

## THE SAINT'S REFRESHING.

### SERMON IV.

*Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.*—2 CHRON. XXXIV. 28.

It is for the most part the privilege of a Christian, that his last days are his best; and 'though weeping be in the evening, yet joy comes in the morning,' Ps. xxx. 5; though he do begin in darkness, yet he ends in light. Whereas, on the contrary, the wicked begin in jollity and light, but end in darkness; yea, such a darkness as is 'utter darkness,' Mat. viii. 12—by Peter called the 'blackness of darkness,' 2 Pet. ii. 17—the preparations whereunto are, God's outward judgments in this life inflicted upon the impenitent and rebellious, wherein God many times puts a sensible, visible difference betwixt the godly and the wicked; as betwixt Lot and the Sodomites, Noah and the adulterous world, Moses and the Israelites with him, from Korah, Dathan, and his company, the Egyptians and the Israelites at the Red Sea; and in this text, betwixt this good king and his people. He must not see all the evil that God was to bring upon his wicked and rebellious subjects. Oh the happiness of holiness, which is sure to speed well in all storms whatsoever; because on all the glory there is a defence, as Isaiah speaks, Isa. iv. 5. Light is sown for the righteous, Ps. xvii. 11; and whatsoever his troubles be, yet his last end shall be blessed. 'Let me die,' saith Balaam, 'the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,' Num. xxiii. 10. Such honour have all his saints, such honour had this good king Josiah; being removed from hence that he might not see the evil to come. Though he were taken from earth, yet it was for his good, that he might be gathered into heaven, and make a royal exchange.

The words contain a *promise of a reward, and great favour unto good king Josiah*, that he should die, and be gathered unto his fathers; and that which is more, the manner considered, that he should 'die in peace;' the ground whereof is shewed unto him: 'Because thine eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.' God's promises are of three sorts. First, Such as he made

upon condition of legal obedience : ' Do this and thou shalt live.' Secondly, When we are humbled upon sight of our sins, then he propounds another way, and promises that if we believe in Jesus Christ our surety, who hath made satisfaction for us, then we shall live. This is the grand promise of all, the promise of life everlasting, and pardon of sin. Thirdly, There are promises of encouragement unto us, when we are in the state of grace. As a father, who means to make his son an heir, doth give him many promises of encouragement, so God deals with his children, when they are in the covenant of grace.

There are, I say, promises of particular rewards to encourage them, as they are sure of the main and great reward, namely, everlasting life. Therefore Josiah being an heir of heaven, God did propound a promise of encouragement unto him, by way of favour, to shew that his good works were not unregarded. In general here,

*Doct. 1.* First, We may observe *God's gracious dealing with his children*, that he takes notice of every good thing they do, and doth reward them for it, yea, in this life. There is not a sigh but God hears it, not a tear but he hath a bottle for it. Most men spare God a labour in this kind. He promiseth ' to wipe away all tears from our eyes,' Rev. xxi. 4, but they will shed none. Yet the least tear shed, and word spoken in a good cause, goes not without a reward from God ; not so much as a cup of cold water, but he rewards. Which must needs be so :

Because God looks upon the good things we do, being his own works in us, as upon lovely objects, with a love unto them ; for though Josiah had said nothing, yet his deep humiliation itself, was as it were a prayer, that cried strongly in the ears of God, that he could not but reward it. So that partly because God looks upon us as lovely objects, he loving the work of his own Spirit, and partly because they cry unto God, as it were, and pluck down a blessing from heaven, they cannot go unrewarded.

*Use.* This is matter of comfort, that God will not only reward us with heaven, but will also recompense every good thing we do, even in this world ; yea, such is his bounty, he rewards hypocrites. Because he will not be beholding to them for any good thing they do, nor have them die unrewarded, he recompenseth them with some outward favours, which is all they desire. Ahab did but act counterfeit humiliation, and he was rewarded for it, 1 Kings xxi. 27-29. So the Scribes and Pharisees did many good things, and had that they looked for. They looked not for heaven, but for the praise of men. This they had, as Christ tells them, ' Verily, I say unto you, you have your reward,' Mat. vi. 5. God will be beholding to none ; but whosoever do anything that is good, they shall have some reward, whether they be good or bad. If the conscience of a man did judge well, he might come to God with boldness, not to brag of good works, but out of an humble heart saying, ' Remember me, O Lord, as I have dealt with thee.' So good Hezekiah did : ' Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth,' Isa. xxxviii. 3. When we labour in all our actions to please God, we may with boldness approach to the throne of grace, and say with Peter, Remember, Lord, ' Thou knowest that I love thee,' John xxi. 15. If there were no other reward but this, that we have a privilege to go to God with boldness, our conscience not accusing us, it were enough. What a shame is it, then, that we should be so barren in good works, seeing our labour shall not be unrewarded of the Lord ! Oh then let us take counsel of the apostle : ' Finally, my brethren, be ye steadfast and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that

your labour is not in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. xv. 58. He hath a reward for every cup of cold water, for every tear. Every good deed we do hath the force of a prayer to beg a blessing; yea, our very tears speak loud to God, although we say nothing. But to come to particulars.

'Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers,' &c.

Here we see this word *behold*, a word serving to stir up attention, set before the promise, which was formerly set before a threatening, 'Behold, I will bring evil upon this place,' &c. Behold is as necessary before promises as threatenings. For the soul is ready to behold that which is evil, and by nature is prone to dejection, and to cast down itself. Therefore there need be a 'behold' put before the promise, to raise up the dejected soul of Josiah or others, and all little enough. Christians should have two eyes, one to look upon the ill, the other upon the good, and the grace of God that is in them, that so we may be thankful. But they for the most part look only upon the ill that is in them, and so God wants his glory and we our comfort.

'Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.'

*Doct. 2.* Mark here the language of Canaan, *how the Spirit of God in common matters doth raise up the soul to think highly of them.*

Therefore it is that the Holy Ghost sweetens death with a phrase of 'gathering.' Instead of saying, Thou shalt die, he saith, 'Thou shalt be gathered.' How many phrases have we in Scripture that have comfort wrapped in them, as there is in this phrase, 'Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.' I will not speak how many ways peace is taken in Scripture. 'Thou shalt die in peace;' that is, thou shalt die quietly, honourably, and peaceably. And thou shalt not see the misery that I will bring upon the state and kingdom. Thou shalt be gathered to thy fathers, which is meant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to all the faithful patriarchs.

*Doct. 3.* Only observe, it is a very sweet word, and imports unto us, *that death is nothing but a gathering*, and presupposeth that God's children are all scattered in this world amongst wicked men, in a forlorn place, where they are used untowardly, as pilgrims use to be in a strange land. Therefore we had need be gathered, and it is a comfort to be gathered. But from whence shall he be gathered? He shall be gathered from a wicked, confused world; and to whom shall he go? To his Father. His soul shall go to their souls, his body shall be laid in the grave with theirs. As if he had said, Thou shalt leave some company, but go to better; thou shalt leave a kingly estate, but thou shalt go to a better kingdom.

*Doct. 4.* *The changes of God's children are for the better.* Death to them is but a gathering. This gathering doth shew the preciousness of the thing gathered; for God doth not use to gather things of no value. Josiah was a pearl worth the gathering. He was one of high esteem, very precious. So every Christian is dearly bought, with the blood of Christ. Therefore God will not suffer him to perish, but will gather him before the evil days come. As men use to gather jewels before fire comes into their houses; or as husbandmen will be sure to gather their corn, before they will let the beasts come into the field; so saith God to him, I will be sure to gather thee before I bring destruction upon the land. We are all by nature lost in Adam, and scattered from God, therefore we must be gathered again in Christ. For all gathering that is good is in him; for he is the head of

all union that is good. And this is to be wrought by the ordinances of God, by the means of the ministry, which is appointed unto that end, to gather us, as Mat. xxiii. 37, Christ speaks to Jerusalem, 'How often would I have gathered you together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but you would not.' Christ would have gathered them unto himself, by his word, but they refused.

All the gathering of a Christian in this life is a gathering to Christ by faith, and to the communion of saints by love, 1 Thes. iv. 17; and the more he doth grow in grace, the more near communion he hath with Christ. Then after this gathering by grace, there comes by death a gathering to Christ in glory. For the soul goes for ever and ever to be with the Lord. After this comes a higher degree of gathering at the day of judgment, when there shall be a great meeting of all saints, and the soul and body shall be reunited together, to remain for ever with the Lord. Let us then think of this, that whatsoever befalls us in the world, we shall be sure to be gathered, for death is but a gathering. For from whence goes Josiah? From a sinful world, a sinful estate, a wretched people, unto his fathers, who are all good, nay, to God his Father. We are all here as Daniel in the lion's den, as sheep among wolves; but at death we shall be gathered to our fathers. It is a gathering to a better place, to heaven; and to better persons, to fathers, where we shall be for ever praising the Lord, never offending him, loving and pleasing one another. Here Christians displease one another, and cannot be gathered together in love and affection, but there they shall be gathered in unity of love for ever.

*Use.* This serves, first of all, to comfort us in departure of friends, to render their souls up with comfort into the hands of God. We know they are not lost, but sent before us. We shall be gathered to them, they cannot come to us. Therefore why should we grieve? They are gathered in quietness and rest to their fathers. This should also make us render our souls to God, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and Redeemer. From whence go we? From a sinful world and place of tears, to a place of happiness above expression. Why should we be afraid of death? It is but a gathering to our fathers. What a comfort is it to us in this world, that we shall go to a place where all is good, where we shall be perfectly renewed, made in the image of God, and shall have nothing defaced? Let this raise up our dead and drowsy souls. Thus we shall be one day gathered. The wicked shall be gathered together, but a woeful gathering is it. They shall be gathered like a bundle of tares, to be thrown into hell, there for ever to burn. They are dross and chaff, never gathered to Christ by faith, nor to the body of the church by love; and therefore they are as dross and chaff, which the wind scatters here, and shall for ever be scattered hereafter, Ps. i. 4. They are, as Cain, vagabonds in regard of the life of grace here; and therefore shall be for ever scattered from the life of glory hereafter. They shall be gathered to those whom they delighted in, and kept company with, whilst they were in this world. They loved to keep company with the wicked here, therefore they shall be gathered to them in hell hereafter. This is sure, thou shalt live in heaven or hell afterwards, with those whom thou livedst with here. Dost thou live only delighted in evil company now? It is pity thou shouldst be severed from them hereafter. If thou be gathered to them in love and affection here, thou shalt be gathered to them in hell and destruction hereafter. It is a comfortable evidence to those that delight in good company, that they shall be with them in heaven for ever. 'Hereby we know that we are translated from death to life, because we love

the brethren,' 1 John iii. 14. And on the contrary, those that are brethren in evil here, may read in their own wicked courses and conversation what will become of them hereafter. They are all tares, and shall be gathered together in a bundle, and cast into hell fire for ever.

'And thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.'

Here is a reward, not only to die, but to die in peace. Josiah goes the way of all flesh; he must die though he be a king. This statute binds all. All are liable to death. 'And thou shalt be gathered, or put in thy grave in peace.' This doth declare that he should be buried; the ground whereof is out of Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return.' From earth we came, and to earth we shall return. The earth we carry and the earth we tread on shall both meet together. In that God doth here promise it to Josiah as a blessing, we may hence learn,

*Doct 5. That burial is a comely and honourable thing, and that we ought to have respect unto it, partly because the body of a dead Christian is a precious thing. They are temples of the Holy Ghost, members of Christ, and therefore ought to have the honour of burial. Partly because it shews our love and affection to the party buried, for it is the last kindness we can do unto them. Again, we ought to have respect to burial, to shew our hope of the resurrection, that though the body be cast into the earth, yet it shall rise; though it be sown in dishonour, yet it shall rise in honour. So we see that for these reasons burial is honourable. Therefore it is said of the faithful in Scripture, that they were buried, to shew how honourable a thing it is; and indeed it is an honour, specially for fathers, to be buried by their friends and children, and carried by them into their graves. For to be buried like a beast is a judgment to wicked men.*

*Quest.* But what then shall we say to all those that are not thus buried, whose bodies are given to be torn by wild beasts, or burnt to ashes, or flung into rivers, as antichrist useth to deal with many saints?

*Ans.* I answer, that in this case faith must raise itself above difficulty; for though it be a favour and blessing of God, to have Christian burial after we are dead, yet Christians must be content to go without this blessing sometimes, when God calls them to the contrary, as when we cannot have it upon good terms, with peace of conscience, or with God's love. In this case a burial in regard of God's favour is not worth the naming. Therefore let all Christians be content to put their bodies, life and all, to hazard; not only to be willing to want burial when we are dead, but to sacrifice our lives and whatsoever else for God, as many saints have been martyred, and their bodies burnt to ashes. Yet God will gather together the ashes of the dead bodies of his children; for 'right precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,' Ps. cxvi. 15. And is it not better to want this with God's favour, than to have the most honourable burial in the world on evil terms? For what saith the Spirit of God? 'Happy and blessed are they which die in the Lord,' Rev. xiv. 13; not happy are they that die in pomp, and are buried in state, but happy are they that die in the Lord. Therefore when we may not have it, although it be a comely thing, yet if we have God and Christ, we have all that is good. Therefore it is no matter what becomes of our bodies after we are dead; for though we be flung into the sea, burnt to ashes, yet both sea and earth must give up all the dead, as it is Rev. xx. 13. Therefore as for our bodies, let us be willing that God may have them, who gave them; and if he will have us to sacrifice our lives for him, let us do it willingly.

'And thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace.'

*Obj.* How is this? for we read, in the succeeding chapter of Josiah, that he died a violent death; he was slain by the hands of his enemies. Is this to die in peace?

*Sol.* I answer, the next words do expound it. He died in peace, 'because his eyes should not see the evil that God would bring upon the land afterwards;' as if he had said, Thou shalt not see the ruin of the church and commonwealth. So, though Josiah were slain by idolaters, by Pharaoh and his chariots, yet he died in peace comparatively with a worse state of life. For though he died a bloody death by the hands of his enemies, yet he died in peace, because he was prevented by death from seeing that which was worse than death. For God may reserve a man in this life to worse miseries than death itself.

From hence we learn this instruction,

*Doct. 6.* That death may be less miserable than the ill which a man may live to see in this life; or, that the miseries of this life may be such as that death may be much better than life, and far rather to be chosen. We may fall into such miseries whilst we do live, that we may desire death, they being greater than it. The reason hereof is, because that a sudden death, in some respects, is better than a lingering one. One death is better than many deaths, for how many deaths did Josiah escape by this one death! It would have been a death to him if he had lived to see the ruin of the commonwealth, the church of God, and his own sons carried into captivity, to have seen them slain, their eyes plucked out, the temple of God plucked down, and idolatry set up.

We ought then to be careful how to avoid a cursed and miserable estate after death. All the care of wicked men is to avoid death. But they may fall into such an estate in this life that they may wish death, as an heathen emperor once did, who complaining said, 'I have none will do me so much favour as to kill me.'\* All the desire of atheists is, that they may live. Thou base atheist, thou mayest fall into such an estate as is worse than death, and if that be so terrible, what will that† estate be after death? An atheist in this life desires life, Oh that I might not die! But in hell thou wilt desire, Oh that I might die! The time will come that thou shalt desire that which thou canst not abide to hear of now. What desperate folly is it therefore to redeem life with base conditions; not to give it for the gospel when we are called to it. In this case, that base life which we so stand upon, will cost us the loss of our soul for ever in hell, when we shall desire to die.

'Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace.' The Lord saith, he 'will gather.' So we see,

*Doct. 7.* Our times are in God's hand; as David saith, 'My time is in thy hand,' Ps. xxxi. 15. Our times of coming into the world, continuing in it, and going out of it, are in God's hand. Therefore he saith, 'Thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace.' God hath power of death. Our going and coming is from God; he is the Lord of life and death.

*Use.* This is a comfort unto us while we live in this world, that whilst we live we are not in our own hands, we shall not die in our own time; neither is it in our enemies' hands, but in God's hand. He hath appointed a certain time of our being here in this world. This should tie us to obedience, and to die in hope and faith; because when we die we are but gathered to our fathers, to better company and place than we leave behind us.

\* Qu. 'Nero'?—G.

† Qu. 'thine'?—Ed.

Again we see here *that men may outlive their own happiness*, that at last life may be a judgment unto them, because they may see that which is worse than death. How many parents live to see the ruin of their own families! the undoing of their children by their own miscarriage! We see God takes away Josiah, because he will not have him live, as it were, beyond his happiness. We see how tenderly affected God is for the good of his children. He pities them when they are in misery, knows what they are able to bear, and will lay no more upon them than he gives them strength to endure. God knew that Josiah was tender-hearted, and melted at the very threatenings, which if he could not endure to hear against his country, could he ever have endured to have seen the miseries upon his people and country? Surely no. Therefore God will rather gather him to his fathers.

Now this is a wonderful comfort, that many times God will not let us see too great matter of grief. Let us then imitate God, and deal so one with another as God deals with us—the husband with the wife, and the wife with the husband, and the like. Let us not acquaint them with such things as may make them more grieve than is fitting, or they are able to bear. God would not have Josiah to see the misery he brought upon his country, because he knew that he was tenderly disposed, that a little grief would soon overcome him. So let us beware of causing any to grieve, or to let them know things which they are not able to bear.

Again, Seeing this is a grief to a kind and loving father, yea, worse than death, to see the ruin of his child, this should teach all those that are young, to take care that they give no occasion of offence to those that are over them, for to grieve; which will be worse than death unto them. It would have been worse than a death unto Josiah to have seen the ruin of his children. So for those children which have been cherished by their parents in their nonage, it will be worse than death to them in their age to see their children lewd and come to ruin, whereby they bring so much sooner the grey head of their father to the grave in sorrow. These offend against the sixth commandment, which saith, 'Thou shalt not kill.' Let us then rather revive and comfort the heart of those that have been good unto us, and not kill them, or do that which is worse than death unto them.

'Neither shall thy eyes see the misery I will bring upon this people.'

*Doct. 8.* Here we learn again *that it is the sight of misery which works the deepest impression.* It is not the hearing of a thing, but the sight of it, which affecteth most deeply; as in the sacrament, the seeing of the bread broken, and the wine poured out, works a deep impression; and because God knew Josiah's heart would break at the sight of the misery, therefore he tells him, 'Thine eyes shall not see the evil that I will bring upon this place.' The sight is a most working sense, to make the deepest impression upon the soul. What shall be our great joy and happiness in heaven, but that we shall see God for evermore? Sight is a blessing upon earth, both the eyes of the body wherewith we see, and the eyes of the soul—that is, faith—which makes us see afar off, till in heaven we shall see him face to face. So that sight makes us both happy and miserable.

*Use 1.* *How wretched, then, is the estate of them that shall see themselves, with their own wicked eyes, sent to hell, with the creature they delighted in.* That which the eyes see, the heart feels. There are many atheists, whose whole care is to preserve life. They would live, although they live the life of a dog. But the time will come, that thou wilt more earnestly desire

death than life. Thy eyes shall see, and thy body feel, and thy conscience too, that which is worse than a thousand deaths. Thou shalt then die a living death. The worm of thy conscience shall gnaw thee for ever, and shalt see and feel the tormenting fire which shall never be quenched. That which the wicked nourish now to follow their humour, never caring to please God, the day will be when they shall desire to avoid it; and that which they labour to avoid most now, the time will come when they shall most desire it. Death is the king of fears. It is terrible. But then look beyond death: what is behind that? Thou shalt see at the heels of it hell and eternal damnation.

*Use 2.* This should teach us also how to *understand the promise of long life.* It is a promise and a favour of God to be desired. It is a prayer with condition, if God see it good; else God may give us long life, to see and feel a world of misery. Therefore such promises are to be desired conditionally: if God see it good for us.

*Doct. 9.* Again, The Holy Ghost saith here, 'Thy eyes shall not see the evil I will bring upon this place.' Hence we learn, *that those which be dead in the Lord, are freed from seeing of any evil or misery.* The godly shall see no misery after death. If this be so, then they do not go into purgatory after death, as the papists hold. The Holy Ghost saith, Josiah is taken away from seeing any evil to come. Then sure they do not fall into such misery after death, which is worse than death. True, say the papists, such excellent men as Josiah do go to heaven immediately. Ay, but the Holy Ghost saith by Isaiah, lvii. 1, that 'the righteous are taken away from the evil to come.' It is spoken of the whole generation of righteous men. Therefore it is a sottish thing for them to hold that any of them shall see purgatory, when God saith the righteous are taken away from seeing any evil to come.

*Doct. 10.* And as it is against them in this, so *here is another conclusion against popery, that takes away their invocation of saints:* for the righteous go to heaven, and cannot see or know our wants and miseries; yea, they are taken away, because they should not see the miserable estate that befalls their posterity. Then if they do not know our wants, how can they hear and help us when we pray, seeing it is a part of their happiness not to understand our miseries? For if Josiah, from heaven, could have seen the desolation and misery that befell his country afterwards, it would have wrought upon him. But Josiah was taken away, that he should not see it. Therefore, why should men spend that blessed incense and sacrifice of prayer, unto those that cannot hear? But put case, they could hear some; yet can they hear all that pray unto them? A finite creature hath but a finite act and limited power. How can one saint give a distinct answer and help to perhaps a thousand prayers, as the virgin Mary hath many thousand prayers offered her? How can she distinctly know, and give a distinct answer to every prayer?

'Thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace, neither shall thy eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.' *Let us learn here a mystery of divine providence in his death;* for there is a mystery of providence, not only in great matters, as election and predestination, but in ordering of the common things of the world. How many excellent mysteries are here wrapt together in this death of Josiah! As, first, it is said that he died in peace, whereas he died a violent death, and was slain by the hands of his enemies. His death was both a mercy and a correction: a correction for his error in being so hasty in going to war with Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and yet it

was a mercy, because it prevented him from seeing the evil to come, and so likewise brought him sooner to heaven. It is a strange thing to see how the wisdom of heaven can mingle crosses and favours, corrections and mercies together; that the same thing should be both a mercy to Josiah to be taken away, and yet a correction also for his error, in going to fight against Necho, king of Egypt, as we see 2 Chron. xxxv. 23. We may have mercies and afflictions upon us at the same time, as God, by the same death, corrected Josiah's folly, and rewarded his humility.

Mark here again another mystery, *in the carriage of divine providence*: how he brings his promises to pass strangely above the reach of man; as here, he having promised Josiah that he should die in peace, one would have thought that Josiah should have died in pomp and state. No. Thou shalt die in peace, although thou be slain by the hand of thy enemies; thou shalt come to heaven, although it be by a strange way. Thus God brings his children to heaven by strange ways, yea, by contrary ways, [by] afflictions and persecutions. Paul knew he should come to Rome, although it were by a strange way; though he suffered shipwreck, and was in great danger, as we may see Acts xxvii. 2, *seq.* God hath strange ways to bring his counsels to pass, which he doth so strangely, as we may see his own hand in it.

Again, Here we may see another mystery in divine providence, concerning the death of Josiah, *in that he was taken away being a young man*, but thirty-nine years old, who was the flower of his kingdom, and one upon whom the flourishing estate of such a kingdom did depend. Now, for such a gracious prince to be taken away in such a time, and at such an age, when he might have done much good, a man would hardly believe this mystery in divine providence. But 'our times are in God's hand,' Ps. xxxi. 15. His time is better than ours. And therefore he, seeing the sins of the people to be so great, that he could not bear with them longer,—for it was the sins of the people that deprived them of Josiah. It was not the king of Egypt who was the cause of his death, but the sins of the land—those caused God to make this way, to take away their gracious king.

*Use.* Here we may admire the wisdom of God, who doth not give an account unto us of his doings, why he suffers some to live, and takes away others; why he suffers the wicked to live, and takes away his own. We can give little reason for it, because it is a mystery; but God best knoweth the time when to reap his own corn.

'Neither shall thy eyes see all the evil I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the land.'

*Doct. 11.* Here the Holy Ghost doth insinuate unto us that whilst Josiah was alive, God would not bring this judgment upon the land, but after his death, then it should come upon them. So here we learn this comfortable point of instruction, *that the lives of God's children do keep back judgment and evil from the place where they live, and their death is a forerunner of judgment.* Their life keeps back ill, and their death plucks down ill. While thou art alive, I will bring no evil upon this place, but when thou art gone, then I will bring it down, saith God. The reasons of this are,

*Reason 1.* Because *gracious men do make the times and the places good where they live.* It is a world of good that is done by their example and help. While they live the times are the better for them.

*Reason 2.* And again, *they keep back ill, because gracious men do bind God by their prayers.* They force, as it were, a necessity upon God, that he

must let the world alone. They bind his hands, that he will do nothing while they are in it; as to Lot in Sodom, 'I can do nothing while\* thou art gone, saith the angel,' Gen. xix. 22. They stand in the gap, and keep God from pouring down the vials of his wrath. But when they are gone, there is nothing to hinder or stop the current of divine justice, but that it must needs have his course. As when men have gathered their corn into their barns, then let their beasts, or whatsoever else go into the field, they care not; and as when the jewels are taken out of a rotten house, though the fire then seize upon it, men regard not. So when God's jewels are gathered to himself, then woe to the wicked world, for then God will break forth in wrath upon them. Woe to the old world when Noah goes into the ark, for then follows the flood. Woe to Sodom when Lot goes out of it, for then it is sure to be burned. Luther prayed that God would not bring war upon the people in Germany all his time, but when he died, the whole land was overspread with war. So, before the destruction of Jerusalem, God did gather the Christians to a little city called Pella, near Jerusalem.† So there are many gracious parents that die, after whose death comes some miserable end to their wicked children, but not before. God takes away the parents out of the world, that they might not see the ruin of their children. So then we see that it is clear, that good men keep back judgment from the places where they live.

What should we learn from hence?

*Use 1.* This should teach us to *make much of such men as truly fear God*, seeing it is for their sakes that God doth spare us. They carry the blessing of God with them wheresoever they go. As Laban's house was blessed for Jacob's sake, Gen. xxx. 27, and Potiphar's for Joseph's sake, Gen. xxxix. 23, so the wicked are spared and fare the better for the saints who live among them. But what is the common course of wicked men? To hate such with a deadly hatred above all others, because their lives and speeches do discover the wickedness of theirs, and because they tell them the truth, and reprove them.

Therefore it was that Ahab could not endure the sight of Micaiah, that holy prophet, who without flattery spake downright truth, 1 Kings xxii. 8, *seq.* So it is now beyond seas and elsewhere. They labour to root out all the good men. But what will they get by it? Surely it will be a thousand times worse with them than it is; for if they were out, then woe to the land presently.

*Use 2.* This should also teach us to *pray to God to bless those that are good*. Is it not good for us to uphold those pillars whereby we stand? What madness is it for a man to labour to pull down the pillar whereby he is holden alive? As Samson, pulling down the pillars of the house, brought death upon himself, so godly men, the pillars of this tottering world, which uphold the places whereby they live, being once shaken, all the whole state falls. Therefore let us not be enemies to our own good, to hate the godly; for it is for their sakes the Lord shews mercy to us, and refrains to pour out his judgment upon the wicked world. And when the best gathering of all gatherings shall come, that the elect of God shall be gathered together, then comes the misery of all miseries to the wicked. So we see this point is clear, that the godly, while they are alive, keep back ill and bring much good. For doth God continue the world for wicked men? Surely no. For what glory and honour hath God from such wicked

\* That is, 'until.'—Ed.

† Cf. Note cccc, Vol. III. p. 536.—G.

wretches? Do they not swear, lie, live filthily, and abuse his members? Is it for these that God doth continue the world? Surely no; but for the godly's sake are judgments deferred, and the world is continued.

Use 3. If this be thus, *well may we lament the death of those that are good.* For when they are gone, our safety is gone. 'They are the chariots and horsemen of Israel,' 2 Kings ii. 12. Therefore well may we bewail their loss. Well might Jeremiah lament for the death of Josiah, for together with the breath of Josiah the life of that state breathed out; together with him, the flourishing condition of Jerusalem died, and lay buried with him as it were in the same grave.

See here again how God correcteth too much resting on the arm of flesh. They blessed themselves under Josiah, as if no evil should come near them; as appears, Lament. iv. 20, 'The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live.' There is no greater wrong to ourselves, and to others on whom we rest so much, than to secure ourselves so much on them as to neglect serious turning to God.

'Neither shall thy eyes see all the evil I will bring upon this place.'

This is the ground why he should die in peace, 'Because he shall not see all the evil I will bring upon this place.' Here we see that the judgment which God threatened to bring upon the church and commonwealth is set down by this word 'evil.' 'Thine eyes shall not see all the evil I will bring upon this place.' But who sends this evil. It is an evil brought by God. Thou shalt not see the evil 'I will bring,' &c. It was not God that brought it properly, but Nebuchadnezzar, who carried his sons into captivity. Howsoever, God had a hand in it. 'For is there any evil in the city and God hath not done it?' saith the prophet, Amos iii. 6. But we must distinguish between evil. There is,

1. The evil of sin; and 2. The evil of punishment.

First, The evil of sin; and this God doth not bring, for it is hateful unto him. Then the evil of punishment, which is twofold:

(1.) Either that which comes immediately from God, as famine, pestilence, or the like; in which punishments we are to deal with God alone.

(2.) Or else, the evil that comes from God, but by men, which he useth as instruments to punish us, and this is by war and cruel usage.

Now thus Josiah is taken away from this greatest evil we can suffer in this life; to have God correct us by the hands of men. For when we have to deal with God, the labour is easier to prevail with him, as David did, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. But when we have to deal with merciless men, then we have to deal with the poisoned malice of men, besides God's anger. Now the evil that comes from God is chiefly,

The ill which seizeth upon the soul after death; or else, the evil which seizeth upon the whole man, both soul and body, both in this and after this life.

Thus God is said to bring evil, not the evil of sin, but the evil of punishment.

Doct. 12. Hence we learn, that *the evils which we suffer, they are from the evil of sin.* It is sin that makes God to bring evil upon the creature. If we look upward to God, there is no evil in the world, for in that consideration all things are good so far as he hath a hand in them. Therefore, whatsoever the creature suffers, it comes from the meritorious evil, the evil of sin. It comes from God, but through the evil of sin provoking him.

*Quest.* If any man ask, How can God, which is good, bring that which is evil?

*Sol.* I answer, We must know that the evil of punishment is the good of justice. All the evil that he doth is good, as it comes from him in his justice punishing, because it doth good to them that are punished, either to cause them return, or if they will not, to shew the glory of his justice in condemning them. It is the good of justice, and it is not always in God only permitting or suffering such a thing for to be done; but it is in him as an act, having a hand in it. Therefore God saith, 'Ashur is the rod of my wrath;\*' so that in all punishments God hath a hand, whether it be upon the body or soul.

*Use.* This serves for direction unto us, *To begin where we should begin;* in all our afflictions to go to heaven and make our peace with God, and not go to secondary causes. For all evil of punishment comes from him. Let us, if we fear evil, make our peace with God by repentance and new obedience; and then he will overrule all secondary causes so as to help us. Go not in this case to the jailor, or to the executioner, but go to the judge. Let us make our peace in heaven first, and then there will be soon a command for our ease. Yea, Christ can command the wind and sea to be still, the devil himself to be quiet, if our peace be made with him.

Therefore let us learn this lesson, and not fret against the instrument whereby God useth to correct us. David had learned thus much when Shimei railed upon him: 'It is God that hath bid him, therefore let him alone,' 2 Sam. xvi. 11. So holy Job saith, 'It is God that gives, and God that takes away,' Job i. 21. He doth not only say, God gives, but God takes away. Oh but it was the Chaldeans that took it away. Ay, but it is no matter for that, God gave them leave. Therefore let us carry ourselves patiently in all troubles, submitting ourselves under the mighty hand of God, from whom we have all evil of punishment.

*Obj.* Again, Here we have another mystery of divine providence. For it may be objected. What! will God bring evil upon his own church and people? upon the temple and place where his name is called upon, and that by idolaters. Where is divine justice now?

*Sol.* I answer. Hold thy peace, take not the balance out of God's hand. He knows what is better for us† than we ourselves. We must not call God to our bar, for we shall all appear before his. God useth servants and slaves to correct his sons; worse men than his people to correct his people. It is his course so to do, when they of his own sin against him. For evil men many times make evil men good, when they are used as instruments to correct them; as here God useth wicked men to make his children good. So God makes a rod of Ashur, to make his evil children better. He useth slaves to correct his sons, because it is too base a service for the angels or good men to do. Therefore he useth the devil and his instruments to do it. Wherefore let us not call into question God's providence; for when he will punish his people, he can hiss for a worse people; for Egypt, or Ashur, or the like. So if he will punish England, he can hiss again for the Danes, or Normans, to punish his own people. Let us not boast we are God's people and they idolaters. No; God can hiss for a baser people to punish his own servants. It is the will of God so to dispose, and the will of God is *summa justitia*, the height of justice. God will have it so. Let us make our peace with him, and not demand why he doth thus and thus.

\* That is, 'Assyria.' Cf. Isa. x. 5.—G.

† Qu. 'what is good for us, better?'—Ed.

'And so they brought the king word again.' I will but touch this in a word, and so make an end.

Here we see that the messengers deal faithfully with Josiah. They brought the direct message which the prophetess did bid them, which was good for himself, but doleful for his estate. He was a gracious man, and God gave him gracious servants.

*Doct. 13. For God will give good men faithful servants, that shall deal faithfully with them. As for the wicked, God will give them such servants that shall humour them to their own ruin. If they have a heart not desirous to hear the truth, if they be Ahabs, they shall have four hundred false prophets to lead them in a course to their own ruin. But Josiah had an upright heart, desiring to know the truth. Therefore God gave him a faithful prophetess to deal truly with him, and faithful messengers to bring the true answer.*

'Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people great and small,' &c.

Which words shew what good king Josiah did upon the receipt of this message. As soon as ever he heard it, he did not suffer it to cool upon him. But when his spirit was stirred up, he did as a gracious king should do, he sent and gathered all the elders of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, both great and small, and they went up to the house of the Lord, and there read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

Here, first, we see that Josiah gathered, as it were, a parliament and a council; as also, in both Josiah and the people, we may behold an excellent and sweet harmony of state, when all, both king and priests, Levites and people, did meet amiably together. This was an excellent time, when there was such an harmony between king and people, that he no sooner commands but they obeyed him.

But more particularly we learn,

*Doct. 14. That the care of the commonwealth and of the church is a duty belonging to the king, that the reformation both of church and commonwealth belongs unto the prince. There is a generation which think that the king must only take care for the commonwealth. But they have also power to look to religion. We see Josiah doth it, he is the keeper of both. Josiah hath a care of religion, and it doth become his place. He is a head, and it is befitting his relation. He is a father, not only to look to the temporal state, but to the church.*

The Donatists in Augustine's time did ask, What had the emperor to do with the church? But it was answered that the emperor could not rule the commonwealth except he govern the church, for the church is a commonwealth. So that we see, as a chief right, the ordering of the matters of religion belongs to the care of the prince. But there are two things in religion: first, intrinsecal, within the church, as to preach, administer the sacraments, and ordain ministers. These he ought not to do. But for those things that are without it, these belong unto him. If any of those that are placed in church or commonwealth, do not their duty, it is fitting for him to correct. He ought to set all a-going without, and to remove abuses, but not to meddle with the things within the church aforesaid, as to execute the same, but to oversee and govern their execution, and those persons whose proper office it is to execute them.

This observe against the usurpation of the pope, and see the supremacy

of king Josiah, that he is supreme over all ; not only over temporal persons, but over evangelical persons. For there was an high priest at that time and the Levites, but none were above king Josiah.

*Quest.* Ay, but this was under the law, say the papists.

*Sol. 1.* I answer, that this is a rule in divinity, that the gospel doth not take away or dissolve the laws of nature and reason. Therefore if the supremacy belonged to the prince then, surely now much more. Therefore saith one, We give respect to the emperor as next to God ; to God in the first place, and then to the emperor.\* The ministers have power over the prince for to direct him and give him counsel, but yet they are not above him. A physician doth give directions for his patient. Is he therefore above him ? So a builder giveth direction for the building of the king's house. Is this any supremacy ? So the minister may give direction and counsel to the prince ; but hath he therefore any superiority above the prince ? Surely no.

*Sol. 2.* In the second place, here we see who it is that called this parliament. It was king Josiah. He was the first mover in calling of this council, for he was the head ; and had it not been a strange thing to have seen the foot move before the head ? The head must first give direction before any of the members can move. Therefore it is only in the authority of the king to gather a council, and none must gather a public assembly without authority from the king.

The calling of assemblies belongs to the prince. If it be a general council, then it must be by the emperor ; if it be a national council, then by the king or prince of that nation ; if provincial, then first from the king or princes, as first movers of it, and so to others. As the heavens, and these celestial bodies over the earth, first move, and then all other afterward, so kings ought first to move, and then all to follow.

*Use 1.* If this be so, we see how the pope wrongfully takes this right of calling councils to himself, which properly belongs to the emperor ; for we know that for a thousand years after Christ the emperor called councils, if any were. But of late years the pope, encroaching upon the emperor, hath usurped this right of calling them, whenas you see no assemblies ought to be gathered without the authority of the prince.

Though fasting be an excellent thing, yet public fasting must not be without the consent of the king. Let Christians have as much private fasting as they will, thereby to humble themselves, but public fasts must not be without the consent of the king ; for great matters are to be done by great motions. Here is a great matter of gathering a council. Therefore the head and body and all join together. As it is when the body is to do some great thing, all the members of the body stir together to do it, so it is with the commonwealth. When great matters are in hand, all must be joined together, as here king, priests, Levites, and all the people, both great and small, joined together for to prevent the judgment threatened.

But what must we do if things be amiss ? I answer, Take the right course ; that is, go to God by prayer, and entreat him who hath the hearts of kings in his hands, to incline and stir up the hearts of princes for to reform abuses. Well, but what did the king do when he had gathered all the elders and inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem into the house of the Lord ? They went up thither to fast, and pray, and read the book of the law.

\* Tertullian. Cf. Apology, c. xxxiii. to xxxvi.—G.

Reformation makes all outward things fall into a good rule, but they are to be called only by the authority of the prince, and when a fit time and occasion requires.

The papists brag much of the Council of Trent; but if ever there was a conspiracy against Christ, it was in that council; for the parties that had most offended, and were most accused, and should have been judged, were the judges; and the Holy Ghost, which should have been in the council, and should have been their judge, him they excluded, and received a foul spirit of antichrist sent unto them, in a cap-case\* from Rome, whence they had all their counsel. Was not this a goodly council?

Again, In that Josiah gathered a council in time of public disorder and public danger, here we learn that it is not only lawful, but many times necessary, to gather assemblies and councils for reformation of abuses, both in church and commonwealth, which otherwise cannot be abolished. So councils are good to make canons, rules, and to prevent heresy; yea, much good may be done by gathering of them, if they meet to a good end, for the good of the church, and the glory of God; for God who is willing and able to perform the good will be strongly amongst them. For if Christ by his Spirit hath promised to be in that assembly, 'where two or three are gathered together' upon good grounds, and to good ends, how much more will he be, when two or three hundreds are so gathered together? But this must be done by the consent of authority, otherwise it would be an impeachment to government. So much briefly for this text, and for this time.

\* That is, a small case or travelling-box. Cf. Nares and Halliwell *sub voce*.—G.

\* \* \* The frequent allusions in the preceding sermons, and throughout, to wars and accompanying evils abroad, receive interpretation from 'The Thirty Years' War,' which, beginning in 1618 and ending in 1648, was thus contemporary with the whole of Sibbes's public life.—G.