

SERMON UPON ACTS XXIV. 25.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled: and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.—Acts xxiv. 25.

In this chapter you have—(1.) The story of Paul's accusation by Tertullus; (2.) Paul's defence; (3.) The event, Felix's humanity to Paul; where three things are observable—

1. He deferred the business: ver. 22, 'When Felix heard those things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias, the chief captain, shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter;' that is, understanding the affairs of christians better than they were represented to him by Tertullus, having governed the province jointly with Cumanus for a while, and afterwards being sole governor himself, he well understood the difference between the Jews and christians as to the external state of the controversy; that is the meaning of 'having more perfect knowledge of that way.' Not that he knew or accurately understood the tenor of christian doctrine, but that he well knew how hardly and unjustly the christians were handled by the Jews. He knew that Christ and christians were not guilty of sedition against the Roman commonwealth, but that Christ was delivered to Pilate out of mere envy; that the christian religion was confirmed by notable miracles; that those that professed christianity were eminent above all other sects of the Jews for great modesty and piety, nor so prone to raise mutinies and troubles as the rest of the Jews. This he knew, and this moved him to show some favour to Paul, by putting off the Jews, under a pretence to speak further with the chief captain, Lysias. Which teacheth us that the religion and innocency of the primitive christians was such, that in some measure it got them favour in the sight of heathens. Christians are holy chiefly for this end, that they may please God and save their souls; but yet this is one motive by which they are quickened to holy conversation and godliness, that they may give no occasion to the enemies to blaspheme, but rather may have a good report among them which are without, and so invite them to a love of the truth and ways of God: 1 Peter ii. 12, 'Having your conversation honest among the gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day

of visitation;’ Col. iv. 5, ‘Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time;’ 1 Thes. iv. 11, 12, ‘That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, as you are commanded; that you may walk honestly towards them that are without, and that you may have lack of nothing.’ Those that by scandals do hinder other men’s salvation can hardly be certain of their own.

2. He gave Paul more liberty: ver. 23, ‘And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come to him.’ Though he kept him yet in bonds, yet he was not a close prisoner, but had liberty of conversing with his friends. Where learn—

[1.] When afflictions are not wholly taken away, yet it is a mercy to have a mitigation. Paul, from his closer restraint, had his condition enlarged, and God gave him some more liberty, though not a full deliverance. Christ himself, though he could not obtain that the cup should pass away, yet was comforted and supported by an angel, Luke xxii. 42, 43. So Paul, in another case, had grace sufficient for him, though the messenger of Satan that buffeted him was not taken away, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Thus God often sweeteneth our afflictions when he doth not remove them, and remembereth mercy in the midst of judgment.

[2.] Observe, ‘He should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come to him;’ which showeth the kindness of christians one to another, in affording mutual help and comfort in their necessities and afflictions: ‘He should forbid *μηδένα τῶν ἰδίων*, none of his own,’ *i.e.*, of his own company, ‘to come to him;’ as Acts iv. 23, ‘They went *πρὸς τοὺς ἰδίους*, unto their own company.’

3. The third office of humanity and kindness from Felix to Paul was, that he was desirous to hear him preach: ver. 24, ‘After certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ;’ that is, of the christian religion. This Drusilla was the sister of Herod Agrippa, who killed James and imprisoned Peter, Acts xii. In histories she is said to have deserted her husband, the king of the Emisens, and to have lived uncleanly with Felix. Now, being a Jewess by religion, she had not only sinned against the law by marrying an uncircumcised person, or a worshipper of a strange god: Mal. ii. 11, ‘Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god;’ but also by deserting her husband after she had married him, and living in adultery, rather than a true and proper marriage with Felix. So that here are two evil persons, and yet they are willing to hear Paul preach concerning the faith in Christ. Wicked people may desire to hear the word out of curiosity; so Herod heard John, Mark vi. 20; but they come not with an intent to believe, and do the things given them in charge.

In the text you have the issue and effect of this sermon: ‘And as he reasoned of righteousness,’ &c.

In the words we have an account—

[1.] Of the matter of Paul’s sermon.

[2.] The effect and fruit of it.—(1.) ‘Felix trembled;’ (2.) Delayed, and put it off, ‘Go thy way,’ &c.

I. The matter.

1. In general, it was concerning faith in Christ, or the christian religion.

2. In particular, three heads are mentioned, ‘Righteousness, temperance, judgment to come.’ He made choice of these heads as plainest and easiest to be understood, and as a proper and suitable argument; for Felix was publicly stained with vices contrary to these virtues. He was brother of Pallas, and one well known to the emperor Claudius. He was in his magistracy very unjust, acquiring great riches by bribes; Tacitus reporteth him infamous for this. And he and Drusilla were intemperate and incontinent, living in adultery, and he using her as a wife, who was another man’s. Paul was not ignorant of this. We must not shoot at rovers, but aim at a certain mark in our ministry. A physician that cometh to cure doth not use at adventure one remedy for all diseases, but medicines proper to the malady of the patient. The method of converting sinners requireth this, to show what men must be that may stand in the judgment, holy, just, and temperate.

II. The effect and fruit on Felix’s part. Of Drusilla there is nothing spoken. She being a Jewess, this doctrine was not new and strange to her; but having heard it often, is not moved by it through hardness of heart. But of Felix we read two things—

1. His trembling, *ἐμφοβος γενόμενος*; he is all in an agony, made up all of fear.

2. His delay and put off, ‘Go thy way.’ It is a civil denial and baffle put upon conscience. Conviction not improved usually makes a man turn devil. He might have cast him into irons, but he rageth not. It fared worse with Jonathan the high priest (as Josephus telleth us) when he had reprov’d Felix for his injustice and bribery. He sent assassins to murder him, who, mingling themselves with his servants, and making a broil in his family, killed him, so that the principal author and designer of the murder was not known. It fared better with Paul—(1.) Partly from the force of the present conviction; it was so strong that he could not gainsay, but only seeketh to elude the importunity of it by the dream of a more convenient season. (2.) Partly from some mixture of his sin: ver. 26, ‘He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul,’ *ἄμα δὲ καὶ ἐλπίζων*. The text in the Greek joineth his fear and avarice together; being afraid, he bids Paul depart, but hoped also that money should have been given. This expecting a gift, as it obstructed his conviction, so it broke his rage, and therefore he useth Paul the more civilly.

Doct. That a carnal man may be deeply affected with the christian doctrine, even to great agonies of conscience, and yet finally miscarry.

This is evident in the instance of Felix, who trembled, but yet delayed, shaketh off the force of Paul’s sermon by a pretence of business, and continueth in his sin; for after this he expecteth a bribe, and because that came not, to pleasure the Jews he left Paul in bonds.

1. I shall speak of the nature of this trembling or agony of conscience which is here ascribed to Felix.

2. The cause of it, God’s word, in the general; and in particular, the doctrine of the last judgment.

3. The effects and fruit, how it doth or may come to nothing.

I. What is this trembling ascribed to Felix? Trembling at the word of God is made a fruit and effect of special grace: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.' And Ezra, attempting a reformation, gathered to him all that trembled at the words of the Lord God of Israel, Ezra x. 3.

I answer—We must distinguish of a fear sanctifying and a fear only awakening for a time; of a fear that is a grace, and a fear that is only a pang of conscience. A fear sanctifying is such a sense of our danger as stirreth up in us a constant serious care to avoid the wrath of God and please him. So it is said, Prov. xvi. 6, 'By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.' This fear is a grace, an habitual disposition of soul, which is spoken of in the places alleged. The fear only awakening is such a sense of our danger as doth only trouble us for the present, but doth not put us upon the right way to remedy the evil we are convinced of: Eph. v. 14, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' The awakening is a mercy, especially if we are not only awakened from our drowsy fits, but we arise from the dead. If we forsake the way of destruction, and betake ourselves to the service of God, we are safe.

Many wicked men are shrewdly shaken by the preaching of the word for a while; they are a little awakened out of their drowsy fits, and begin to fear and tremble; yet they return to them again, and sleep the sleep of death, till in the day of judgment the books of conscience be opened, and then they everlastingly awake with terrors, and never sleep more. If they could as sweetly sleep in their sins in hell as they do now upon earth, wrath to come would not be so terrible and tormenting a thing to them.

The differences between this sensible work and holy trembling at God's word are these—

1. Holy fear is a voluntary act, and excited in them by faith and love; by faith, believing God's threatening; by love, which is troubled at the offence done to God: 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27, 'Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord.' Josiah was active in this trembling and humiliation. But this is an involuntary impression, arising from the spirit of bondage, and irresistible conviction, which for a while puts them in the stocks of conscience; but they seek to enlarge themselves as soon as they can.

2. They differ in the ground or formal reason of this trouble, agony, and consternation of spirit. To be troubled for the offence done to God is a good sign, but to be troubled merely for the punishment due to us is the guise of hypocrites. Esau was troubled, for he sought the blessing with tears when he had lost it, Heb. xii. 17. But how was he troubled? *Non quia vendiderat, sed quia perdiderat*—because he had lost the birthright, which was his misery; not because he had sold it, which was his sin. So all wicked men, saith Austin, *non peccare metuumt, sed ardere*; they do not fear to sin; their hearts are in secret love and

league with their lusts, but they are afraid to be damned ; it is not God's displeasure they care for, but their own safety : ' The young man went away sad, and was grieved, for he had great possessions,' Mark x. 22 ; because he could not reconcile his covetous mind with Christ's institutes. So Felix trembled, being convinced of sins which he was loath to discontinue and break off.

3. They differ in their effects. Many men tremble at the word of God coming in upon their hearts with power, but this awakening worketh diversely. Sometimes to a solicitous anxiousness about the way of salvation, and then it is good ; as those, Acts ii. 37, ' And when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do ? ' That was a kindly work, to desire to be further instructed and directed into the way of life and peace. Sometimes to rage : Acts vii. 54, ' When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth ; ' they were vexed at the galling truths which Stephen delivered, and the conviction that was upon them kindled their rage against him. Sometimes it produceth nothing but dilatory excuses, as here in Felix : ' Go thy way for this time ; when I have a more convenient season, I will send for thee.'

II. The cause of this trouble and agony was the word ; wherein the matter and the manner is considerable.

1. The matter is to be considered both generally and particularly.

[1.] Generally, the word of God, or the doctrine of faith in Christ. It hath a convincing power. (1.) Partly because of its author ; the impress of God is upon it ; it partaketh of his properties : Heb. iv. 12, 13, ' For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart ; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' God searcheth the heart, and the word searcheth the heart. God is powerful, and his word is powerful, in discovering a sinner to himself, and bringing a sinner out of his lurking holes, and taking off all disguises. (2.) Partly because of its clearness and evidence to a natural conscience, if it be not strangely stupefied and blinded by fleshly lusts : 2 Cor. iv. 2-4, ' By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' This scripture showeth that the gospel is light, which will discover itself if men do not shut their eyes ; and if men refuse the converting power, they cannot withstand the convincing power of it ; for the work of bringing home souls to God lieth more with their lusts than with their consciences. (3.) And chiefly because of the concomitant blessing. God hath appointed the word to be the great instrument of convincing and converting the world, and doth accompany it with his grace and Spirit, sometimes to one effect, sometimes to another. To convincing : John xvi. 8, the Spirit shall ' convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.' If it

doth no more, it shall leave them under a conviction of the truth. Sometimes to conversion ; as 2 Cor. iv. 6, ' God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' God concurrerth with his own ordinance by his omnipotent and creating power.

[2.] Particularly the day of judgment is to be insisted upon in our ministry. The apostles, in planting the faith, observeth this point of wisdom, to insist much upon the judgment-day: Acts x. 42, 43, ' And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead ; and to him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.' This was the great point which his chosen witnesses were to insist upon. So also Acts xvii. 30, 31, ' But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' The apostles observed the tempers of those they dealt with ; when with the brutish multitude, they invite them by arguments of providence: Acts xiv. 15-17, ' Sirs, why do ye these things ? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are therein ; who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways ; nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' When with the learned, he speaks of the first cause and chief good : Acts xvii. 28, ' For in him we live, move, and have our being ;' and binds all by his coming to judgment, ver. 31. So he deals with Felix here ; he urges principles of known equity and sobriety, from the day of judgment. See also 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, ' For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether good or evil. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' This was their great and powerful argument.

Reasons.

(1.) Because this made their access into the hearts and consciences of men more easy, because of its suitableness to natural light. That man is God's creature, and therefore his subject, is evident by reasons drawn from our dependence on the first cause and fountain of all being. That man hath failed in his subjection to his creator and Lord is evident by daily experience ; that therefore God may call him to an account, and man should fear his wrath, is a principle as evident as the former, and justified by the guilty fears incident to mankind because of their offences : Rom. i. 32, ' Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' Divine justice must once publicly appear, and rectify the disorders of the world. Now because of the sentiments of nature, the doctrine of the final judgment doth easily enter into the thoughts and consciences of men.

(2.) This doth most befriend the great discovery of the gospel, which is justification by Christ and pardon of sin, by submitting to his instruction. If he be our judge, we ought to take the law from his mouth, and put ourselves into his hands, to be guided and ordered by him, that we may find favour in that day. This is evident; every one would seek to be approved by his judge; and that Christ is our judge is evident by his resurrection; and his doctrine alone, with any probability of reason, pretendeth to the reparation of mankind, and to set them in joint again, that they may live to God. Let men have but the sense of a judgment to come soundly laid up in their hearts and consciences, and they can have no rest while they keep off from the gospel.

(3.) This doth best solve the doubts about present providence. Paul doth not teach Felix that the christian religion doth make any difference between the just and unjust as to their outward condition in the world, or between the temperate and intemperate. No; for the just may be oppressed and the unjust thrive, or else Felix had never been in power; and as for the temperate, their religion would make them miserable while they deny the desires of the flesh. No; here 'there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; and there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous,' Eccles. viii. 4. But there is a judgment to come, wherein every man shall be judged according to what he hath done in this life; all men must appear and receive their doom, and some go into everlasting life, others into everlasting punishment.

2. The manner is to be considered. The word must be closely and prudently applied; for here is both a close and prudent application.

[1.] Close. He discourseth of virtues opposite to the vices wherewith this man was blemished. The word hath force of itself, yet managed with dexterity, as a dart that falleth by its own weight, it will pierce; but especially when feathered, and directed and cast by a skilful hand, and levelled at the mark: 'This is Jesus, whom ye have crucified. And when they heard that, they were pricked at the heart,' Acts ii. 36, 37. Not when they saw the miracle, not while the doctrine was delivered. In the doctrine delivered we do but bend the bow; in application we let fly the arrow and shoot at the mark. A clap of thunder when distant doth not startle me, but when it is in my own zenith.

[2.] Prudent. Paul is here an example of prudence as well as of faithfulness. When he spake to Felix and Drusilla, he doth not charge them with intemperance, or unchastity, or injustice; but discourseth of justice and temperance, that by that which is right they might understand that which is crooked, and from the rule know their own enormity. He lays the looking-glass before their eyes, and lets them see themselves, and behold their natural face in a glass.

III. The effect or fruit, how it doth or may come to nothing.

1. Through the levity of man, whose pangs of devotion are soon spent. The righteousness of the hypocrite is compared to the morning clouds and the early dews, Hosea vi. 4; the righteousness of the upright to the morning light, Prov. iv. 18.

2. Their addictedness to their lusts, which is greater than their

affection to religion : Luke viii. 14, ' And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.' Sentiments of religion die away through cares of the world or voluptuous living.

3. Their unskillfulness in handling wounds of conscience. Some think they are never wounded enough ; but it is not the deepness of the wound, but the soundness of cure that is to be regarded. Some heal their wounds slightly, a palliate cure ; they skin it over when it festereth within. Others dissemble it till it proveth deadly. Others run to a worldly cure, as if soul-thirst could be quenched at the next ditch, or an evil spirit could be cured by music. Some by a clatter and din of business put off that which they do not put away : Amos vi. 3, ' Ye put away the evil day.' Cain, in anguish of conscience, fell abuilding of cities.

4. Want of God's grace : Acts xvi. 14, ' And a certain woman named Lydia, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened.' Which is forfeited by the party who hath common helps and advantages. Some put away the word : Acts xiii. 46, ' It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo ! we turn to the gentiles.' Some put away trouble of conscience : Gen. vi. 3, ' My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh.' Some lose their tastes and relishes of christian doctrine, and relapse into a carnal savour : Heb. vi. 3, 4, ' For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them to repentance.'

Use 1. Information. We learn divers profitable lessons from hence.

1. The power of the word. Here is a notable instance of it, if we consider the person who trembled. Felix—(1.) By religion a pagan, who did not believe the gospel. The devils believe and tremble, and the word worketh effectually in them that believe ; but here an infidel is fain to stoop to the evidence of it, and at the same time it breaketh upon his heart and mind so far as to make him afraid. (2.) By his quality, a judge. The prisoner maketh the judge tremble. Outward distance and disadvantages should not discourage us ; our testimony rightly managed may alarm the consciences of those who are ready to condemn us. (3.) By his disposition ; not a devout man, but a man hardened in a course of sinning. We should despair of none. God can find his way into the consciences of the most sensual. (4.) For his outward condition, a man glutted with worldly happiness ; yet the thoughts of the other world will soon sour all the prosperity of the present life. (5.) For his temper now ; he sent for Paul out of curiosity, to satisfy his Jewish wife or minion ; but God can make use of man's sins to glorify himself and his truth. This power of the word, this convincing power, should be often thought of ; they that feel it not, fear it : John iii. 20, ' For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.'

2. The profitableness of insisting upon the last judgment, that we

may persuade you, and you may suffer yourselves to be persuaded. It is the great awe-bond to beget in us a sense of our duty and sin; for (1.) It is an impartial judgment, that must pass upon all, high or low, rich or poor: Rev. xx. 12, 'And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' Outward friend or foe, heathen or christian, officer or private person: 1 Peter i. 17, 'And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his work.' (2.) It is a strict and just judgment: Acts xvii. 31, 'He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness.' Now God winks at many faults, ver. 30. (3.) It is our final doom; our eternal estate dependeth on it; we must be judged to everlasting joy or everlasting torment. (4.) It is near and sure: 'For the judge standeth before the door,' James v. 9. Every week, day, hour, minute, we approach nearer to it.

3. The soreness of a bad conscience, and upon what unsound terms it is with God. Felix is set a trembling by Paul; Belshazzar's edge taken off in the midst of his carousing: Dan. v. 6, 'Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.' So true is that, Heb. ii. 15, 'Who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'

4. The necessity of a strict obedience. We should carry ourselves so that the word may comfort us, not make us afraid; discharging our duties to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves: Titus ii. 12, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' Paul mentioneth here two parts, as suiting to his purpose, but there are three—'Godly,' the chief part of which is to seek our reconciliation with God by Christ, then to love him and delight in him, and serve him faithfully, doing his will, seeking his glory. 'Righteously,' that we may be just to our neighbour, doing to others as we would be dealt with ourselves. 'Soberly;' sobriety and temperance lieth in self-government, that he possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, keep himself unspotted from the world, subdue the flesh, that it may not wax wanton, that the heart be not hardened, nor conscience stupefied, and so become incapable of spiritual things, and so still crucify the flesh, and inure the mind to heavenly things.

5. The sottishness of them who are not moved so far as Felix was, who hear of righteousness, temperance, judgment to come, and are not a whit moved.

Object. But you will say, Our hearts are established by grace, why should we be afraid of the future judgment? I answer—

1. To be only moved with fear and terror is slavish.

2. You should have a deep reverence of his majesty, and so be afraid to displease him.

3. You must distinguish between a perplexing distrustful fear and an holy, preventive, eschewing fear.

4. There are great reasons why this fear should have an influence upon us while we dwell in flesh—(1.) Because the wrath of God was

once our due; (2.) We still deserve it; (3.) It is certainly a great and extreme difficulty to get free from so great an evil. [See the Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 11.]

Use 2. Caution, which is double—

1. Do not lose the advantage of this common work, but when the waters are stirred, put in for a cure. It may be lost—(1.) Partly by delays or dreams of a more convenient season. The sinner's morrow will never come; delay is but a plausible denial; the sinner's *non vacat* is *non placet*: Luke xiv. 18, 'And they all with one consent began to make excuse.' (2.) Partly by disobedience or relapses into our old crimes; so Felix returned to his bribery and licentious course. Therefore let us open our hearts to Christ's knocking.

Reasons. (1.) It is very dangerous. None so bad as those that quench these convictions. The Holy Ghost by the power of the word setteth them a trembling many times at the thoughts of their condition, and they have some kind of mind to let sin go, but it cometh to nothing. Iron often heated and often quenched is the more hard; the parts are more united and condensed; as water heated in cold weather, being more rarefied, freezeth the faster: Prov. xxix. 1, 'He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.'

(2.) You lose your season, the time wherein God will be found. There is a twofold season—the time of God's grace, and our capacity. (1.) The time of God's grace. God the Father's time is while he waiteth: 1 Peter iii. 20, 'When once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.' The Son's time is when the gospel offers are made to us: 'To-day, if you will hear his voice,' Heb. iii. 7; 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2, 'We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain; for he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.' The Spirit's season is the time of the motions of his Spirit: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man;' Acts vii. 5, 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.' (2.) The time of our capacity. When conscience is awakened, the word is most likely to make an impression upon us, as when the wax is hot it will receive the impression of the seal.

2. Do not rest in a common work, that you hear the word, and are some way affected, Herod rejoiced, Felix trembled. God hath never our hearts till he hath gained our love as well as our fear. Felix trembled; God gained upon his fear; but he never hath our hearts till he hath our delight, and such a delight as is not controlled by other delights, when I love him above all, and rejoice in his word more than in all riches.