

## SERMON UPON 2 PETER III. 9.

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*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.—2 PETER iii. 9.*

THE apostle, in answer to the caviel and exception of the mockers of religion, is taking off the scandal of the delay of Christ's coming. Three considerations are produced to satisfy the godly—

1. The true measure of speed or delay is the eternity of God, which admits of no beginning, succession, and ending, but consists in a constant presentness to all that which to us seemeth past or to come ; and we must judge as he judgeth. This is laid down, ver. 8.

2. The end of this delay, which is the conversion of sinners. It proceedeth not from any culpable slackness in God, but only his patience towards the elect. God is not slack, but we hasty. Our temper requireth time and patience to work upon us, and bring us under the power of grace. This is in the text.

3. The manner of coming, which is sudden and unexpected, like the coming of a thief upon a sleepy family, ver. 10 ; therefore we should rather prepare for it than complain of slackness.

We are upon the second consideration. Wherein—

1. The false cause of this delay is removed, 'The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.'

2. The true cause assigned, 'But is long suffering to us-ward.'

3. The end of this long-suffering propounded—(1.) Negatively, 'Not willing that any should perish ;' (2.) Positively, 'But that all should come to repentance.' Wherein the way to escape ruin is intimated, which is repentance.

The only doubt is about the sense of the words, how that is to be understood, that God would not have any perish, but all come to repentance ; for we see many do yet perish, all do not come to repentance ; and is God frustrated of his end ?

*Ans.* To this doubt three answers are given, and all solid, though I prefer the two first.

1. The patience of God, according to its nature, hath that use and end, to invite all sinners to repentance : Rom. ii. 4, 'Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, not know-

ing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' God's continuing forfeited mercies, and tarrying the sinner's leisure, giveth us an hope that he is willing to be reconciled; and if we do not seek his favour, and turn to him by repentance, it is long of ourselves; the fault is our own, because we do not improve this hope.

2. The apostle in this place hath special reference to the elect, who are concerned more especially in the promise of Christ's coming, to put an end to their sufferings, and to render them an eternal reward. Certain it is that the apostle speaketh to christians, reckoneth himself in that number: 'Is long-suffering towards us.' Now all these are not born at once nor converted at once. If the judgment should be hastened, many of the elect would be found in their natural condition. Now God would have none of these to perish, but that all in their time should by congruous means be brought to repentance. All things are for the elect's sake; if their number were completed, time would be no more, and the present state of things would be dissolved.

3. The third answer is by distinguishing a twofold will in God. There is *voluntas signi* and *voluntas beneplaciti*. The will of his good pleasure, and his will declared by some sign, command, decree. The one concerneth our duty, the other the event. It is all men's duty to repent: 1 Tim. ii. 4, 'Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth.' Not as to the event: God doth not will it so as it shall fall out so; but this is their duty. His approving will is meant. Some scoff at this distinction, but the thing is as evident as daylight. It is one thing to will that this thing shall be or not be; another thing, this is good or evil; one respects existence, the other moral regulation. The one showeth what shall be, the other what should be; the one what God will do, the other what we should do. His command must be distinguished from his decree; some things are willed only by one, not both; as the selling of Joseph, the crucifying of Christ; God willed them *voluntate beneplaciti*, but not *signi*; he declared no such will as a rule to the creatures. Some things he willeth *voluntate signi*, not *beneplaciti*; as the conversion of all that live within the hearing of the gospel; he doth not purpose it in his decree. Sometimes he willeth the same things by both; as the conversion of the gentiles to the faith of Christ; God purposed it in his decree, and required it in the gospel. This is a truth applicable to other scriptures, and in part to this. But I stick to the former answers. By his secret and everlasting decree he chooseth whom he thinketh good, and appoints the preaching of the gospel, by which all are invited. God would not have any one to perish by his directive and approving will: Ezek. xxxiii. 11, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Turn ye,' &c. Yet will not have all to be saved, not all by his secret and appointing will.

*Doct.* The great end of God's continuing the world and the present state of things is to bring men to repentance.

I shall not handle curious questions, therefore I shall show you—  
(1.) What is repentance; (2.) That this is God's end in continuing the world and the present state of things; (3.) What encouragement there is from God's long-suffering to induce men to repentance.

I. What is repentance? It lieth in three things—

1. A sensible sight of sin and deserved wrath. There must be a sight of sin, for it is sinners only who are called to repentance: Mat. ix. 13, 'I came to call sinners to repentance.' Those who know themselves to be so and feel themselves to be so, these are most ready to correct their errors, and to unravel that web which they have been weaving for a snare to themselves. Others carry it as though they needed no repentance. And also a sight of wrath; for repentance is a flight from wrath, a turning from God angry to God reconciled; as appeareth by Mat. iii. 7, 'Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' Who will take care to run into his city of refuge who hath not an avenger of blood at his heels? Heb. vi. 18, 'That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' Therefore God's first work is to awaken the stupid and careless sinner, and to make him see his sinful and lost condition.

2. Such an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ as maketh them turn to him. The apprehension of God's mercy is the great inducement to repentance: Joel ii. 13, 'Turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful.' The former branch ariseth from apprehended future wrath, this from the hope of future mercy. Indeed there is a continued repentance which followeth pardon, a melting of heart and self-loathing, that floweth from felt love; as Luke vii. 47, 'The woman wept much because she loved much;' 'And she loved much because much was forgiven her;' Ezek. xvi. 63, 'That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more; because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God;' Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 'Then shall you remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations.' But the first repentance floweth not from felt received mercy, but from mercy hoped for: Acts ii. 38, 39, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children,' &c. A desire and love of the grace which we expect from God putteth us upon this repentance.

3. In a grieving for and forsaking of our sins, and giving up ourselves to his service. Grief for sin there will be; for, 2 Cor. vii. 10, 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of.' This is necessary to check the sensitive inclination, or the love of pleasure, which is the root of sin. Not only a grieving for, but a forsaking of our sins: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy.' It is but a brabble with sin, not a repentance, unless the love and power of it be weakened in the heart; and therefore repentance is not to be judged by the horror, the sorrow, the grief, but by the change it worketh in heart and life; if sin becometh hateful, if the person be humbled in himself, if he be brought to esteem of and put a price upon God's grace in Jesus Christ; if it be his constant care and study to please God, and he getteth some victory over the sins he repenteth of; and after all this, there is a devotedness to

God, or a living to his glory and service, called often in scripture a living to God, or a bringing forth fruit unto God.

II. That this is God's end in continuing the world and the present state of things. This I shall prove—

1. By removing false causes. To appearance there is a slackness. Whence cometh it?

[1.] It is not want of kindness, or backwardness to our good, that he doth delay our reward and the introduction of the everlasting estate. A man may defer and not be slack. He is slack who doth not come at the due and appointed time. The time is set, though unknown to us, and accordingly it shall be kept. God puts not off his coming, not an hour after the time: Heb. x. 37, out of Hab. ii. 3, 'Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' How much? how much? *ὅσον, ὅσον*. He will not stay a moment after the time appointed.

[2.] It is not ignorance, as not knowing the fittest time when to put a period to the course of the world or of our lives. That cannot be imagined, for his waiting is guided by judgment: Isa. xxx. 18, 'He waiteth that he may be gracious; for he is a God of judgment.' He delayeth till the fit time come of putting an end to the troubles of the faithful and the sins of the wicked; for he guideth all things with wisdom, and will take hold of the fittest season and occasion of putting his designs in action.

[3.] It is not from forgetfulness of his promise, 'For he is ever mindful of his holy covenant,' Ps. cxi. 5. He hath promised to come, to accomplish the deliverance of his own, and the punishment of the wicked, and he doth not forget what he hath promised.

[4.] Not from change of counsel; for he is Jehovah, that changeth not. Men change out of the mutability of their nature, or because they have not a due foresight of all possible difficulties; but, 1 Sam. xv. 29, 'The strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent.'

[5.] Not from impotency and weakness, as if he could not execute what he hath promised. That among men is the cause of delay. Men must do as they can. Sometimes they must be patient perforce; they want strength to punish when they have a just cause, and a good mind to it; as when David had a strong mind to punish and put Joab to death for the murdering of Abner, but Joab was too potent: 2 Sam. iii. 39, 'I am this day weak, though anointed king; and these men the sons of Zeruiah are too hard for me.' They had too strong a party in the army and among the soldiers. But this case is not incident to God, who is able to dissolve all things in an instant, at the beck and nod of his will.

2. By assignment of the true cause why the world and the present state of things is not dissolved.

[1.] Many that belong to the purposes of God's grace are not yet born and come into the world; and all things in the world are continued and preserved with a subserviency to God's decrees. This you shall find in that sometimes providences are shortened: Mat. xxiv. 22, 'For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened;' that the nation might not wholly be wasted and worn out, that they might not have

too great a trial. God had elect among them, whom he would preserve; the chosen among the Jews whom God would gather in the appointed time. But, on the contrary, here in the text, time is enlarged for their sakes. All particular providences wherein they are concerned are dispensed with this reference, Rom. viii. 28; and all that act under God are carried on with this encouragement. For the apostle saith, 2 Tim. ii. 10, 'Wherefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.' Surely the apostle knew what was his master's business, and for what end the gospel was to be preached, whatever became of the messengers: 'I endure all things for the elect's sake.' Providence being continued for their sakes, he was to continue his labours in the gospel, whatever entertainment he met with.

[2.] Many of them are not yet converted. They are as yet brands lying in the burning, hidden in the polluted mass of mankind, and God will draw them forth; for, John vi. 27, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' And God will draw them forth in a way suitable to his glory and their temper as men; which requireth time till they come to years of discretion, and pains to work upon their souls by commands, threatenings, and promises, and alluring motives, and sometimes disappointments in their worldly concerns; and every one of these multiplied one after another; and after many refusals of his renewed offers, and slighting means, they are at length gained and overcome by his powerful love.

Observe here two things—

(1.) That God gaineth the elect by the same means which are propounded to the reprobate. He dealeth in common with mankind in the external means, showing no more favour to the one than to the other. They both, it may be, live under the same ministry, yet one is taken and the other is left.

(2.) That it is long ere many of the elect are gained. They may withstand many a call, both from God's word and providence; but because it is nigh for the present, we cannot say that it will never be day. And then when they are gained, it requireth some time to bring them to that measure of grace that God hath intended to work in them, that he may fit them for glory, and we may grow into that perfect age which we are appointed unto in Christ: Eph. iv. 13, 'Till we all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' The edification of the body of Christ is a work that is still kept afoot, until all that are given to Christ of the Father be effectually called, and united with Christ the head, and every one of them attain to their full and perfect measure of spiritual growth; and so long the world endureth.

[3.] The wicked by this forbearance of God are rendered more inexcusable.

(1.) Because while they are in this life there is place for repentance. It is a great mercy that they are not presently cut off and destroyed, but that God giveth them opportunities of breaking off their sin by repentance: Rev. ii. 21, 'I gave her space to repent, and she repented not.' If God doth not suddenly execute judgment upon them, their crime is the greater. It was a favour not vouchsafed to the angels;

they were executed quickly : 2 Peter ii. 4, ' God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment.' The angels were the most glorious creatures, yet when they sinned against God they were presently *in termino*, in their final estate. Man is yet *in via*, in the way to a better estate. For God to batter to pieces vessels of gold, as soon as they had the least crack and flaw in them, and spare earthen vessels, this is the wonder of his mercy. Therefore it should be esteemed as a great favour and indulgence that he doth not presently thrust down sinners to hell as soon they do provoke him ; much more that he hath provided a remedy, and offereth pardon to them, and hath not secluded them from all possibility and hopes of recovery for ever.

(2.) God provideth great helps and means of repentance for them ; for he hath sent his messengers into all parts of the earth, and commanded every one to repent and prepare for the judgment : Acts xvii. 30, ' And the times of their ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day,' &c. ; so that the world now perisheth, for rejecting the means tending to recover them. The sins of the nations were not so great till God sent them the means. When the Lord giveth any people the means to repent, their sin is the more aggravated, and their judgment is the greater ; for the rejection of the means is a sin not only against our duty but our remedy, and a vile ingratitude and obstinacy, which hath no cloak and colour of excuse. For though men have an impotency of nature, and cannot convert themselves without the internal efficacy and power of the Holy Ghost, yet the impotency of nature doth not necessitate men to wallow in a course of sin against the light of conscience, and to put away the means by which they might be reformed.

III. What encouragement there is from God's long-suffering to induce men to repentance. And—

1. God's forbearance, and continuing of some grace to us, possesseth all men's minds with this apprehension, that he is gracious, merciful, willing to be reconciled, if we will but accept of terms agreeable to his glory and our good. Therefore it is said that ' the goodness of God leadeth to repentance,' Rom. ii. 4 ; for wherefore should he defer vengeance, and forbear so long to punish thy sinful course, but only that thou mayest bethink thyself and make thy peace ? He could destroy thee in an instant ; and why doth he not, but to see if thou wilt yet repent, and love him, and serve him ? If a man were under a sentence of death, and the execution were delayed and put off from day to day, would not he think it were a fit time to interpose by supplication, and obtain his pardon ? Surely we should gather the like conclusion, and make supplication to our judge.

2. The encouragement is the greater, that we have not only time and life, but many mercies, forfeited mercies, continued to us ; such as food, raiment, friends, house, liberties, health, peace. What do all these do but invite us to God ? For whosoever hath the heart of a man would be thankful to his benefactor. Yea, the very beasts express a gratitude in their kind to them that feed them : Isa. i. 3, ' The ox

knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib.' The dullest of the brute beasts will take notice of such as feed them and make much of them, and shall not we take notice of God, and be obsequious to him, from whom we have received all our supplies, our Lord and owner, who hath fed us and most kindly entreated us? Hosea xi. 4, 'I drew them with the cords of a man, the bands of love.' Unless we renounce humanity, we cannot but look upon ourselves as having strong bands upon us, obliging us to duty and mindfulness of God.

3. These mercies do not harden in their own nature, but merely by the sinner's abuse of them; for in their own nature they have a fitness and tendency to recover men to the love and service of God, but through our abuse they become snares, and entangle us in the service of the flesh. In the creature there is something good to lead us up to God, who is the first and chief good; something imperfect, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, to drive us off from itself. Is there anything comfortable in the creature? Whence came it? who put it there? Common mercies point to their author, if we would recollect ourselves, and receive them with thanksgiving. Is there vanity and vexation in it? why is it, but that the creatures may not detain us from God, that we may not sit on the threshold when we may come before the throne? Our great fault is loving the creature above the Creator. Now the creature is embittered, and is an occasion of so much vexation and trouble, that we may not rest in itself. All the good that is in the creature is an image of that perfect good which is in God. Now, who would leave the substance to follow the shadow? As if a virgin wooed should fall in love with the messengers of a great king, and despise the person himself. There is a sweetness in these things mixed with imperfection; the sweetness to draw us to God, the imperfection to drive us off from the creatures, to make us look higher. They do as it were say to us, We cannot satisfy you; you must seek for happiness in that God that made us and you. Now men are inexcusable if, after all this, they forsake God for the creature: Jer. ii. 13, 'My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'

4. God hath provided a remedy for us by Christ, whereby he would astonishingly oblige men to seek after his own salvation: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' There is love to the world in it; there is man-kindness in it: Titus iii. 4, 'After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.' A propitiation for the whole world: 1 John ii. 2, 'He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.' Here is a sufficient foundation for this truth, that whosoever believeth shall be saved. If, after all this, man shall be negligent, vain, careless, unmindful of his misery or remedy, his own conscience will bear witness against him that the cause of his sin and the hindrance of his recovery is from himself, and from his own obstinacy and impenitency: Hosea xiii. 9, 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy hope.' God is not to be blamed for our destruction; it is of our own procuring. There was help in God, but they would not accept it.

5. Affected scruples whether this be intended to us, are a sin, and do not disoblige us from our duty. They are a sin, because secret things do not belong to us, but the open declarations of God concerning our duty : Deut. xxix. 29, 'Secret things belong unto the Lord ; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children.' Let us perform our duty, and the secret purposes of God will be no bar and hindrance to us. To betray a known duty by a scruple is the part of an erring and deceitful heart. God may do what he pleaseth, but we must do what he hath commanded. This is the only true principle that will enable us to carry our work through to the last.

6. God hath appointed means, which during the time of his patience are liberally vouchsafed to us ; and we being commanded to use these means in order to our recovery, should lie at the pool and wait for mercy. If we refuse the helps and the means, our condemnation is just ; we even pass it upon ourselves : Acts xiii. 46, 'Since ye put away the word of God from you, ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life ;' and become incapable and unworthy of any benefit by the gospel. The giving of these manifold helps and means on God's part showeth a great hopefulness of success, and such as may encourage us cheerfully to perform our duty, and carry it through with the expectation of a blessing ; but the refusal of these helps and means on our part showeth we are intractable and disobedient, and perish by our own obstinacy.

7. Because common mercies are our ruin, and our table a snare, and our welfare a trap, and the ease and 'prosperity of fools slayeth them,' Prov. i. 32 ; therefore God warneth us of danger of the abuse of these mercies, telleth us of the corruption that is in the world through lust, commandeth us and entreateth us to use them better, and to remember him who giveth us comfortably and richly to enjoy these things, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18 ; sometimes taketh them out of our hands, as a father would do a sharp knife out of the hands of a child ; prayeth us that we will not love a perishing world, and forsake our own mercies ; that we will not hazard eternal things for trifles. And after all these warnings, who is to blame ?

8. God doth not presently give over dealing with the despisers of his grace, or those that reject or neglect his blessed offers, but doth defer punishment, draw out his patience towards them to the fullest length. He yet tarrieth longer, to see if yet they will be in a better mind : 1 Peter iii. 10, 'The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.' If, after all this, we be disobedient and incorrigible, what place is fit for us but the prison of hell ?

*Use 1.* It showeth how cross to God's design they act who delay repentance because God delayeth vengeance : Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.' Men are apt to do so, partly because they measure things by present sense. If it be not ill with them for the present, they think to-morrow shall be as yesterday. Partly because they think they shall have time enough to repent at last, and so can be contented that God be longer dishonoured, provided that they at length may repent and be saved ; though God delayeth that you may take the season, not let it slip. Partly because



they abuse God's patience to atheism; either denying providence, saying, 'The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil,' Zeph. i. 12; as if God had forgotten the care of the world; or else think that God approveth their sin because they continue in health, peace, and prosperity: Ps. l. 21, 'These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest,' &c.; and so grow sensual and secure, and their hearts more hard and impenitent, because God spareth them. This is to 'turn the grace of God into wantonness,' and to 'treasure up wrath,' Rom. ii. 5. But though God bear long, he will not bear always. The chimney long foul and not swept taketh fire at length: Ps. lxxviii. 21, 'But he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of every one that goeth on in sin.' Forbearance is not remission. Sentence is past (John iii. 18, 'He that believeth not is condemned already'), though not executed: Eccles. viii. 11, 'Because sentence is not speedily executed,' &c. God may give sinners a long day, but reckoneth with them at last: Rom. ix. 22, 'What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?' There is suffering, long-suffering, and much long-suffering; yet all this while fitted for destruction. When you have but a little space given you, will you frolic it away in sins and carnal pleasures? God is 'bending his bow, whetting his sword, if they turn not; he is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. vii. 11, 12; and at length his anger will break out if they turn not.

*Use 2.* What reason all of us have to bless God for his forbearance and long-suffering, and to acknowledge it as a great mercy; for his long-suffering tendeth to repentance, either the beginning or the perfecting of it. Now this mercy is the more enhanced when we consider—

1. What we have done against God. A good man cannot tell how often he offendeth: Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors?' Ps. xl. 12, 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about; they are more than the hairs of my head.' God's people have cause to wonder at his patience, as well as others.

2. What is the desert of sin in the general: Rom. vi. 23, 'The wages of sin is death.'

3. The instances of those who have been taken away in their sins. Zimri and Cosbi unloaded their lives and their lusts together. Lot's wife in her looking back was turned into a pillar of salt: Luke xvii. 32, 'Remember Lot's wife;' a lasting monument of rebellion against God. Gehazi blasted with leprosy. Korah, Dathan and Abiram, the earth swallowed them.

4. With how much ease God can do the like to you: 1 Sam. xxiv. 19, 'If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?' when he has a fair opportunity to satisfy his wrath. God can easily do this: Job vi. 9, 'That he would loose his hand and cut me off.' With one beck of his will he can turn us into our first nothing.

5. With how much justice and honour he might have taken us away long since, and have shut us up in chains of darkness, for a monument to the careless world! Sometimes God maketh instances in every table: Rom. i. 18, 'The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.' In every law, both by way of omission

and commission. Why might not I have served for one of these instances?’

6. How many mercies have been vouchsafed to you in the time of God's long-suffering? The mercies of daily providence: Ps. lxxviii. 19, ‘Who loadeth us daily with his benefits.’ Especially deliverances out of imminent dangers, when you were snatched as a ‘brand out of the burning,’ Amos iv. 11; and preserved in a general destruction: Lam. iii. 22, ‘It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.’ Or when some disease hath been upon you, that you thought you should have gone down to the chambers of death: Ps. lxxviii. 38, ‘He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not;’ that is, he respited his vengeance. It is a kind of a pardon when God remitteth some measure of the deserved punishment: so far as any part of the punishment is remitted, so far is the same pardoned. Sometimes God seemeth to put the bond in suit, but spareth upon our intercession. Now this should be taken notice of, and notably improved. A man is sick, afraid to be damned, but he recovers again. Now, though it be not a total pardon, we cannot say it is none at all; for God took such a one out of the jaws of hell for that time. So Mat. xviii. 32, the debt was forgiven, yet required afterwards: the meaning is, he was spared for the present; he did not obtain that full pardon which amounteth to justification, yet he was recovered out of sickness, misery, and apparent danger, and that upon his cry to God.

7. If you are continued till you have some experience of the grace of Christ, then much more have you cause to bless God for his long-suffering. How ill would it have been for your souls if you had died in your sins! God may say to you, as he did to his people, Isa. xliiii. 24, 25, ‘Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.’ If God had been quick with us, where should we have been? We are of an hot and eager nature, cannot bear affronts or spiteful usage: Luke ix. 54, ‘Lord, wilt thou that we call for fire from heaven to consume them, as did Elias?’ This was James and John, beloved disciples, *ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότεροι*. The fury of rash zeal appeared in the best, even in the disciple of love; but God does not deal so with us.

Use 3. To exhort to repentance. If a malefactor arraigned at the bar of justice should perceive by any speech, or word, or gesture, sign, or token, any inclination in the judge to mercy, how would he work upon that advantage to get a reprieve and the execution put off! So should we improve God's forbearance and long-suffering to sue out a pardon.