvation of poor sinners is a work wherein all the persons of the blessed Trinity are engaged, and do concur therein by a several distinct personal operation. Surely that is a noble work wherein such agents are employed; and our hearts must be raised to give equal glory to all the persons, knowingly, and distinctly, and explicitly; the Father out of his good pleasure electing sinners to grace and glory; the Son by his obedience and suffering purchasing the same for them; the Holy Ghost by his power working grace in them, and preparing them for that blessedness which the Father hath appointed, and Christ hath purchased for them.

(3.) In believing in Christ as mediator, our troubles are stopped at the fountain-head. It is not the wrath and fury of the creature, but the wrath of God, which maketh us miserable; and nothing can fully

comfort us if God be apprehended as an enemy, or not fully reconciled to us. Now 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. There was enmity stopped; God in our nature suffering for us, dying for us, and paying a full ransom for our sins; so that now all true believers may draw nigh to him as a reconciled God; for Christ hath merited favour for all those who come to God by him.

(4.) By believing in Christ as mediator we may be assured of his purchase of glory for us, which is the great cordial against all trouble whatsoever: 1 Thes. v. 9, 10, 'For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.' He biddeth them 'comfort one another with these words,' ver. 18. When a great judgment is a-coming upon men because of their sins, a believer is affliction-proof, because he hath secured his eternal interests by Christ. Here our Lord Jesus telleth them he was going to heaven to prepare a place for them. Whilst we flatter ourselves with temporal hopes, we lie open to a delusion and a disappointment. If we are kept alive, if we stand in the judgment, whether we sleep or wake, day and night, here is our comfort; other things must be left to God's will.

Use. Direction what to do in a time of troubles and dangers.

1. Hope of exemption from the trial is not that which Christ prescribeth, but minding of higher things. We are poor creatures, tainted with carnal self-love, and governed by fancy and appetite, and place all our hopes and happiness in having our supplies and supports under the view of sense, and in being free from trials. Now Christ referreth not to sense, which would gratify this humour, but to faith; 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' We love ourselves more than God, and the ease of the body more than the welfare of our souls, and the world more than heaven, and our temporal pleasure and contentment more than our spiritual and eternal benefit; we would have our consolation here. No; Christ referreth us to another cure, not to seek the ease of the flesh, but the sure repose of the soul; he referreth to the objects of faith, not the delights of sense. Spiritual peace is the best counter-balance for worldly trouble and bitterness: John xvi. 33, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good comfort, I have overcome the world.'

2. Those higher things which we should most regard are chiefly reconciliation with God and assured expectations of the heavenly rest. These are the two grand comforts which Christ insists upon in the sermon which ensueth the text. If we be reconciled to God, and have the pledge of it, the Spirit of God to dwell in us, and to sanctify and comfort us when dejected, it is enough: 'I will send the comforter,' ver. 26; and 'I am going to prepare a place for you,' ver. 2. These are Christ's two comforts. It doth not become a christian to be dejected in his troubles, but he must be sure his comforts come from spiritual grounds, from 'God's love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost,' Rom. v. 5, and from the hopes of heaven: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' These are God's comforts, and these give joy in tribulation.

3. There is no having these things till we have chosen God for our God and everlasting portion, and do make use of Christ as mediator. I put it into these notions, because the faith spoken of in the text is not a speculative assent, but a practical belief, and that lieth in a choice of God as our everlasting portion and happiness, and a coming to God by Christ: Heb. vii. 25, 'He is able also to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him.' The first step which the soul taketh towards heaven is the making God our chief good and last end; this goeth before faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for faith in Jesus Christ as mediator is but subordinate hereunto, as the means leading to our chief end. These two acts are the abridgement of the gospel: Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' Our act towards God is called repentance, because we have deviated from our happiness; we have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and till we grow wise, and change our course, we shall never return to it. Repentance is a considering of our ways after we had gone wrong, and so run ourselves into ruin and mischief. The second act is faith, because the things we believe are above nature. Jesus Christ's whole undertaking, birth, death, resurrection, ascension, the promises of the gospel, are above nature. God, and our duty to him, are in a great measure evident by natural light. It is supposed in the text men will easily believe in God; it is required that they believe in Christ; let us make use of him as the only means of our recovery, by his merit and efficacy reconciling us to God, and changing our hearts, reconciling us to God's grace, and restoring his image.

4. The advantages we have by God and Christ must be often thought of, for a serious consideration is the great help of faith: Heb. iii. 1, 'Consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.' Our knowledge is not operative but by lively and active thoughts: Heb. xii. 2, 'Looking unto Jesus.' God worketh by our thoughts: Ps. cxliv. 15, 'Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' As under the law they were to consider their happiness: Deut. iv. 7, 'For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?' So are we to consider of the great privileges of the gospel, God reconciled, and pardon and life bestowed on us in and through Christ.
