

## SERMON UPON MICAH VI. 5.<sup>1</sup>

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*O my people ! remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal ; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.—*  
MICAH VI. 5.

THESE words are a part of God's plea against Israel for their ingratitude in departing from their obedience to him. Their backsliding had raised an evil report upon God, as if he were harsh and severe, and had not dealt well with them ; therefore God justifieth his providence ; what injury had he done to them ? wherein had he wearied them ? what had they to lay to his charge ? ver. 3, ' O my people ! what have I done to thee ? and wherein have I wearied thee ? Testify against me.' The matter concerneth us, for the general sin of this nation is, that we are grown weary of God ; but we have as little reason as they had. Injuries he had done none to them, but, on the contrary, vouchsafed many rare and singular favours. He instanceth first in his redeeming them from Egypt, where they were dealt with as slaves and bondsmen : ver. 4, ' For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants.' Surely a deliverance from spiritual or temporal bondage should be an eternal bond upon us to be for God. The second instance is his conduct of them in the wilderness under Moses and Aaron : ver. 4, ' And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.' When God giveth a people such governors both in church and state, who do not only adhere to true religion, but countenance it in others, yea, set their whole heart to propagate it, it is a great mercy, not to be forgotten. The third instance is that in the text, his bringing them into Canaan, notwithstanding the designs to root them out by the way : ' O my people ! remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted,' &c.

In which words—

1. Observe the matter, what is recommended to their remembrance, in two things—

[1.] The plot betwixt Balak and Balaam.

[2.] The many good things that fell out between Shittim and Gilgal.

2. The end why it is recommended to their remembrance, ' That ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

First, For the matter.

[1.] The plot between Balak and Balaam.

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[1.] What Balak consulted ; how to ruin Israel, and bereave them of God's favour and protection. Therefore he sent for Balaam to curse them, hoping that by this wizard's enchantments and predictions the matter would be easy.

[2.] What Balaam answered—(1.) Somewhat by way of prophecy ; (2.) Somewhat by way of counsel. (1*st.*) By way of prophecy, he found that to curse Israel was a fruitless endeavour, and God overruled his tongue to bless them ; (2*d.*) By way of counsel, he persuaded Balak to feast them, to induce them to idolatry and fornication.

2. The second part of the matter which is commended to their remembrance is, what happened between Shittim and Gilgal. Shittim was the place where they went astray after Baal-peor, Num. xxv. 1, and the place where they did abide until after Moses' death ; and from whence Joshua removed them to Jordan, where they passed over to Gilgal, and there the Lord renewed his covenant with them by circumcision, Josh. v. 2. Therefore the Lord willeth his people here to remember the things that befell them from Shittim to Gilgal. What these things were may be seen by the history following—(1.) Though many warped, and committed such heinous whoredoms with Baal-peor, the state and body of the church was still preserved ; (2.) That God led them on dry foot through Jordan, and at length brought them into Canaan, the land of promise ; (3.) There anew confirmeth his covenant with them ; and (4.) The slaying of Balaam, their pernicious enemy, in the interval between their going from Shittim to Gilgal : Num. xxxi. 8, 'Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.'

Secondly, The end, 'That ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.' It implieth here both his mercy and his fidelity. His mercy, which strove with their wickedness, and overcame their evil with his goodness. His faithfulness, in keeping his covenant and his promises ; for though some of the people did perish for that they fell into this wickedness with Baal-peor, yet those that cleaved to the Lord remained alive. This was just as they were entering into the promised land.

*Doct.* That old mercies, especially national mercies, should not be forgotten, that we may know God's uprightness in keeping his covenant and gracious promises.

1. I shall give you an account of this instance of mercy which the text offereth.

2. What observations may be thence deduced.

3. Why such kind of mercies should not be forgotten.

*First,* To give an account of this instance of mercy in the text.

1. What Balak consulted. Let us state his design ; for this plot that he laid was most dangerous and wicked, and the most likely to obtain his desire ; for if he could have obtained from God a curse upon Israel, he might soon have vanquished them. There are many ways which the devil's instruments take to mischief religion. Sometimes by fomenting and promoting divisions among themselves, that they may first ruin one another, and then become a prey to their common adversaries : Gal. v. 15, 'If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.' It beginneth in caluminating and defaming one another, and then within a while it

breaks out into open feuds, and that breedeth mischief and persecution. The devil hath a hand in all this, and many times his instruments, as Sanballat and Tobiah set up a party among the Jews to weaken their hands in the work, Neh. vi. Sometimes by sowing divisions between them and their rulers. The devil knoweth what an advantage it is to religion to have the countenance of princes, and, on the other side, how jealous they are of their authority and prerogatives; therefore by his instruments he seeketh to prejudice and prepossess them against those that profess religion in strictness and power. Thus 'Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam, the king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel, and the land is not able to bear all his words,' Amos vii. 10; as if he had enticed the people from their duty, and made them enemies to his authority; and this by clancular insinuation, when Amos was neither called nor heard. So Saul against David: 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, 'Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?' So Haman against the Jews: Esther iii. 8, 'There is a people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.' Thus whisperers make princes conceive an ill opinion of religious men. But the devil will soar an higher flight yet, to divide between them and God, and to disengage him from the protection of his people. What else is the meaning of all his temptations? But most eminently this was the plot now in hand. The Israelites could not be overcome as long as God was with them, and how shall they do to get away God from them? God was not, as the gods of the heathens, to be called out by sacrifices and enchantments; as they used, before they warred against any people, to endeavour by certain charms and rites to get away their tutelary gods from them. Macrobius hath a chapter *De ritu evocandi deos*; and if they conquered any country, they ascribed it to the departure of their gods. *Excessere omnes, adytis arisque relictis, dii quibus imperium hoc steterat.* Balak, according to the custom of the nations, would try this; but they were now to deal with the God of Israel, who could not be charmed away from his people. And though Balaam was of great repute and esteem among that people, and though it was misery enough to be blasted with his curse, and happiness enough to be blessed by his mouth: Num. xxii. 6, 'He whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed indeed;' even as Simon Magus was esteemed the 'great power of God,' Acts viii. 10; yet this would not take effect. Therefore—

2. Let us see what Balaam answered him.

[1.] By way of prediction. He came to curse them, but he uttereth many prophecies concerning the happiness of Israel: Num. xxiii. 8, 'How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed, or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied?' He showeth that no inferior power is able to hurt without leave from God; yea, he pronounceth a great blessing upon Israel, as those that were happy both in life and death: ver. 10, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.' And further showeth the stableness of God's

love to his people : ver. 19, 20, ' God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ? Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.' All the powers of the world are not able to separate them from his love and blessings in Christ. And then prophesieth of Christ, insomuch that Balak entreateth him to give over : ver. 25, ' Neither curse them at all, nor bless them at all.' Since he could do no evil to Israel, he would hinder him from doing good. But yet he would make another trial ; but still it pleased the Lord to overrule his tongue to bless Israel, and the truth and constancy of his love appeared, against whose will the more he struggleth the stronger he is resisted, Num. xxiv. 3. He taketh up a new parable, blessing Israel once again, which puts Balak all into a rage and indignation, and he driveth away the false prophet from his sight, who sought after honour and riches as the wages of his unrighteousness, but is sent home with ignominy and shame. But Balaam's mind is still hankering after the reward, and therefore, when he could not hurt them by any prophetic curse, he seeketh to do it by his pestilent counsel.

[2.] What he answered him by way of advice : Num. xxiv. 4, ' Come now, and I will advertise thee what thou shalt do.' Moses doth not express the counsel given, because it was whispered secretly into Balak's ear ; you see the sense is imperfect in that place ; and what it was may be known by the effect, and by other places. By the effect, Num. xxv. Balaam gave counsel to Balak and the princes of Midian to put a stumbling-block before the Israelites, to see if they could withdraw the people from the love, fear, and obedience of the Lord their God, that so God might be provoked to withdraw his favour and blessing from them ; and so Israel's sinning might bring themselves into the curse which Balaam with all his enchantments could not bring upon them. By this wicked counsel they prevailed against many, to the death of twenty-four thousand Israelites. That Balaam was the author of all this mischief appeareth, Num. xxxi. 16, ' Behold these (that is, the Midianitish women) caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor.' And it is said, Rev. ii. 14, that ' Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication.' This was the plot, to send some beautiful women of the Midianites to wander about the camp of Israel, to tempt their lusty youth and martial men, first to uncleanness, and then to idolatry, that so God might be provoked against them ; a design pernicious and full of refined malice.

3. What befell them between Shittim and Gilgal.

[1.] In Shittim they miscarried foully by the effect of Balaam's counsel. The intended war of Moab against Israel was turned into a pretended peace and feigned amity, and their fair women were sent about the camp to defile the bodies and souls of men with whoredom and idolatry. And so a people that had such experience of God's power and goodness in the wilderness, and were just now ready to enter into the promised land, are here prevented and overthrown in

the wilderness, and God's anger was kindled against them, and twenty-four thousand were destroyed among the people, Num. xxv. 9. It seems one thousand slain by the judges, and twenty-three thousand by God's own hand; that is, by a plague: 1 Cor. x. 8, 'Neither commit fornication, as some of them also committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.' But after that God was atoned to them, and his judgment was executed upon the malefactors, and the plague ceased.

[2.] They are sent against the Midianites, who had vexed them with their wives, that is, with their deceits and feigned amity; and there they light on Balaam, and slew him, Num. xxxi. 8. This wretch died not the death of the righteous, as he seemed to desire; but his iniquity found him out, for, among others, he was slain with the sword.

[3.] After this God appears among them again, and they are led into Canaan with a miracle; an argument of a great favour on God's part, and an awe of those things that befell them at Shittim; and now they are very tender of provoking God again: Josh. xxii. 17, 'Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day?' They had tasted of the bitter waters.

[4.] God's covenant is renewed at Gilgal, to show that he would still be their God, and bless them as formerly, Josh. v. 2, 3.

*Secondly,* The observations that may be hence deduced. For certainly it was a special act of God's mere love: Deut. xxiii. 4, 5, 'They hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor to curse thee; nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken to Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee.' So Josh. xxiv. 9, 10, 'And Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose, and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: but I would not hearken to Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand.'

1. That wicked men cannot hurt the godly but when God permiteth: Gen. xxxi. 7, 'Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God suffered him not to hurt me.' So Laban saith, ver. 29, 'It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of your fathers spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.' God hath the power of blessing and cursing in his own hand, however men are disposed. The king sought by all means possible and devisable to bring God's curse upon them, but God changed it into a glorious blessing. Men's hearts are not in their own hands, and if they find their hearts, success is not at their command. God disappointed the plots and practice of Balak and Balaam. Balaam returned as he came, and could not curse Israel, but denounced woes against their enemies.

2. That God can protect us against the fraud as well as the violence of enemies. The devil assaults us with wiles and darts, Eph. vi. 11, 16; so do his instruments assault us; they vex us with their wiles, and pursue us with their open hostility and persecution; but we may trust God with our safety. A remedy may possibly be prepared against violence, when no man by his own foresight can find out all the snares laid for him. But this is the comfort of God's people, that nothing is

hidden from God. He is wise, and he is watchful; wise to foresee the draught of his own providence: Ps. xxxvii. 12, 13, 'The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth: the Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that the day is coming.' And as God is wise, so he is watchful: Ps. cxxi. 4, 'He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' God is privy to their most secret designs.

3. That God's providence is especially interested when the design is to corrupt religion. Balaam was right in pronouncing blessings on the children of Israel whilst they kept true to their religion; but his advice was to feast and entertain Israel kindly, to induce them to forsake their God, and then the Lord interposed, and defeated this malicious purpose. Many times God doth that for the sake of religion which a people that profess religion deserve not: Isa. iv. 5, 'And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Sion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for upon all the glory shall be a defence.' Particular persons fell by those wars, but religion was secured and kept safe.

4. That God can make our very enemies befriend us. Thus he overruled the heart of Balaam to bless Israel and curse their enemies: Prov. xvi. 7, 'When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.' It is a proverb, not a promise, and must be interpreted that God can if he will, and oftentimes doth it for the most part; for proverbs are taken from what is usual and common. Thus he made the keeper of the prison kind to Joseph: Gen. xxxix. 21, 'The Lord was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.' And Laban was smoothed by the way when he pursued after Jacob: Gen. xxxi. 29, 'The God of your fathers spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.' And Esau was kind to him when Jacob feared him: Gen. xxxiii. 4, 'He ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him.' But above all, take the instance of the text. Balaam came contrary to God's warning, having an eager desire after the reward; his hostile mind continued still, yet he blesseth instead of cursing, by the overruling power of God. God hath several ways to accomplish this; either by bridling their rage, or putting convictions on their consciences, or changing their hearts, or determining their interests. It cannot be imagined but that the Creator is able to rule his creature one way or other; therefore we should cease from man, who is not sovereign master of his own affections. When all is thoroughly considered, God will be found to be the most desirable friend and dreadful adversary.

5. That we cannot lie open to the plots and snares of those that hate us till we have provoked our shadow and defence to depart from us; for till there was an apostasy from the truth and the right ways of God, Balaam with all his wiles could have no advantage against Israel. Balaam's counsel did more hurt than his curse. When we once contemn God's law, and turn to the wicked, we forfeit our protection, both against open violence and secret machinations. Many things are contrived against us in the dark that we know not and see not; but God watcheth for us: Isa. viii. 10, 'Take counsel together, and

it shall come to nought, speak the word, and it shall not stand ; for God is with us.' Keep God with you, and you are safe. All the plots of the enemies were to separate between them and God ; do not gratify them herein.

6. Observe God's just judgments on violent and fraudulent enemies. Balak and Balaam designed a mischief against Israel, but it fell upon their own pates. Balak lost a considerable part of his territories, which was allotted as a portion to the tribe of Reuben ; Balaam was slain by the sword. And thus it usually falls out in the course of God's providence : Ps. vii. 15, 16, 'He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.' They are taken in the pit they digged for others ; their treacherous desigus and attempts return upon themselves, to their own destruction ; as iron, when it is overheated in the fire, burneth their fingers which hold it ; or like an arrow shot up against heaven, it cometh down most piercingly upon their own heads : they are taken in their own pit, poisoned in their own cup ; so that in the issue it appeareth they laid a snare for themselves ; all is converted to their own ruin.

7. That God's mercy is not wholly made void to his people, notwithstanding their many sins and failings. He spareth some though he punisheth others, and remembereth his covenant when our sins deserve it should be broken off. Alas ! whosoever readeth the carriage of this people in the wilderness towards God, he shall still find grace striving with sin, and the goodness of God overcoming the evil of man, and his fidelity prevailing above their unthankfulness and unfaithfulness. And the character of this people in the wilderness is just our own in travelling to heaven. How often do we forfeit the blessing of God's presence ! But he is not severe upon every failing, and upon repentance he is willing to renew covenant with us, and set us in joint again. Nothing hurteth us more than the sinful provocations of God's people. Have no hand in them, or if you have been accessory to public guilt, bemoan it, and humble yourselves before God, and be more awful and tender for the future, and you will find God to be a merciful God.

*Thirdly,* Why such kind of mercies should not be forgotten. Here I will prove—

1. That man is apt to forget the great mercies of God, especially national mercies.

2. That yet these mercies should not be forgotten, both because of God's command, and the profit of remembering them.

1. That man is marvellous apt to forget these benefits ; therefore there are so many cautions that we forget them not. In private mercies : Ps. ciii. 2, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits ;' Deut. viii. 11, 'Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day ;' and ver. 14, 'That thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.' So we have many precepts : Deut. viii. 2, 'Thou shalt remember all the way

which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years ;' 1 Chron. xvi. 12, 'Remember his marvellous works which he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.' And so many charges and complaints : Judges viii. 34, 'The children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies on every side ;' Ps. lxxviii. 11, 'They forgot his works and his wonders that he had showed them ;' and Ps. cvi. 13, 'They soon forgot his works.' And all this is no more than needeth ; for man's memory is a bad friend to benefits. Injuries are written in marble, but benefits in the water. Now, as these cautions, charges, and accusations do respect all mercies, so especially more eminent mercies ; for it is said, 'He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered,' Ps. cxi. 4. The great miraculous works of his providence should make such impression upon men as never to be forgotten, but recorded and reported for ever. As for great deliverances, God hath appointed ordinances for a memorial, such as the passover, or the Lord's supper, to remember our redemption by Christ ; for by these works God maketh himself a name, by doing great things for his people, 2 Sam. vii. 23. Redemption from the tyranny of antichrist is not to be forgotten.

2. That yet these mercies should not be forgotten, partly because God hath commanded the contrary, as we have seen. It is not only a sin to forget his word, but his works ; and partly also because of the profit.

[1.] That we may be more deeply possessed of the goodness of God. The ear doth not affect the heart so much as the eye, and what is felt leaveth a greater impression upon us than what is talked of, for experience giveth us a more intimate perception of things. The king of Syria said, 'We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings,' 1 Kings xx. 31. A rumour and report giveth encouragement, but actual experience silenceth all contradiction. When I can say, I know God is not unmindful of his people, but relieveth them in their great straits, and watcheth over their welfare. As the apostle : Acts x. 34, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons ;' Ps. cxl. 12, 'I know that the Lord will maintain the right of the poor, and the cause of the afflicted.' Unquestionably God will undertake the patronage of his distressed servants when all other hopes fail them ; meaning, when God did signally defend them and watch over them.

[2.] To encourage us to walk in his ways. It is our forgetfulness of God's goodness that maketh us so disobedient and unthankful to him : Ps. lxxviii. 7, 'That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.' Nothing breedeth a careful uniform obedience to his commands so much as a grateful remembrance of his mercies. Alas ! as our thankfulness is abated, so is our obedience. God's authority sways the conscience, but God's love inclines the heart. Therefore mercies should be remembered.

[3.] To fortify us against all oppositions and temptations : Deut. vii. 18, 'Thou shalt not be afraid of them, but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh and unto all Egypt.' It is



a great comfort to faith to look back upon the former manifestations of God's power and good-will towards his people. We have manifold fears and infirmities upon us when we see the power or suspect the craft of our enemies; but let us remember former experiences, and that will be an allay to them. When we see the continuance of his judgments so many years, and in so many forms frequently varied, but still lying upon us, we are filled with many sad thoughts and reasonings of unbelief; but we may soon suppress and silence them by the thoughts of God's power and love heretofore, and the evidences of his love and good-will and fidelity to all that depend upon him. Former dealings raise our hearts to the expectation of future mercies.

*Use.* To press us to this remembrance—

1. Of the great christian mercies that concern the whole commonwealth of believers; such as the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, and intercession of the Lord Jesus. These are the standing dishes at a believer's table, the constant food for our faith, mercies never out of season; these are mercies so general and beneficial, that they should never be forgotten, but remembered before God. We should always bless God for Jesus Christ, and desire that the knowledge of these things may be perpetuated to after ages: Eph. iii. 21, 'Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

2. For national mercies, so far as they concern either the first planting or the restoring of Christ's religion, or the maintenance of it against the eminent open attempts or secret plots of antichristian adversaries. These should be remembered by us; partly to awaken our zeal, that religion thus owned may not die upon our hands; partly to show our esteem both of the religion and the mercy of God in owning it; partly that we may beg the continuance of it, for every thanksgiving is an implicit prayer; partly that we may embolden ourselves against all the difficulties we may be exposed to in owning the true profession, and depend on the same God still, and continue faithful to him.

3. Old personal mercies; though we have new ones daily, yet they must not jostle out the old. David saith, Ps. ciii. 2, 'Forget not all his benefits.'

[1.] The smallest mercy should not be despised, partly because they all come from a great God. A small remembrance from a prince or potentate we esteem as a great favour; why not from God much more? Ps. cxiii. 6, 'Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.' But the invisible hand that reacheth out our mercies to us is little noted or observed, partly because they come from the same love the great ones do. You see all along in the 136th Psalm, 'For his mercy endureth for ever;' ver. 25, 'Who giveth food to all flesh, for his mercy endureth for ever.' Daily bread as well as those mighty wonders flow from the same mercy. Nothing should be small where nothing is deserved. And partly because he that is not faithful in a little will not be faithful in much; as in point of sin, he that doth not make conscience of small sins, will fall into greater. The lesser commands are a rail about the greater; so a constant neglect of mercies breedeth a senseless stupidity.

But whose memory is so vast as to carry all matters away with it?

*Answer*—There is an habitual remembrance and an actual commemoration.

(1.) An habitual remembrance is necessary as to all God's acts of mercy, not only of the more eminent and signal providences, but of every day's kindnesses. This habitual remembrance is caused by taking notice of mercies as they come to us, that by observation of the multitude of them we may be possessed with an higher esteem of God's never-failing compassions, and may love him more, and serve him better. Every experience is as fuel added to the fire, as it increaseth our love to God, and our trust and dependence upon him.

(2.) An actual commemoration is impossible as to every single mercy; it would require that we should live over as long again as we have done in the world, for God's mercies may be reckoned by the minutes of our lives.

[2.] In the more eminent passages of our lives, as much as may be we should be more express and particular; for particulars are more affective, such as are awakening opportunities, deliverances in great dangers and fears, or notable mercies vouchsafed. God helpeth weak eyes, that cannot see his goodness in a lesser print, by a greater, when he sets forth his love, power, and goodness in a larger character. To neglect or forget these showeth that we will little mind the dealings of God. In short, if we cannot recall the single acts, recollect the sorts of mercies; as painters, when they draw a crowd, paint a cluster of heads. We cannot reckon up all the mercies of God in order: Ps. xl. 5, 'Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-wards, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' If we do not always actually remember, yet still cherish an habitual remembrance, or a constant sense of the Lord's goodness to us; this will help us against our distrustful fears: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 'And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.' David's former experiences were a great relief to him. So against discontent and murmuring: Job ii. 10, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not evil?' This will be a check to sin: Ezra ix. 13, 14, 'And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such deliverance as this, should we again break thy commandments?' And a strong impulsion to obedience: Josh. xxiv. 31, 'And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel.'

*Directions.* 1. Be affected with mercies if you would remember them; for deep affections leave a print upon us which cannot easily be defaced; men remember what they care for.

2. But the special way to remember them is to improve them, to grow better for them, to increase in faith, love, and obedience; then christians will remember them by a good token. If you let them pass as common accidents, no wonder the impression such providences make is soon worn off. A man that hath well profited by a sermon

will not easily forget it : Ps. cxix. 93, 'I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.'

3. You should often call yourselves to an account : Ps. cxxxix. 17, 'How precious are thy thoughts to me, O Lord! how great is the sum of them!' By the thoughts of God he meaneth the various dispensations of his providence. The variety of mercies is infinite, that it is impossible for us to get to the bottom of them; when we come to a reckoning we are amazed.

4. Consider our ingratitude is aggravated by every mercy received, especially eminent and signal mercies. This is the ground of God's plea and controversy against his people in the text; and 1 Kings. xi. 9, 'And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice.' If your hearts decline, and depart from God after many encouragements to cleave to him, how just will your condemnation be! But God will add mercy to mercy when you are thankful for former mercies.

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