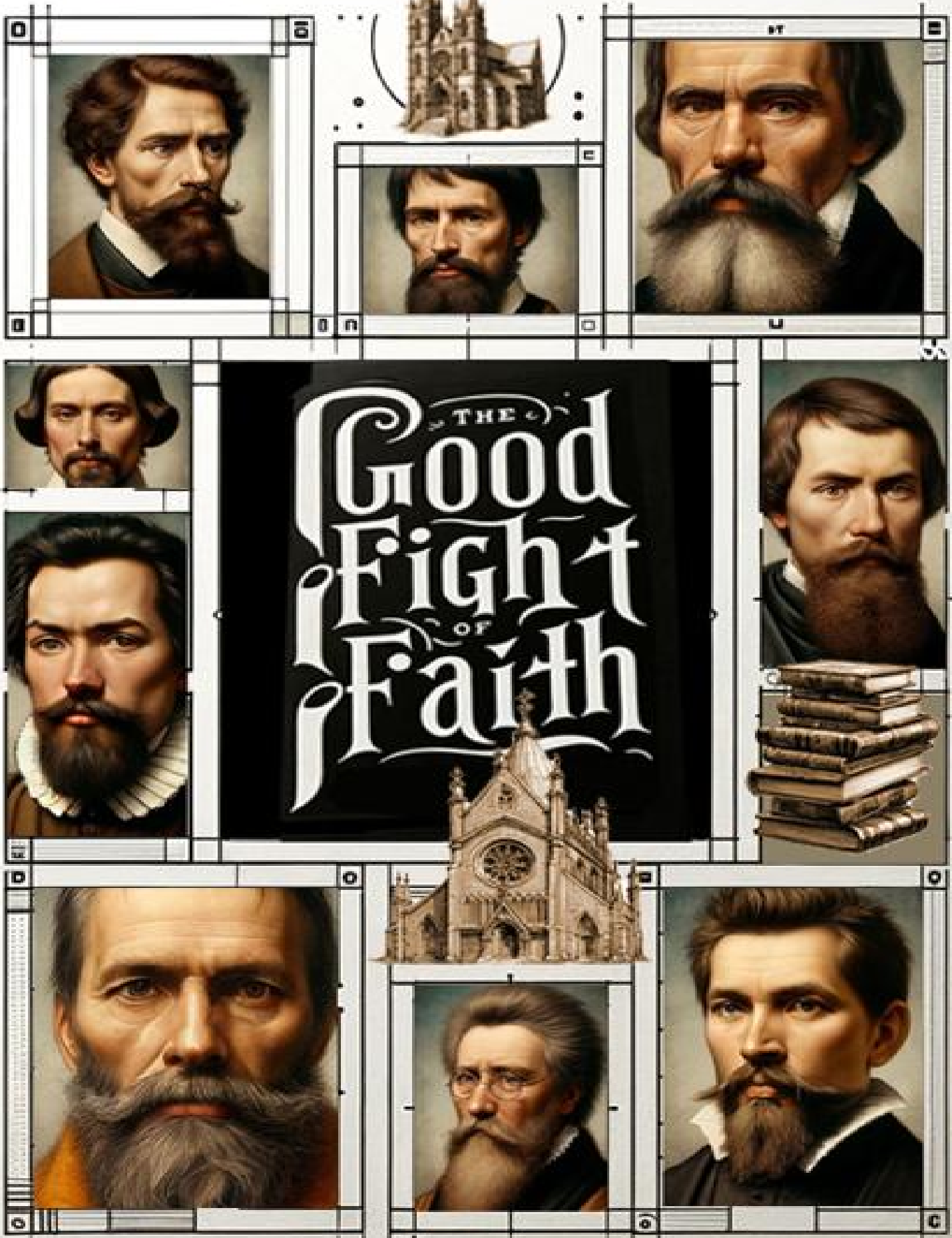
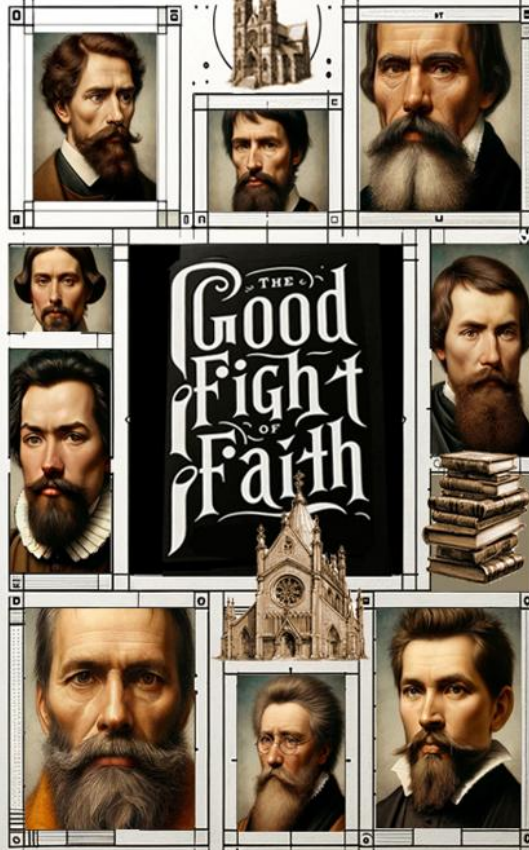


"FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF THE FAITH. TAKE HOLD OF THE ETERNAL LIFE TO WHICH YOU WERE CALLED AND ABOUT WHICH YOU MADE THE GOOD CONFSSION IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES." 1 TIMOTHY 6:12



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The Good Fight of Faith

By Thomas Boston

1 TIMOTHY 6:12,

Fight the good fight of faith.

THE Apostle having given Timothy an exhortation to several particular duties, here gives him an exhortation to the Christian life in general. Wherein we have two things.

1. A description of the Christian life. It is not an easy, idle, inactive life; but, (1.) A fight, a combat, a wrestling: for there are many enemies set to keep us out of the promised land. (2.) A good fight. There are many ill fights in the world. The men of the world have many fights and squabbles about this world, the honours, advantages, and pleasures of it, not worth the fighting for. But it is a good fight, a noble and worthy fight, wherein true valour and magnanimity appears. (3.) A fight of faith. Some understand this of the doctrine of faith, as that which is to be fought for. I understand it rather of the grace of faith, by which the fight is to be managed. This comprehends the former; and is more agreeable to the practical directions, ver. 11, and the "laying hold on eternal life," which is done

by the grace of faith. So it is a fight to be managed in the way of believing.

2. The word of command given: "Fight the good fight of faith:" Agonize, like a combatant, wrestler, putting forth your utmost vigour. Timothy was engaged already in the fight; but still he was in the field of battle, and the enemy not yet off the field: therefore it is said to him, Fight. Paul was going off the field, and he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," 2 Tim. 4:7. Timothy was come on the field, and to him it was said, Fight.

The doctrine natively arising from the words, is this.

DOCTRINE. The Christian life is the good fight of faith, that must be fought by all that would see heaven.

In discoursing this doctrine, we shall shew,

I. In what respects the Christian life is the fight of faith.

II. In what respects it is a good fight.

III. Why the Christian life in the disposal of holy providence, is made a fight.

IV. Why a fight of faith.

V. Touch at some particular fights of faith the Christian may have in his course heavenward.

I. We shall shew in what respects the Christian life is the fight of faith. I take up this in these seven things.

1. There are enemies of our salvation, and there must be faith in the soul to set against them. Where there are not two parties, there can be no fight. There is no fighting in heaven, for there are no enemies there, Rev. 21:25. There is none of this fighting in the unbelieving world neither; for the enemies have all there alone, and there is no faith to set against them, Luke 11:21. Unbelief carries the man quite over to the enemy's side; it is the evil spy, that says, It is needless to think on the fight. This fight is only found where faith and its opposites meet; and that is in the Christian's heart and life: Cant. 6 ult. "What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies." So the combatant is only the man that has given up his name to Christ, and listed with him.

2. The enemy will not be quiet; he will make an attack on the believer setting heavenward. Hence is that exhortation, 1. Pet. 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." Satan may rock his own children, and labour to keep all quiet: the more secure they lie, they are in the less hazard to break away from him. But God's children must not look for such treatment; their faces are away-ward from his kingdom; and therefore the enemy's face will be set against them, as a prize.

3. God's people must resist: 1 Pet. 5:9, "Whom [Satan] resist stedfast in the faith." They must set themselves to stand their ground against all opposition, and grapple with the difficulties in their way to heaven, Luke 13:24. They must be denied to their ease, content to quit their soft beds of ease, and take the field for it, and endure hardness, 2 Tim 2:3.

4. They must resist by faith, 1 Pet. 5:9. above-cited. Faith is the mouth of the soul, that must give the shout in this battle, the hands

the men of might must find in it, the weapon they must wield in it, both in the offensive and defensive part of it: Eph. 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." So one must not only have the grace of faith, but he must have it in exercise.

5. They must continue in that resistance, and hold on in it: Eph. 6:13, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." The Christian life is a fight, and that denotes a continuance. Many think they should have no more ado, but whenever an enemy starts up, to lay at him with a stroke, and strike him down; and so be easy again: and so they perplex themselves with doubts, fears, and jealousies of the love of God, because it is otherwise with them, the enemy being still fresh and vigorous, Is. 26:18. But alas! Sirs, ye should consider, that that may be striking indeed, but not a fight, being of no continuance.

6. They must lay their account with ups and downs, getting as well as giving wounds in the encounter. Hence says David, Psal. 30:7, "Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Prevailing Jacob halted in his thigh, after his struggle of faith with the angel. To be absolute masters over the enemy, would not be the fight of faith, but the triumph of faith, which is reserved for heaven. In the fight of faith, the Christian may be set to his knees, but must not give over: yea, though the enemy should lay him on his back, he must say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me," Mic. 7:8, and so bend to his feet again.

7. Lastly, Faith has the chief interest in this fight. In it there will be use for all the graces, the doing and suffering graces: yet the fight has its name from faith, as that which has the chief hand in it. For,

1st, It is faith's possession that the plea is about. Life and salvation in Christ Jesus is held forth, offered, and exhibited in the gospel to the sinner; and the sinner believing in Christ, appropriates and takes possession of it by faith: Cant. 2:16, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." John 20:28, "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." 1 John 5:11, 12, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." There is the ground of the quarrel the enemy has. If the man will quit his plea for life and salvation by Christ, the fight is at an end; the enemy has his design. but if not, the alarm is sounded, and the fight begins to force him from it.

2dly, It is faith that holds fast the possession which the enemy would force from the man. For it is the bond of union betwixt Christ and the soul, and it is that which is the hold of Christ and eternal life: Heb. 10:35, 38, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Now the just shall live by faith." Therefore, believing, we are said to cleave to the Lord, to hold fast what we have, &c. The securities and rights to the heavenly inheritance are the promises; faith gripes them, and so keeps possession.

3dly, It is faith that, of all the graces, is the main actor in this fight. Those worthies in Heb. 11 exercised and had need of all the graces of the Spirit. There was much love, humility, meekness, patience, &c. in their doing and suffering so great things: but all is ascribed to faith. For faith is the captain of all the graces; it leads them out, puts an

edge upon them for the fight, and makes them active. And therefore, in this fight, the word that is given from heaven, is, "Be not afraid, only believe," Mark 5:36, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," Eph. 6:16.

QUESTION. How comes it that faith has the preference among all the rest of the graces in this fight? ANSWER. On these accounts,

(1.) It is the grace that is first on the field of battle, and all the rest follow it. It is the first link of the chain of the graces of the Spirit, that draws all the rest after it, 1 Tim. 1:5. It is the mother-grace, out of whose womb they all come forth; because it is the uniting grace that knits the soul to Christ, the fountain of fulness. So the way to get love, repentance, patience, &c. is to believe, thus it furnishes the field of battle, with fighters on Christ's side.

(2.) It strengthens them all, according to its measure; for that is the rule of the dispensation of grace, "According to thy faith, be it unto thee." According as it is weak or strong, so are they: for it is not only the mother-grace but the nursing grace. Faith lies as it were nearest the fountain, and is the channel of conveyance of supply: so as it gets in, they get out for their nourishment.

(3.) It brings the healing they get to their wounds. Many a time the Christian's love is foundered in this fight, and is like to bleed to death, by an arrow of jealousy of God shot into their breast. Faith gives the combatant a sight of the glory of God in the face of Jesus; and so pulls out the arrow, John 2:4. Their patience is wounded, that it can no longer stand; faith brings the promise, Heb. 2:3, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will

not tarry," and it sets patience to its feet again. It brings the leaves of the tree of life, applies them to the wounds, and heals them; so the fight is renewed.

(4.) It carries on the fight, and obtains the victory: 1 Pet. 5:9, "Whom resist, stedfast in the faith." 1 John 5:4, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is by faith the enemy is put to flight, that partial victories are obtained during this life, and that the total victory is obtained at death, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Thus by faith the martyrs swimm'd through a sea of blood to the other side. And hence,

4thly, The great design of the enemy is to weaken faith, and to wrest it away out of the combatants hand. It was by unbelief of the threatening of the first covenant, that Satan ruined the world at first: and now his great business is, to keep men from believing the promise of the second covenant. He knows full well their strength lies there; and take away that, they shall be as other men, that he may do with them what he will.

Lastly, The great design of a holy God, in that fight is the trial of faith. Hence says the apostle, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7, "Wherein ye greatly rejoyce, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Faith acts in trusting an unseen God, believing his word, living upon the credit of the promise. Thus the Lord will have his people to go through the wilderness of this world, "walking by faith, not by sight." When they come to heaven the trial of faith is over: so there is no more fight.

II. The second thing is, to shew in what respects it is a good fight.

1. The cause is good. Many fight to carry their ill cause by force, and their fightings proceed from an eager desire to satisfy their lusts, James 4:1, 2. But here is a good fight for a good cause, cleaving to the Lord over the belly of all difficulties; laying hold, and keeping hold, of eternal life. It is the cause of God, the cause of Christ, the cause of the sinner's eternal salvation, which cannot be but a good cause, to endeavour the maintenance of against all opposers.

2. It is an honourable fight, worthy of a man of true valour and magnanimity, 1 Cor. 9:25–27; Prov. 16:32. The men of the world boast themselves of their strength in making their part good against weak worms like themselves. In the mean time they are slaves to the devil and their lusts, and have neither heart nor hand to resist them, but are captive at pleasure. But the believer in his fight encounters more formidable enemies: Eph. 6:12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

3. There is a good captain in this fight, the Lord Jesus Christ, under whose standard the believer fights, Heb. 2:10. He went on the head of all the fighting company and overcame; and he calls his people to make their way through an army which he has already broken: Rev. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." He is ever at their hand, and the cause is his; it must therefore needs be a good fight.

4. In regard of the good that is got even of the partial victories; the believers being helped to stand shocks, and get over them, though

the war be not ended. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 5:3, 4, 5, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." The sharp trials of faith are hard in the time: but a review of bypast dangers, of the Lord's working for the soul in the time of the combat, gives an exquisite pleasure: so that the man comes to say, It is good that I was afflicted.

5. Lastly, In regard the final and complete victory in the end, is sure. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Many a battle the believer may lose in the course of the war; he may be shamefully foiled: but though the enemy prevail so far, yet the believer shall always be the conqueror at the end. The men of Ai got an advantage against Joshua's men: but it did not last; they got a complete victory at length over the men of Ai.

III. Why is the Christian life, in the disposal of holy providence, made a fight? No doubt the Lord could have given his people a constant sunshine as well on this side as the other side of death, and cleared the way of those armed adversaries that are ready to attack them.

1. That the members may be conformed to their head in their passage through the world. The life that our Lord Jesus had in the world, was a fighting life all along, till he left the world, and entered into his glory. It is very agreeable then, that his followers should find it so, and so be conformed to their head in suffering as well as in reigning: Rom. 8:17, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." 2 Tim. 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,"

2. That the nothingness, and utter unworthiness of the creature, which is to wear the crown of glory for ever, may convincingly

appear; so as they themselves and all others may see it is owing purely to free grace, not to them, Deut. 8:2. We find the Lord usually laid those very low whom he minded to raise up on high; as in the case of Joseph, Moses, and David: and this to stain the pride of all glory, that they might see their own unworthiness, and that it was wholly of free grace, and owing to no merit of theirs. The Lord accordingly minding to bring a select company into heaven at length, in the first place brings them into the wilderness. There they are stung with serpents, scorched with thirst, &c. whereby much corruption and weakness appeared in them, &c. and afterwards they are brought unto a wealthy place.

3. For the greater confusion of the grand adversary, who, attacked him in person in the world, and whom he causeth poor weak creatures to triumph over after they have maintained a fight with him, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Our Lord Jesus overcame and baffled Satan's temptations in the wilderness. He triumphed over him on the cross, where the heat of the battle was: Col. 2:15, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Satan renews the battle against his members on earth: and what is the issue? The strippling, with his sling and stone, lays Goliath on the green. The weak believer through faith confounds the united wit and force of men and devils, Luke 10:19, which tends to the greater confusion of the enemy.

4. For the greater glory of the captain of their salvation, the more full display of the freedom of grace, and the efficacy of his blood and Spirit. (1.) Every wound the believer gets in this fight, puts a new jewel in Christ's crown. For every new wound requires a new plaister from Christ. That is a new item for the believer in the debt-book of free grace, and so puts him more in free grace's debt. (2.) Every

wound the believer gives in this fight, considering his weakness and fecklessness, and the strength and subtlety of the enemy, does the same.

5. For that they may have a greater variety of experiences: Rom. 5:4, "Patience worketh experience; and experience, hope." The exercised Christian is the man of most experience. There is a great variety of promises in the covenant, for the various cases the children of God may be in: and that his people may have experience of the relish of these promises, he brings them into the cases to which these promises are adapted. Who finds the sap of that promise, Is. 33:16, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," like those that are put to a fight of faith for their daily bread; or of that, Deut. 32:36, "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants; when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left, like" those whose case is brought to an extremity in point of hopelessness?

6. Lastly, That heaven may be the more sweet to them, when they come to it. It is in this respect that heaven is called a place of comfort, Luke 16:25, wiping away of tears, rest from labours. None will find rest so sweet as the wearied man. A child of God come to his journey's end, after many falls and risings, after many ups and downs; set ashore after a dangerous voyage, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in a higher strain, than if he had never been in danger from his first setting out.

IV. The fourth thing is, to shew why their fight is called a fight of faith. The reason is, because by that means all the glory of the victories obtained redounds to free grace, not to the sinner himself: Rom. 4:16, "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." The Lord is jealous of his own glory, and sinful man is very apt to ascribe

something to himself; therefore faith is pitched upon; for its activity lies in these two.

1. In carrying the sinner quite out of himself, and from off his own bottom. Hence believers are said to have no confidence in the flesh, Philip. 3:3. The unbeliever's great strength lies in summoning together all the power of his natural abilities, and in confidence thereof trying the battle. But faith makes a man to be denied to all his own abilities, and not to lean to himself, his light, strength, &c. And therefore as the fire burns keenest in the sharp frost, so faith acts most vigorously, when sentence of death is passed on all probable means, as Abraham's faith.

2. In leaning upon the Lord for all. Hence believers are also said to rejoice in Christ Jesus, Philip. 3:3. Faith goes out to the battle in the name of the Lord, holding by his promise, trusting that he will make it out: and so it is the mouth of the soul that sucks the sap of the promise, by a fiducial application of it, and trusting in it.

V. I will touch at some particular fights of faith, the Christian may have in his course heavenward, such as,

1. In a call to some more than ordinary work or duty.
2. In desertion.
3. In temptations from Satan.
4. In afflictions.
5. With this present evil world.
6. With sin.

7. With death.

First, There is a fight of faith, in a call to some more than ordinary work or duty. Sometimes the Lord takes trial of his people by calling them to some extraordinary piece of duty. Thus Abraham was called out to this field, Gen. 22:1; Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, Exod. 3; and Jonah, to preach to the Ninevites.

Here the believer gets his hands full, as much as he is able to wrestle with; yea, and sometimes as much as lays him by, his faith failing. Thus Jonah was so put to it in this fight, that he goes to fly towards Tarshish, to shift the duty.

Now, what makes the difficulty here, are, (1.) The hardness of the work in itself, as in Abraham's case. (2.) A deep sense of our inability for it, as in the case of Moses, when commanded to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, Exod. 4:10. For sometimes it is that which the Christian seems of all things to be most unfit for. (3.) The great danger there may be in it, so that the Christian must run a risk in setting about it. Sometimes he must risk his reputation, as in Jonah's case; sometimes he must risk even his safety or life. Here there is a particular fight of faith to be fought. And therein faith is to be exerted,

1. In complying with God's call in the faith of the promise of strength for it. Hence says the apostle, Philip. 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." God never calls his people to any duty, but what they have ground to expect furniture for from himself in the way of believing: "No man goeth a warfare on his own charges." God's call implies a promise of furniture: "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright." And God suits the back to the burden. It is much alike then whether it be little work and little strength, or great work and strength conform.

2. In following the duty, in the faith of divine protection, as far as he sees good. Faith trusts God with one's safety in the way of duty, according to the promise, Psal. 91:11, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." As long as one is found in the way where God bids him go, he may be sure God will set a hedge about him, and make all work together for his good.

Secondly, There is a fight of faith in desertion. Here the believer is on the dark mountains in a special manner, the Lord in the depth of sovereign wisdom withdrawing from him. And in this case there may be several things very heavy.

1. Darkness covering the believer's spirit, Is. 50:10, where! he goes mourning without the sun. Their former light is taken away, and clouds and mists arise, so they cannot know their way

2. Indisposition for duty, proceeding sometimes from a lassitude to communion with God, Cant. 5:2, sometimes from the extremity of trouble, Psal, 77:4. So that the soul is not more unfit for duty, than when there is most need.

3. An army of doubts and fears attacking them, doubting of their love to God, and God's love to them, Psal. 77:7, downwards.

4. The terrors of God set in battle-array against them, Job. 6:4. They "remember God, and are troubled," Psal. 77:3, The man is carried captive from Sion to Sinai; the discharge is lost, and the law bends up a process against him. God appears an enemy, Psal. 88:15.

Now faith's part here in this fight is,

1st, To justify God in the dispensation, Psal. 22:3, and to submit to sovereignty, Job 2:9, 10, believing he doth all things well. The man

has to do with him whose will is the supreme law, and so must not adventure to call him to an account.

2dly, To cleave to God in Christ by a faith of adherence; saying with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him, Job 13:15. He must resolutely adhere, over the belly of discouragements.

3dly, To believe an outgate in due time; saying with the church, Mic. 7:8, "When I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." Hence is that exhortation, Is. 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

4thly, To hold the conclusion of our interest, notwithstanding the arguments drawn from the divine dispensation to prove us naught. Hence says Job chap. 27:5, 6, "Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

5thly, Continuing in the way of duty notwithstanding; as Job did, chap. 1:20, 21, who, notwithstanding all the calamities that befel him, blessed God.

Thirdly, There is a fight of faith in temptations from Satan. He is the declared enemy of God and mankind. Natural men he tempts to sin, to get them kept the surer in his gripes; the godly, that he may mar their communion with God, their comfort and growth, and may make their lives bitter, if he cannot get them back entirely to his service; both that he may get God dishonoured by them. The temptations of Satan are too many to be reckoned up particularly; but I shall take notice of these eight things following, in which ye would set yourselves to fight the fight of faith.

1. Temptations to sin, after some seeming or real enjoyment of God in ordinances or providences. Nothing is more ordinary than a subtle or furious attack of the devil on a person brought into a better case than ordinary, Cant. 5:1, 2. Thus after solemn ordinances. So after Christ's baptism, Matth. 4:1; and the disciples after the first communion. Satan is a proud, envious Spirit. The better it is with a soul, the more likely is the honour of God to be advanced, and their own salvation. And neither of these can that malicious spirit endure. In this case faith is to manage a fight, by,

1st, Believing the Scripture warnings and instances of this: Luke 22:31, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." 2 Cor. 12:7. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Hereby the soul will be set to watch before the temptation come, and so be in better case to resist it; and when it is come, will see that it is no more than what God's people have met with.

2dly, Resisting, not in confidence of vows, purposes, and resolutions, the present frame of the heart, or grace already received; but in confidence of the grace that is in Christ, and the new supplies of it: 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." It is confidence in what we have in ourselves that mars all.

2. Temptations to the sin that one is most easily laid aside unto: Heb. 12:1, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Satan will be sure to attack you on the weak

side, where he is most likely to prevail. He knows what is the sin of one's constitution, age, calling, and the like, and there to set on where the wall is weakest. But he that minds for heaven, must resist, and fight against him, and that in faith.

1st, Believing the necessity of overcoming, even in that particular: Matth. 5:29, 30, "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell, And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Men would do well to remember that there the one thing lacking, which ruins all, may lie, Mark 10:21. And if the devil can get the man kept under the dominion of any one lust, it will serve his purpose for that man's eternal ruin, though he have otherwise many good things about him.

2dly, Believing, that such temptations may be overcome and got mastered: Luke 17:6, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustardseed, ye might say unto this sycamine-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you." These temptations men do so naturally incline to comply with, that they are ready to think, it is in vain to offer to resist them, for it will not do, Jer. 2:25, "Thou saidst, There is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." This is the language of unbelief, which faith must contradict, if one would stand.

3dly, Believing, that, in the use of appointed means, he shall overcome, through grace and strength from the Lord: Mark 11:24, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." This faith makes the soul in this case like a giant refreshed with wine, opposing Christ's promised strength

to its own weakness, and the force of the temptation; and so brings it off victorious, Is. 40 ult. and 45:24.

3. Temptations to the grossest sins. Nobody is out of hazard of these, while in this world, 1 Cor. 10:12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Satan makes great hellish gain by these; he wastes and defiles the conscience, gets God greatly dishonoured, and religion exposed to reproach by them. He gets the mask pulled off many hypocrites by them; and gets sincere Christians sometimes made to go halting to the grave by them, Prov. 7:26. They that would see heaven must resist, and resist in faith,

1st, Believing that they are snares for soul-ruin, according to the word, Prov. 6:27, 28, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" and chap. 1:17, "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." It is the work of faith to discern, by the glass of the word, Satan's devices, and arts of destruction; that the soul, seeing them so, may conceive a horror of them. Hence says the apostle, Rom. 12:9, "Abhor that which is evil."

2dly, Believing that it is not the temptation, but the yielding to it, that will provoke God against you. I own, that such temptations are often sent as a punishment for other sins, as Judas' covetousness was punished with a temptation to betray Christ for money: and by such means God often shakes himself loose of hypocrites, as in Judas' case, and spues them out of his mouth, leaving them to yield to them, Rev. 3:16. And it is often the thought of serious souls, that temptations to sins so very gross are a sign of the Lord's hatred against them: yet that is a plain mistake; for what sin is there so gross but a child of God may be tempted to it? Asaph was tempted to deny a providence, Psal. 73:13. Agur saw himself in hazard of

atheistical contempt of God, Prov. 30:9. Job was tempted to blaspheme and curse God, Job 1:11, 12. to self-murder, chap. 7:15. Christ himself was tempted to distrust, self-murder, and worshipping of the devil, Matth. 4. The faith of these things will be strengthening under such horrid temptations.

3dly, Believing the word condemning and forbidding these sins, and so opposing Heaven's word of command and threatening unto the temptation. Thus our Lord resisted all his temptations in faith, Matth. 4. This is faith's wielding the sword of the Spirit against the tempter, which is fitted to awe the heart with the authority of God, and fill it with abhorrence of the temptation. Whenever the temptation is given, there should presently be some apt Scripture to oppose to it in faith; and as oft as the temptation is repeated, do ye repeat the word in faith, and Satan will fly at length. So in such cases ye should have such Scriptures as these ready, Deut. 28:58, 59; Psal. 14:1; 1 John 3:15; Eph. 5:5, 6.

4thly, Believing the promises suited to the case. There is no temptation any can be in, but there is a promise suited for it in the word, which is the armour faith must wield in order to overcome: 1 Cor. 10:13, God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." James 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." And in the faith of the promise make resistance, not doubting but it shall be accomplished in your case: and according to your faith of the promise in the use of means, so shall it be; as with Peter on the water, and the army against Amalek with Moses' hands lift up.

4. Temptations artfully suited to one's circumstances. Satan has a hellish art of framing his temptations upon his observation of

people's circumstances, wherein they are most likely to take with them. Thus Christ being an hungered, the devil tempted him to distrust, Matth. 4:3. Job was tempted to blaspheme and despair under his afflictions. Achan was tempted to steal, a fair opportunity offering. Thus he has his temptations suited to the age and the young, the poor and the rich, the jovial and those of a sorrowful heart. He knows, that in such a case he rows with the stream, and is most likely to prevail. But resist ye in faith,

1st, Believing, according to the word, that Satan watcheth all opportunities against you, 1 Pet. 5:8. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." This will make you to watch against him, when the enemy has such an advantage against you that he will not let slip. They had not need to sleep who are within the enemy's gunshot.

2dly, Believing that God's eye is on you, and the Lord has you upon your trials in that particular, to which ye are so tempted. Hence says Joseph, Gen. 39:9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? Men's corrupt hearts are apt to think, when a fair occasion of sinning lies before them, that now is the time to gratify the lust; but happy were they could they think, now, here is a trial for me, and God is looking on to see how I will behave.

3dly, Believing that as the devil suits his temptations, so Christ suits his help and assistance, to the circumstances of poor sinners: so that resolving to resist, you may say, There are more with us than against us, 1 Cor. 10:13, forecited. Whatever way the stream runs for your compliance with the temptation, stretch out your withered hands to swim against it, in faith of your throughbearing upon the ground of God's faithfulness, Is. 40:28–30.

5. Temptations from one sin to another. Satan knows, that one sin makes way for another; and that to get in his finger once, is the way to get in his whole hand after. So Eve's lustful look to the forbidden fruit, made way for her taking, taking for eating, that for giving to her husband and his eating: and so the whole world's ruin was completed, Gen. 3:6. Thus it is usual for Satan to prevail with those that have yielded to him in one temptation, to lie for covering it again. And some sins natively lead to others; as in the well known story of the three sins one was tempted to. Thus drunkenness makes men an easy prey to uncleanness, Prov. 23:33. And some when once the devil has got them to be harlots, the temptation from that, and from their credit, has made them murderers: some murdering their children after they are born, some before they are born, going about to destroy their conceptions; the latter as well as the former murderers, and guilty of innocent blood in a degree beyond Onan, Gen. 38:9, whom the Lord himself slew as a murderer. But ye must resist, and that in faith. Happy they Who resist the beginnings of sin, who crush the viper in the bud: but when ye are fallen into the snare, fight against the temptation to add sin to sin, or to cover one sin with another.

1st, Believing, that there is mercy for penitents, but none for those Who harden themselves in their wickedness: Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." Nay, there is not a more ready way under heaven to expose sinners to the arrows of God's wrath, than to be hardened in wickedness, Deut 29:19, 20.

2dly, Believing, that the design of the temptation to one sin from another, is plainly the ruin of the soul, that the devil may get the person so deep into the mire, that he may never win out again. Thus he drove Judas from the betraying of Christ, into an attack against

his own life. For thus the one sin becomes a need-nail to the other, shutting up the soul under the guilt of it, not to be removed but by a miracle of mercy.

3dly, Believing, that all the shame, and pain, and misery that can follow in the world, upon one sin, is not to be laid in the balance with the wrath of God, that is kindled against the sinner by running into another sin because he has been guilty of one, Matth. 16:26. This all such as so do will find, either in this world, or in hell, when God shall make all their sins together lie on their own heads. For sooner or later sin will find out the guilty, Numb. 32:23.

4thly, Believing the promise of pardon through the Redeemer's blood, however atrocious and heinous the sin is: 1 John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Some are led on from one sin to another, because they have no sense of the ill and danger of it to their souls: the faith of God's testimony of their sin would cure this, and make them cry out, Undone. Others have a secret despair of finding mercy, and so they proceed from, evil to worse: but the faith of the promise of pardon would cure that: Is. 1:18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

5thly, Believing the promise of renewed strength even to those that have slighted it before, Jer. 3:14. They who have been foiled by one temptation, may get victory over another. They may have taken a large step on the devil's ground, who yet looking to Christ by faith, may stop and go no further, Psal. 65:3.

6. Temptations suddenly and surprisngly cast in, and resolutely continued, 2 Cor. 12:8. These are Satan's fiery darts, Eph. 6:16. This is a furious assault of the devil, which he often makes

use of in blasphemous or other diabolical injections into the minds of poor sinners; where the soul is in no better case than one, who descending a thatched house, no sooner gets one fire-ball quenched, but another is thrown in on him. If at any time this be your case, set to vigorous resistance, in faith,

1st, Believing, that these are your affliction and trial, but no further your sin than you yield or consent to them. This is clear from the horrible Satanical suggestions made to our Saviour, Matt. 4. while yet there was no sin in him. Satan does with these as harlots laying their brats at the door of honest matrons, so confounding, perplexing, and hurrying the poor tempted sinner, that he is apt to take the voice of Satan for his own voice. But unless ye yield to them, and embrace them, Satan, and only he, shall be accountable for them.

2dly, Adhering resolutely by faith to the Lord Jesus, in that hour and power of darkness, as your Lord and Saviour did. Thus our Lord gave us an example, John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." If ever that resolute adherence is necessary, it is necessary at such a time: Is. 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The great end and design of the tempter by these furious attacks, is, to drive the poor tossed tempted creature from his hold of Christ: but we should be like the traveller in the windy day, that holds his cloak the faster the harder it blows.

3dly, Believing, that there is no safety in parleying with the tempter, but ever and anon the temptation is to be rejected with abhorrence. It was Eve's parley with the tempter, that laid the foundation of the

ruin of the world by the first sin, Gen. 3. Setting on the Second Adam, he got his answer a refusal, with abhorrence of his proposal, immediately, Matth. 4. These suggestions are not so far to be listened to, as that one should think with himself whether he should comply with them or not. "The Lord rebuke thee," is the short and safe answer.

4thly, Believingly opposing the Lord's word to them, which condemns and forbids the things tempted to. In those temptations our Saviour met with, which were shocking even to the light of nature, it is remarkable he still opposes scripture to them, Matth. 4:7, 10. For that is a divine ordinance for repelling of temptation, to be reiterated in faith as often as Satan repeats his temptation.

5thly, Believing, that there is grace in Christ Jesus sufficient for repelling these most violent temptations, and that it is sufficient for you in your case in particular, Hence says our Lord, 2 Cor. 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." If Satan prevail so far as to cause the tempted to think, that the violence of the temptation is so great that it is not possible for them to stand against it; this is such a weakening of faith, that the breach can hardly miss to be made there, as a breaking forth of an high wall in an instant. And Satan cannot obtain it of the tempted but by turning his eyes away from Christ into himself; Therefore, in that hour of darkness, let the tempted keep his eye on the fulness of strength in Christ for him: 2. Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

6thly, Believing the promise of victory to the poor struggler with temptation: Jam. 4:7, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." The faith of the victory is necessary to animate the tempted to continue the struggle, and will make him in the temptation to be like

a giant refreshed with wine, and will undoubtedly bring him off victorious at length. For there is the decision, "According to thy faith, so be it unto thee."

7. Temptations striking at the very foundations of faith and religion, such as against the being of God, and the divine authority of the scriptures, Psal. 14:1. and 73:13. These are most dangerous, but they are what the devil himself cannot prevail with himself to believe; though he fain would, yet he cannot be an atheist, nor an infidel as to the scriptures, Jam. 2:19. But he sometimes would palm these foul atheistical principles on poor sinners, even saints of God, who want not an atheistical principle in them to work upon. If at any time Satan attack you with such temptations, ye must resist them,

1st, Believing, that they are the spawn of the old serpent in the corrupt heart, the hissing of the crooked serpent: Psal. 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Hence it is said of the beast in Rev. 13:6 that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." This is the reception they should get immediately, faith discerning the devil's cloven foot in them at their very first appearance. Whether they come immediately from the devil, or from the corrupt heart itself moved by Satan, it is all a case in this point; believe them to be hellish, devilish, most abominable, and to be treated with the utmost abhorrence. And the sooner ye give them that entertainment, the victory will be the more easy and speedy.

2dly, Resolutely believing the foundation-principles which the temptation strikes against, over the belly of the Satanical objections mustered up against them before you, though ye be not able to answer those objections or loose the difficulties: Heb. 11:6, "He that

cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." 2 Tim. 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." And hence is that exhortation of the apostle, Eph. 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

There is not wanting store of reasons to support the great foundation-principles of religion; and nothing but sophistry can be brought against them, which reason sufficiently enlightened may discover. There are convincing arguments for the being of a God, and the authority of the scriptures, to be used against atheists. But when ye are assaulted with these temptations, I dare not advise you to the way of disputing with the tempter, but to the way of believing; not to the bringing reasons for these principles against him, and answering his hellish objections against them, but to a resolute holding of the conclusion over the belly of all his objections; because,

(1.) They are first principles, and ye are not obliged to dispute them with any, unless it were to keep an opposer from ruin, as in the case of atheists. But this has no place in a combat with the devil, of whom there is no hope.

(2.) Because the devil is an intercommuned spirit, with whom we are not to commune and enter into reasoning without a special call. Our Lord himself, though he could have reasoned the devil out of it, yet he took not that method, but just opposed to his temptations the testimony of scripture. And it is certainly the safest way for us, whatever we have to say in temptation, to say it to God, rather than to the devil.

(3.) Because the devil is a disputant too subtle for us, and in the way of wit and reason may quickly over-reach us. I make no question, but the devil is a philosopher and divine far beyond any of our greatest scholars: and men may expect from him most subtle turns of wit to elude their arguments, and to start objections which it will not be easy to answer. And therefore it is not safe to engage in dispute with him.

But do ye resolutely believe the principles you have received on divine authority, which ye have no reason to quit on the devil's contrary testimony, though he pretend reason for it, since he is known to be a liar and murderer. This the apostle prescribes, Eph. 6:16. forecited. And this method of holding by the conclusion resolutely, while the sinner is not capable to answer the objections, is recommended to us by the practice of the saints, Jer. 12:1; Matt. 15:25. Therefore, while Satan casts in these temptations, or raises them in your heart, enter your protestation against them, (crying out of violence and wrong), that you allow them not, you do believe, and will through his grace believe these foundations, and will not quit them.

3dly, Believing and applying the promise of saving illumination, and teaching of the Spirit. It is light from the Lord himself, that must dispel the mists that Satan raises in the corrupt heart, wherein these horrible temptations do take place. Hence says our Lord to Peter, Matth. 16:17, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." 1 Cor. 2:12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." And this light is brought in, by faith's applying the promises suited to the case. Of these are many, such as Heb. 8:11; John 17, and 14:21. And the tempted should lift his eyes unto the

Lord, that he may so shine in his word, into his soul, as that his light may dispel the darkness, according to his promise.

4thly, Believing the scripture accounts of these things, of those mysteries of providence from whence Satan raiseth these temptations. Satan sometimes observes the spirits even of saints fretted and rankled with long and sore afflictions, their prayers not heard and answered, the wicked prospering, and they in great distress: and here he plants his cannon, to beat down from these, even the foundations of all religion. Thus he dealt with Asaph, Psal. 73:12, 13, 14. And he resists him by believing the scripture account of those mysteries of providence, vers. 16–18. This is the way to undermine Satan's battery, to rase the foundations on which he builds.

What will that malicious spirit make of the long and sore distresses of God's people, and the prosperity of the wicked, against the being or nature of God, and the certainty of his word? The sun may hide his head long in a stormy winter; but will any say therefore, there is no sun, or that the ordinances of the heavens fail and misgive? Is not one day with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day? Doth not the scripture shew, that the wicked are raised on high, that they may fall more grievously? Is there not a judgment to come, and a long eternity enough to shew God's good pleasure in the vessels of his mercy, and his wrath against the vessels of wrath, though neither the godly have two summers, nor the wicked two winters, in one year? Have not prayers lain long over, that yet have got a gracious answer at length? Zech. 7:3; James 5:11.

Thus believing is the method of resisting in these temptations. Howbeit, when ye are out of the shock of temptation in these matters, it would be of good use to fortify and confirm your faith of

the foundation principles of religion, with all the reasons and arguments ye can draw together for them.

8. Lastly, Temptations of delusion. This is a kind of temptation most hard to resist, Satan therein transforming himself into an angel of light, and pressing to sin under the notion of duty, 2 Cor. 11:14. It is a great trial of faith, Matth. 24:24; a great and fearful plague where it takes, Is. 66:4; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12, and has always a lamentable upshot, according to the nature thereof, Is. 1. ult. But ye must resist in faith,

1st, believing your own weakness and darkness in yourselves, together with the diligence of Satan the great seducer, according to the scripture, 2 Cor. 3:5, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is of God. 1 Pet. 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour." It is self-conceit, a high opinion of our own great attainments, that most readily betrays men into the snare of delusion; for these are in little fear of Satan's wiles, and so are the more easily caught in his snare.

2dly, Believing the holy scriptures to be the only rule of faith and manners, and a full and perfect rule; and to improve it so: Is. 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." There is an itch in the nature of man, to be wise above what is written; and sometimes Satan has made his gain thereof by visions, voices, dreams, impressions, and impulses. But in all such cases take heed to yourselves, that Satan delude you not: but bring the matter to the word written, and thereby examine it. What is of God will abide the trial by that touch-stone; and the more closely it is brought to the word, it will appear the more clear: what is not so, will lose its lustre

there, as ill wares brought out to the light of the sun. And therefore those under delusion are mighty loathe to examine by the word: 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Pet. 1:18, 19, "And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." The holy scripture is the stated way of communication betwixt heaven and us: it is from the Holy Spirit, and it is not possible that he should contradict himself, Is. 59. ult. Therefore "though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," Gal. 1:8.

Lastly, Believing the promise of guidance into all truth, John 16:13, "Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." Psal. 25:2, "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way." The soul thus emptied of itself, and leaning to the Lord Christ for his teaching, will not want teaching in the use of means. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 28:7, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped." Our Lord Jesus is the appointed leader and guide of his people, Is. 55:4. He is given of God for a light of the people. He has set us our ways-marks in this as in all other cases. Divine manifestations are always sanctifying and humbling; delusions puff up, and leave the soul always as unholy as they found it. Divine manifestations have ever an immediate tendency to holiness; delusions have always a tendency to unholiness. And even when duty is pressed in delusion, it will readily

be found either out of season, or not the duty of one's station, or to have some such flaw in it or other.

Fourthly, There is a fight of faith in afflictions: Heb. 10:32, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." One may as well think to travel without the flies annoying him in a hot summer day, as to go through the world without meeting with afflictions. They are common to good and bad. In the Lord's way one cannot miss them: Acts 14:22, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In the way of sin one will meet them too: Eccl. 10:8, "He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." Sovereignty distributes them, to some more, to others less; but to all, some. The native effect of afflictions on the guilty creature, is to drive it away from God, (however they are oft turned to good); even as the lash of a whip natively drives away him that is lashed, from him that lasheth. So that it is owing to something else that they do good to sinners. And that,

1. To a word of divine appointment. Afflictions are an ordinance of God for good to poor sinners: Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." And a divine appointment will alter the nature and operation of a thing. The savour of burnt flesh is very unpleasant, but the divine ordinance of sacrificing made it a sweet savour, Gen. 8:21. Clay laid on one's eyes is a mean natively to make one blind: yet, by virtue of a divine ordinance, it cured blindness, John 9:6, 7. So afflictions natively, or of themselves, drive away the soul from God, but, by virtue of a divine ordinance, lead it to him.

2. To a receiving of them in faith: 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." See Heb. 11:35–39. Whoever would profit by a divine ordinance, must receive it in faith, Heb. 4:2. For to every divine ordinance there is a promise annexed to be believed: and the promise being believed, the ordinance has its effect. So that we see afflictions do good to some, to others no good, but ill: Why? It is faith and unbelief that make the difference.

Wherefore ye must fight in faith against the native tendency of afflictions in themselves. And if ye ask, What is that tendency in afflictions on the guilty creature, which he must fight against? and, How must one fight in faith against it? I answer in the six following particulars. It is,

1. To impress the person with the apprehension that God is his enemy, and that he is seeking his ruin: 2 Kings 6. ult. Even Job himself was carried away with this hard thought of God, Job 33:10, 11, "Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths." Guilt lying on the conscience, makes it full of hard thoughts of God, and terrible forebodings. Whenever the guilty soul hears from heaven by affliction, it is ready to strike in his mind, Now this is for my sin, and God is proclaiming war against me to ruin me. Hence affliction is several times the means of awakening the secure sinner; though he can never come to God till he believe.

Now, ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that though all your afflictions are infallible signs of God's hatred of your sin, and his seeking the ruin of it; yet no affliction on you in this world can be such a sign of God's hatred of your persons, and his seeking your ruin, Eccl. 9:1, 2. No, no; God's dearest children may have as heavy afflictions on their backs, as any other persons in the world, Psal. 73:12, 14. And no wonder, since God's only begotten Son had the heaviest burden of afflictions that ever was on the back of a man.

2dly, Believing, that afflictions are God's ordinance for good to the afflicted, even as really as is the preaching of the word to them: Prov. 29:15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom." They are the discipline of God's house, as the word is the doctrine of it: Heb. 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." So the design of the rod is your good, as the design of physic is the health of the patient; though, in the meantime, one, by misguiding under it, may indeed kill himself; even as one, by not complying with the design of the affliction may wound his own soul. It is certain, that afflictions have a word of divine appointment for good; there is a blessing annexed to them by promise: but how can ye share of it, if ye do not believe them to be an ordinance of God for good?

3dly, Believing, that God by these means is seeking your good, as using towards you the very same means that he does towards the dearest of his children: 2 Pet. 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness,) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Rev. 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent." Should a physician give you the very same remedy that he gives to his own child, sick of your disease; what but unreasonable jealousy should make you think he designs ill

to you? And what but unbelief then can it be that makes you think, that God seeks your ruin by affliction, with which he works the cure of his own?

4thly, Believing the promise annexed to that ordinance, with application to yourselves, that your affliction, through his grace, shall do you good: Is. 27:9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." Zeph. 3:12, 13, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies: neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." This is the way to partake of the efficacy of the ordinance of affliction; and it is the faith of it that makes the saints welcome the rod, to be patient under it, and to comply with the design of it, Micah 7:8, 9; while those that expect no good of them, get as little many times.

2. To take all heart and hand from him in his approaches to God. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 77:3, "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. The guilty conscience takes up the affliction, and just knocks him down with it, fells him with it before the Lord. He is filled with consternation before an angry God, and his heart fails, and can look for no good at the Lord's hand, 1 John 3:20, 21. The affliction lies so heavy upon the poor sinner, that he cannot think there is any hope of God's hearing his prayers, or making him welcome to the throne of grace. Hence says Job chap. 9:16, 17, "If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause." But ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that there are bowels of compassion in God, while nothing but frowns appear (Psal. 130:1, 7.) in his countenance. And it is faith's work, to take up these bowels of mercy in as afflicting God. QUESTION. What way shall one perceive them? ANSWER. While ye behold his anger in his providences, ye must look to his word by faith, and there ye will see these bowels of mercy: Is. 49:14–17, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee." Chap. 63:9, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them, and carried them, all the days of old. And ye may be helped hereto, by considering the heart of a father smiting his own child; where, in a sense, the heart goes not along with the hand. Thus the church prays, but in faith: Is. 63:15, 16, "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." And this the church doth, and that on good grounds, Lam. 3:33, "For he doth not afflict willingly [Heb. from his heart] nor grieve the children of men."

2dly, Believing the testimony of God's word, as to instances of persons that have had God's heart towards them, while his hand has been lying heavy on them. Thus it was with Gideon, Judg. 6:12, 13. Thus it was with Job: he was most dear to God, yet he was given up unto the power of Satan to afflict him. And thus it was with a cloud of

witnesses. These things are written for your learning; that ye, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

3dly, Believing the promise of hearing the prayers of the afflicted, with application to yourselves: Psal. 50:15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Oppose this promise in faith, to the disheartening operation of the affliction upon you before the Lord: take this cordial by the mouth of faith, when ye begin to faint in your approaches to God. So shall ye "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." Is there a secret whisper, that you are so afflicted that you need not pray? It is the surmise of unbelief. Say ye, Since I am so afflicted, I am called to pray, James 5:13, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray:" and there is a particular encouragement in my case, Psal. 102:17, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

3. To frighten the sinner away from God. Thus our first parents saw they were naked, and presently fled to hide themselves from the Lord. When the conscience is fired with guilt under affliction, its natural motion is to run away from God: 1 Sam. 6:20, 21, "And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us? And they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the Lord; come ye down, and fetch it up to you." Hence the sorrow of the world is said to work death, because the more deep one is drenched in it, the farther he goes from God. Satan knows this very well, and therefore is he so eager to have sinners afflicted, and to make their lives bitter with it; though he is sometimes outshot in his own bow, as in Job's case. But ye must fight against this in faith,

1st, Believing, that God sends on afflictions, not to frighten the sinner from him, but to bring the sinner to him: Hos. 4. ult, "The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices," Chap. 5:1, "Hear ye this, O priests, and hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor." It is indeed God's ordinary method to bring home runaways and backsliders: Hos. 2:6, 7, "Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy ways with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." Satan's design is one thing in them, and God's design another: and though Satan row with the stream, a touch from the hand of God on the sinner's heart will carry his purpose.

2dly, Believing, that none can better their case by running away from the Lord: however hard their case may seem with him, they can never mend themselves at another hand. Hence said Samuel unto the people, 1 Sam. 12:21, "Turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain." And hence we find, that Peter said to christ, John 6:68, "Lord to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." The sinner under affliction is often like Hagar, "flying from the face of her mistress Sarai, Gen. 16:8: and that is the best course which the angel of the Lord directed Hagar unto, ver. 9 namely, to return to her mistress, and submit herself under her hands. Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord, and shunning the journey to Nineveh, cast himself into a whale's belly. And those that take course in their affliction, will not speed better.

3dly, Believing your welcome unto, and certain reconciliation with an offended God through christ, 2 cor. 5:19, 20, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." God was never so angry with any of Adam's children, but he was ready to lay by his anger for the sake of Christ, apprehended by faith. The whole tenor of the gospel holds out this truth: and the law is suffered to lash the sinner, and afflictions are laid on him, to the very end that he may improve it for his reconciliation with God.

4. To bring the sinner to cast off religion, and to lay aside the duties of it. Hence says Christ of the stony ground hearers, Matth. 13:21, "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." Thus we find a profane generation arguing the vanity of religion, and the duties of it, from their afflicted and low circumstances, Mal. 3:14, 15, "Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy: yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered." No less a man than Asaph was near to have turned atheist on this very score, under a strong temptation, Psal. 73:12, 13, 14, "Behold," says he, "these are the ungodly, who, prosper in the world they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." And so it has fared with many, who in their prosperity have kept up a form of religion, that their spirits have been quite soured as to religion in their adversity, and they have visibly given up with it; like the mixed multitude in the wilderness.

Here is great need to fight the fight of faith,

1st, Believing that prosperity is not tied to religion, nor yet to irreligion: but which of the ways soever one takes, affliction will meet him in the world, Eccl. 9:2, "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," &c. If men take up religion for worldly prosperity, no wonder they be baulked of their expectation, and lay it aside again upon the disappointment. But their laying it aside will not secure them from affliction. Therefore men should look so to religion itself, as to be wedded to it for its instrinict value. But in the way of religion men may find a good conscience under affliction, while they find an ill conscience in the way of casting it off.

2dly, Believing that the great advantage of religion is to be reaped after the time of trial in this life is over. Hence says our Lord, Rev. 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Chap. 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Now is our seed-time; and the sowing must be in tears, where the reaping time of joy is to follow. The harvest of glory in heaven comes most full after a wet seed-time.

3dly, Believing that there is a notable advantage in religion for bearing of afflictions. Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 1:12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-wards." There are promises in the covenant, which applied by faith, are full of comfort to the afflicted. The Lord's word is full of light as to the nature, uses, and ends of them; so that the Bible is the

best company for those in affliction. This well is deep and faith must draw.

4thly, Believing that the promises with respect to affliction, both as to the blessed issue of them in another world, and as to support under them in this world, shall be made out to you. Thus Asaph in his affliction fastened his feet, Psal. 73:24, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," says he, "and afterward receive me to glory." It is the faith of the upper Canaan, and of provision in the wilderness-world, that fits for the wilderness-life.

5. To provoke the sinner against God, to cause him to murmur against him, quarrel with him, and arraign and condemn in his heart, at least, the conduct of holy providence in the ordering of his lot: 1 Cor. 10:10, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." Prov. 19:3, "The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord." Hard affliction laid on a man in whom dwelleth a corrupt heart, is apt to raise the black band of impatience, complaining, fretting, murmuring, and practical blasphemy against God; like a stick stirring up a muddy pool, or an ant's nest. It made even a Job and Jeremiah to curse the day of their birth. Job was much overcome with his affliction, when he expressed himself so indecently, chap. 30:21, "Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me." Fight against this tendency of affliction in faith,

1st, Believing, that God is a righteous God, and your Sovereign Lord, having all power over you. There may be mysteries of providence in his dealing with us, which we cannot account for: but there can be no unjust step in his procedure with us: Deut. 32:4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Therefore that conclusion

must be stuck to by faith, Jer. 12:1, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." We are his own by creation, and have forfeited our mercies by sin: let faith view him in the throne of sovereignty, and silence us: Matth. 20:15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?"

2dly, Believing, that you are debtors to mercy for that it is not worse with you than it is; saying, with the church, Lam. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." However hard any one's affliction is in this world, it is certain they deserve worse, and God could lay on worse. Hence is that acknowledgment of Ezra's, chap. 9:13, "Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;" and that, Psal. 90:11, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." This will make one to give thanks for what is kept off, rather than murmur for what is laid on.

3dly, Believing, that there is certainly need for all you meet. with: 1 Pet. 1:6, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season [if need be] ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." A holy wise God lays no needless afflictions on any: Lam. 3:33, "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Nay he gives all by weight and measure, and will not put in one grain beyond what the case requires. What though ye cannot see it? ye have yet ground to believe it from the word, and may see it in the glass of God's infinite wisdom, the contrivance of which your lot is, Deut. 32:4. So that whatsoever he doth to you, is not only well done, but best done in your circumstances, Eccl. 3:14.

4thly, Believing, that, through the grace of our Lord Jesus, all you meet with shall work for your good: Rom. 8:28, "We know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good, to them that love

God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." God can carry on the good of a person, by that which he is apt to think is for his ruin; as was the case with Jacob, when he said unto his sons, Gen. 42:36, "Ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." And though the good of them may be long ere it appear, yet where it is believed and hoped for, it will come at length, Jam. 5:7. Now this and all other promises is held forth to you in Christ to be believed, and applied to yourselves.

6. Lastly, To cause the sinner harden himself in sorrow. So we render that expression of Job's, chap. 6:10, "I would harden myself in sorrow;" But it is not the sense of that place. Affliction had this bad effect on good Jacob, Gen. 37:35. who, when all his sons, and all his daughters, rose up to comfort him concerning the loss of his son Joseph, "refused to be comforted; and said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning." It had also this bad effect on Asaph, Psal. 77:2, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord," says he; "my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted." Under affliction the heart is apt to sink; and the case sometimes appears so hopeless, that the afflicted looks not after comfort, but staves it off when offered. They bid a solemn farewell as it were to joy and comfort, and draw the sable curtains of sorrow about themselves: they have no comfortable prospect, they look for none, and resolve to hold there. This is dangerous. Fight against it in faith,

1st, Believing the promise of a comfortable outgate at length, with application to your own case. This hardening one's self in sorrow, whatever be the probabilities it is founded on, is the proper fruit of unbelief, and casts discredit on the promises of God, Psal. 103:9, "He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever." Lam.

3:32, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." It is faith's work to believe the accomplishment of them, though one cannot see how.

2dly, Believing the promise of a comfortable mixture in the affliction while it lasts. God has given a promise of moderating the trials of believers: Psal. 37:24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." Is. 37:8, "In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." And they have had experience of the outmaking thereof, 2. Cor. 4:8, 9, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, (says the apostle); we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." God has given a promise of strengthening believers to bear their trials, Deut. 33:27, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Is. 40:28, 29, 30, 31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint." The Psalmist experienced the accomplishment of this promise, Psal. 138:3, "In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, (says he): and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." God has given a promise of cordials now and then to support them, sweet blinks now and then to refresh them: Hos. 2:14, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise, when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

3dly, Believing, that your patient suffering of affliction is as acceptable to God through Christ, as your doing for God: 2 Tim. 2:12, "It is a faithful saying, If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." God has several pieces of work that he puts into the hands of his people: some he calls to do great things, others to suffer great things, Heb. 11. Whatever it is the Lord carves out to you, ply that; it is what God will accept at thy hand through the Mediator. Suffering is as really service to God, as doing is.

Thus we have seen the evil tendency of afflictions in themselves, and how we are to fight against it by faith. But there are three special cases wherein that force of affliction is greater than ordinary, and requires a strong faith to stand the shock.

1. When a stroke from the hand of the Lord comes upon a man in the way of his duty, which he is doing in obedience to the call and command of God. This is apt to make a stagger, especially when it is a duty others have an ill eye on: for by it God seems to give sentence against the man and his work. When people are going on in an ill way, it is no wonder Heaven works against them; but when the Lord meets a man as an enemy in the way of duty, that is a great trial, Psal. 71:11. It is apt to make one leave duty.

Here is great need to fight in faith,

- 1st, Believing, that that is no sign that the way you are in, being warranted by the word, is displeasing to God. It has been the trial of the Lord's people, when they have been called to the plainest duty, and have been upon signal pieces of service to God. We are to observe providences, but not to make a Bible of them; but bring them to the word, and that will open the mysteries of providence. Jonah seemed to be favoured by providence when he set his face to go to Tarshish, Jon. 1:3, yet he was wrong. Jacob had God's call to return

to his own country, and a promise of the Lord's being with him, Gen. 31:3. Laban looked on it with an ill eye. But what a train of troubles met he with in his way thither? such as his meeting with Esau, his thigh put out of joint in wrestling with the angel, his domestic trials, &c. And you may read the trials Moses met with in his going down to Egypt, upon God's command to redeem the Israelites, Exod. 4:24, &c.

2dly, Believing, that God has holy designs in the matter, becomeing his own infinite wisdom, which ye may afterwards come to see, if ye see them not in the time; though in the meantime he is pleased with your way. Hence said our Lord to Peter, John 13:7, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Sometimes he designs to correct for some mismanagement in the sotting about the duty, as in Moses' case for not circumcising his son, Exod. 4:24, 25; sometimes to hide pride from men's eyes, as in the apostle's case, 2 Cor. 12:7, and as in the case of the children of Israel their being foiled by the children of Benjamin, Judg. 20:18–26. And this he doth always for the trial of his people, their faith, regard to duty, &c. So Satan may be permitted to act against them for their trial; and sure he will be the more eager, the more important the duty is, 1 Cor. 16:9; 1 Thess. 2:18.

3dly, Believing, that there is no safety in one's leaving the road of duty, meet with what they will in it. Hence says the wise man, Prov. 10:9, "He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: but he that perverteth his ways shall be known." A rebuke in the way of duty is sweeter than a warm sunshine in the way of sin: "Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, Heb. 11:26. There is communion with God to be had in such providences, and they furnish men with useful experiences for their after life.

2. When the affliction is extraordinary, and unusual, so that it draws the eyes of beholders to notice it particularly. When people's afflictions are no more than what is very ordinary and usual, they are the more easily borne; but when God seems to point out one to others, by some unordinary stroke, how hard is that to bear, how hard to keep off concluding that God has a particular hatred against us? There is need to fight in faith here,

1st, Believing, that it has been often the lot of God's children, and particularly of his darling children whom he loved most to meet with such kind of trials as would seem to have imported a particular hatred of them. Hence says the apostle, Heb. 10:33, "Ye were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions." And again, 1 Cor. 4:9, "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." This was the lot of Christ himself, Psal. 22:6, "I am a worm, and no man," says he; "a reproach of men, and despised of the people." How was Job's heart pierced with that question, Job 5:1, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn? It is very rare, I suppose, that any of God's children have something more than ordinary about them to the advantage, but they get something more than ordinary to try them. Of all the patriarchs there was not one that had more divine manifestations or so many as Jacob, nor so many and great afflictions neither. Of all the sons of Jacob, there was none so high raised and useful as Joseph, and none so afflicted. Heman was a man of a more than ordinary reach, 1 Kings 4:31, and so of afflictions, Psal. 88:15, "I am afflicted" says he "and ready to die, from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted." Moses was the meekest man in the earth, and never mere man had more ado with it; Job was the mirror of patience, and none suffered more.

2dly, Believing the illimited power of sovereignty, which requires absolute resignation: Matt. 20:15, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" It is a silencing query, Rom. 9:20, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" Sovereignty takes one piece of clay, and sets it on a throne; another of the same, and sets it on a dunghill in rags and sores; reaches to some the ordinary meal of affliction, but makes another's mess five times as much. And who will set bounds to the disposals of sovereignty?

3dly, Believing, that these different aspects of providence upon men, are but for a time, for the time of trial: and they will soon be at an end: Job 21:23–26, "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." It is no great matter whether one be the king or the fool on the stage; for in a little they get behind the curtains, and each one appears as really he is. Ordinary and unordinary afflictions will shortly have an end; and they that bear their own part right, happy will they be.

3. When the affliction is of long continuance. Some afflictions are like a summer-shower, heavy in their time, but soon over, and it grows fair again: but the most trying are the continuing afflictions, that are like a stormy winter, that blows hard day after day. Many times deliverance is looked for, but it comes not. Any promising signs that appear at any time do misgive: and the storm is renewed, and grows ever the longer the more hopeless. Here is a sore shock to abide, which requires to fight in faith,

1st, Believing that this is a part of the discipline of God's house, whereby he exercises his own children. Hence says the prophet, Jer. 8:20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." David complains, Psal. 69:3. of his being weary of his crying, of his throat's being dried; of his eyes failing while he waited for his God. The church was so long continued in affliction, that she forgot prosperity, Lam. 3:17. Many of the Lord's people have been kept so long under the hatches, that they have hung up their harps on the willows, so as to have no more use for them; and yet have been delivered.

2dly, Believing that the longest and blackest night will have a morning; and that though the affliction continue long, it will not continue always. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 103:9, "The Lord will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever." If the question be, "Watchman, what of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Is. 21:11 the answer is, ver. 12, "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come." The sky that has long lowred, may clear ere night: the wound may be looked on as incurable, that yet will be fairly healed, Jer. 15:18, 20. And if it should not be removed in time, yet the faith of a blessed eternity may keep up the heart, when "God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away," Rev. 21:4.

3dly, Believing that God knows the fittest season for removing the affliction, and not we. Hence said our Lord to his brethren, in another case, John 7:6, "My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready." He keeps times and seasons in his own hand, and at the fit time he will remove it, Hab. 2:3. but not before, if it is to be removed in mercy. Men's hearts must abide much hewing, and God

may have much ado with an affliction that is not soon done. The affliction is too soon over, that is removed ere the design of it be answered, Psal. 10:17. None blames the husbandman, that he sows not his seed, before the ground be fit to receive it.

Lastly, Believing that the more we are resigned to the Lord as to the time and method of deliverance, the nearer we are to it, the fairer we lie for it. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 10:17, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." Man's extremity is God's opportunity, Deut. 32:36. Witness Abraham on the mount, the disciples at sea, the Israelites at the Red sea. Happy should they be, who leaving the deliverance on the Lord, should make it their main care to answer the calls of providence by the affliction while it is continued.

Fifthly, There is a fight of faith with this present evil world." Hence says the apostle, 1 John 5:4, 5, "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" This present evil world is a party opposite to God and Christ, and on the devil's side: insomuch that he that lives in friendship with it, lives at enmity with God, James 4:4. And therefore we must either fight against it, or be ruined by it. And there are these two particulars in the world, that we must fight the fight of faith against: 1. The things, 2. The men of the world.

1st, The things of the world are dangerous enemies to our souls, because of the corruption of our hearts. Hence says the apostle, 1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." O the fearful havoc of souls that is made thereby! By thorn

many saints have been cast down, wounded, and many sinners have been slain thereby. The things of the world set out three bands against us, whom we must either fight and overcome by faith, or be ruined by.

1. The white band of the world's smiles.
2. The black band of the world's frowns.
3. The mixed band of the world's cares.

First, The things of the world set out the white band of the world's smiles. And they are stained with the blood of many souls: Prov. 1:32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." The smiling world does with other men, as the panther is said to do with other beasts. He draws them after him with the sweet smell of his breath, hiding his head, and afterwards devours them. Thus was Demas ruined. The white band fights against souls with two kinds of weapons.

1. Profits of the world. Thus it set upon poor Judas with thirty pieces of silver, and so knocked him down, and slew him. It set on Moses with the treasures of Egypt, and had done so to him, had he not had faith to resist it, Heb. 11:26. The Psalmist observes the snare in these, and therefore gives the watchword, Psal. 62:10, "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches Increase, set not your heart upon them." And many a man, who has stood his ground against the black band of the world's frowns, has been overcome with the white, like the man in the fable with the sun and the wind.
2. Pleasures of the world. There are three kinds of them; "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John 2:16.

These are the silken cords, with which souls are drawn to destruction; wherewith when once men come to be bound, they are like iron fetters; the breaking of which, if ever they be broken at all, will cost a flood of tears. Hence prays the penitent Psalmist, Psal. 51:8, "Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken, may rejoice." With many they end in a judicial up-giving to vile affections, Rom. 1:26.

These weapons are wielded two ways.

(1.) In expectation. It is the natural desire of all men, "Who will shew us any good?" Psal. 4:6. The world steps in and makes such an offer, as Satan did to Christ; who when he had "taken him into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Matth. 4:8, 9. And when once the hope and expectation of its profits and pleasures is greedily embraced by an inordinate affection, the soul is set on fire therewith, and the poor creature runs to its own ruin on its own feet, Prov. 7:22, 23, And so it fares with many in this case; as with the mouse, who, watching for the gaping oyster, thrusts in her head presently when the shell opens; which being immediately closed again, she is crushed. Hence says the apostle, 1 Tim. 6:9, "They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

(2.) In fruition or enjoyment, Luke 18:24, "And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?" Such is the corruption of the heart in man, that it is ten to one if the smiling world draw sot his heart away from God. Men are apt to love the world inordinately, even when it gives them gall to drink: how hard must it be not to be

overcome with it, when it courts men, and lays itself in their bosom! Deut. 33:15, "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation."

Ye must fight against the smiling world by faith if ever ye would have the smiles of the Lord's countenance,

1st, Believing the danger that is in the world's smiles, to your immortal souls. The danger is in the sours being thereby drawn to sin against God, and so in end to be pierced with sorrows. Agur saw this, and believed it; and therefore prays thus, Prov. 30:8, 9, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?"—The smiling world is apt to betray men into pride, and a high conceit of themselves, forgetting God, contempt of God's laws, giving up themselves to the swing of their corrupt lusts and affections, &c., and so to work the ruin of the soul, Eccl. 5:13. Believe this on the testimony of God and so shall ye we watch against it,

2dly, Believing the vanity, emptiness, and insufficiency, that is in the world, and all the smiles thereof: Psal. 119:96, "I have seen an end of all perfection, (says the Psalmist;) but thy commandment is exceeding broad." Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What do they avail to a man's real worth? what can they contribute to one's eternal happiness? They are uncertain, and may quickly leave us, and wilt certainly leave us at length; we must go as we came, naked, Prov. 23:5. They are insufficient, they cannot give ease to the heart of man; one dead fly may spoil all the pot of ointment, as in Haman and Ahab's case. They

cannot satisfy the soul; witness the disappointment which the rich man met with, spoke of Luke 12:16, &c.

3dly, Believing the transcendent profit and pleasure, that is to be had in the favour of God, the smiles of his countenance, communion and fellowship with him through Jesus Christ. This believe; and believe, that ye may have it, yea, that ye shall have it, seeking it through Christ: and ye shall overcome the smiling world. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 4:6, 7, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased." Being thus by faith lifted up in your affections to heaven, the earth and all that is in it, will appear very little in your eyes, Matth. 13:45, 46; Philip. 3:8. It is unbelief of, and blindness to the things of a better world, that makes the present evil world so bulky with men.

4thly, Believing the sufficiency of his grace to carry you above them: 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." There is strength in the Mediator, for men's overcoming the world: believe the promise with application to yourselves, and ye shall be more than conquerors. The promise brings salvation with it; and the faith of it loosed Zaccheus' heart from the world, Luke 19:8.

Secondly, The things of the world set out the black band of the world's frowns. The world oftentimes brings up a train of crosses against men, to drive them away from God. Hence we read of the apostles "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22. Men must lay their accounts with their ilk days cross: and sometimes all goes wrong together with them; their sun goes down at noon-day, as in Job's

case. Crosses in worldly things do often much mischief to the soul; they will irritate their corruptions, discompose them for duty to God, and lead them aside into manifold temptations, Prov. 30:9.

Some have a fighting life with the world all their days: but, alas! it is not the fight of faith with it, but a sinful faithless fighting with it, that carries on the ruin of their souls. Ye will know this faithless fight with it by these two things.

1. All their fight is to get something of the world, not to be kept from the spiritual evil of the world. The world does not prosper with them, as it does with some others: and all their concern is to make a shift for throughbearing, which swallows up all other concerns with them. So they are such sons of earth, as that they live as if the curse of the serpent were lying on them, all their days to go on their belly, and lick the dust. The world flies from them; and yet they court it above all things. God crosses them in it, to bring their hearts off it; but over the belly of all the rebukes of providence, it is their great pursuit, Jer. 5:3, 4.

2. Their fight they have with the world, takes away from them all favour of the word of God, and of religion. A sad instance of this ye have, Exod. 6:9, where, when Moses had spoken to the children of Israel all the promises commanded him of God, mentioned in the preceding verses, it is said, "But they hearkened not unto Moses, for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." The fight of faith with the world makes the gospel savoury to men: but this carnal fight with it makes it sapless and tasteless; it rankles their spirits with respect to religion, that many such are not far from thinking that religion is for the wealthier sort; but that as for them, they have another thing ado. And thus the frowning world ruins soul and body to them; at once ruins them for time and eternity.

I would advise you to another sort of fighting with the frowning world. Fight in faith against it,

1st, Believing that the ordering of your lot is in the hand of a holy wise God, who knows best what lot is for you, Job 1:21, whether prosperous or cross. The faith of this would make you embrace the world's frowns, and welcome crosses in the world, as well as prosperity, as what God sees meet for you; as did Job, chap. 1:21, who said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

2dly, Believing that the world's frowns, and smiles too, are but empty and passing shews, which will be soon buried in everlasting forgetfulness. As the world's smiles appear more pleasant than indeed they are, so its frowns appear more terrible to the carnal heart, than they are really: Eccl. 1:2, "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The one and the other are like foam on the water, appearing big, but soon pass away. Being seen by the eye of sense, O how weighty are they! But look to them with an eye of faith, and ye will see they are all but empty noise, which will quickly be laid, 2 Cor. 4:17. The longest term of their continuance is but a few years at most. When one comes to the grave, the rich and poor are alike there; the black band and the white band are both disbanded there.

3dly, Believing that ye have greater things to be taken up about, than either the world's smiles or frowns. Hence says the Psalmist, Psal. 4:6, 7, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." The one cannot make you happy, nor the other miserable. But the favour of God and his wrath are matters of

weight; let it be your care to obtain the one, and escape the other. These things are eternal, the other but temporal; O slight not then the substance, with your concern for the shadow: Matt. 16:26, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

4thly, Believing that you are in yourselves unworthy of the least smile of common providence. Hence says Jacob, Gen. 32:10, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." And says the church, Lam. 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." O why do crosses in the world go so deep with men, but because of the want of due humiliation? and whence is that want, but from unbelief? The humble soul fighting with the world will surely be victorious, because however it frowns on him, he takes it kindly out of the hand of the Lord, as not worthy of better.

5thly, Believing that your souls are in hazard by the frowning world, as well as the souls of others by the fawning world. Hence is that prayer of Agur's, Prov. 30:8, 9, "Give me neither poverty, nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me.—lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." The devil holds some fast in the iron chains of worldly adversity, as well as he does others in the golden chains of prosperity. Some ignorantly think, that because they are poor in the world, and their lot very hard they will surely be well in another world. O deceive not yourselves. As God has no regard to men's riches in saving them, he has as little regard to their poverty: but be they poor or rich, if they be not in Christ, new creatures, really godly, they will be ruined for ever, John 3:3; Exod. 23:3.

6thly, Believing the great promise of the gospel with application to yourselves, Heb. 8:10, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, Hos. 2:19, "And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies." Your crosses in the world may well be taken by you for an alarm, saying, Depart, here is not your rest. God is setting fire to the nests you would build to yourselves among the things of the world; and withal holding out to you the great promise of the gospel. O embrace it, and trust him in it, Zeph. 3:12. And thus shall ye defeat the frowning world effectually. Believing God to be your God in Christ, ye will be very easy whether the world smile or frown, Hab. 3:17.

Lastly, Believing, that, through the grace of Christ Jesus, even the frowns of the world shall be turned to your good: Rom. 8:28, "We know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." How often has honey been gotten out of the carcas of the lion, and much good found to grow within a thorn-hedge of afflictions? The cross has brought forth much good fruit in them that have been exercised thereby: and God is kind to you indeed, if you take it so, in that he makes the world so strange to you, that ye may the more seek after acquaintance with him.

Thirdly, The things of the world set out the mixed band of the world's cares. There is none will be free of attacks from these: even a crown is lined with cares. Yea, we must needs care; our daily bread will not drop down into our mouths, nor will our necessary business be managed without thought. But men are in danger by lawful things, and not by unlawful only. And the cares of the world are often

ruining unto the soul. They are apt to put the man on a rack, to stretch out one's mind as on tenter-pins, degenerating into a faithless anxiety, Matth. 6:25, Take no thought; in the Greek it is, Be not racked in your soul; to trouble one so as to unfit him for his duty to God, Luke 10:41; to swallow up all other concerns, and to render the Lord's word, the food of the soul, quite unprofitable, Matth. 13:22. Fight in faith against them,

1st, Believing that the success of your affairs depends on the blessing of God on your endeavours, not on your anxious care about them; Psal. 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." The vanity and useless-ness of our anxiety may be very plainly read in many experiments; Matthew 6:27, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" In Providence's management of the world, how often is it seen that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all, Eccl. 9:11; and that by strength no man shall prevail? How often does some unforeseen event render a hopeful and promising project vain? and, on the other hand, set right again what seemed to be quite marred?

2dly, Believing that the best way to secure what is truly necessary and fit for you in this world, it is to be first and mainly taken up about the things of another life. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." They that are careful how to please God, God will see to them that they be provided, Psal. 34:10. They whose main care is for the eternal welfare of their souls, may expect, that, in the use of means, the temporal welfare of their bodies

shall be seen to by heaven. This is the shortest and surest way to prosper, Psal. 1:3.

3dly, Trusting in t the Lord with all your concerns which require your care, depending on him as the sovereign manager, and as a sure and safe manager for you. Hence is that exhortation, Psal. 37:3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And ye should trust in him both as to your own conduct and success, both for direction and prospering: Prov. 3:5, 6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not uonto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." This implies three things.

(1.) Laying your burden of care over on the Lord himself, believing that he will care for you, 1 Pet. 5:7. Many an unbelieving lift we take of our own burden, and then we complain that we are not able to go under it: but Jesus Christ is appointed to be the great burden-bearer for poor sinners, and they are called to casttheir burdens on him, Psal. 55:22, and 37:5. If they will needs take their burdens, and keep them on their own shoulders, who can help it? But faith's work is to trust him with all.

(2.) Believing, that he will do the best: Psal. 85:12, "The Lord shall give that which is good;" 34:10, "They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing." He knows himself what is best for us, we know it not: and we owe to him a faith so far implicit, as to believe whatever God doth is best done; and whatever way he leads us, that it is best for us to follow, as did Abraham, Heb. 11:8. It is the property of faith, thus to resign all to the Lord, trusting, that whatsoever is truly best for us, he will bring it about.

(3.) Staying yourself upon the word of the promise, Gen. 32:12, "I will surely do thee good." Thus faith is to be an anchor of the soul in

doubtful events. While anxious care leaves a person nothing to fix on, but causeth him to waver like meteors ill the air; faith fixeth on the promise of God, and renders the soul easy, come what will, Luke 12:29; 1 Sam. 1:18.

2dly, The men of the world are dangerous enemies also. There is an old enmity, which will not cease to work in them, Gen. 3:15. They are agents for the devil, factors for hell, soldiers in pay to fight Satan's battles. No man will get to heaven without a struggle with them; for they are opposite parties to all that really mind to be there. We find David very concerned to be delivered from them, Psal. 17:13, 14, "Deliver my soul," says he, "from the wicked, which is thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure." We likewise find the apostle Paul was so concerned, 2 Thess. 3:1, 2, "Finally, brethren," says he, "pray for us,—that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." And our Lord forewarns his disciples of the world's hatred, John 15:19, "If ye were of the world," says he, "the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Now, the men of the world manage the battle three ways, viz. (1.) with the tongue, (2.) with their feet, (3.) with their hands; and ye must resist them still one way, viz. in faith.

1. The men of the world fight against the children of God with the tongue. They are the seed of the serpent; and therefore it is no wonder to see them spit their venom against such as go not their way. Hence we read of their "imagining mischiefs in their heart;" of their being "continually gathered together for war;" of their having "sharpened their tongues like a serpent:" of adder's poison being under their lips, Psal. 140:2, 3. Ishmael's mocking Isaac, Gen. 21:9, is

called persecution, Gal. 4:29. The trial of the believing Hebrews was the reproaches of ungodly men, Heb. 10:32, 33. See what a conspiracy was formed against Jeremiah, Jer. 18:18, "Come, said they, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah: for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words." See likewise what a secret consultation was formed against David, intimated in that prayer of his, Psal. 64:2, 3, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity: who whet their tongues like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words. God's people are to fight in faith in this case,

1st, Believing, that our God is able to blunt the edge of their swords, and the points of their arrows, and will do it so far as he sees meet. Hence is that promise, Job 5:21, "Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue." It is in the power of their hand to fling dirt upon the faces of God's children; but it is not in their power to cause it to stick, unless the Lord has said it for the greater trial of his people. God has the hearts of all men in his hands, and his people may confidently trust in him with the preserving of their reputation while they keep his way.

2dly, Believing that all the dirt a mischeivous world flings in the face of the Lord's people, the day will come that God will wipe it cleanly away from off them, and throw it back on the faces of them that cast it: Is. 51:8, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation." A lying tongue is but for a moment, and will rebound

upon them that use such a hellish weapon. God has secured by promise the taking away of reproaches from off his people: Psal. 37:6, "And he shall bring forth thy righteousness, as the light, and thy judgment as the moon-day. 68:13, "Though ye have lien among the pots, ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." And so, in the faith of the promise, they may be very easy; and considering the use God may have for them for their good, may find soul refreshment in them. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 5:11, 12, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And says the apostle, 2 Cor. 12:10, "I take pleasure in reproaches, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake."

2. The men of the world fight against the children of God with their feet; that is, by the example of their unholy lives. And much mischief they do by that means; hereby heaps are made to lie upon heaps. Hence says our Lord, Matth. 18:7, "Woe unto the world because of offences: for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." It is hard to bear up against the course of the world lying in wickedness, to swim against that stream, considering the corruption of nature that is in the best. By the force of ill examples, many good men have been worsted, many that had not the root of the matter in them have been ruined: Matth. 24:13, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Fight against it in faith,

1st, Believing, that the way of the world is the way to eternal ruin: Eph. 2:2, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Prov. 13:20. "A

companion of fools shall he destroyed." Are we not expressly told, that the multitude is going in the way to destruction? and that there be very few which are on the way to heaven, Matth. 7. So that whosoever mind for heaven, must needs be nonconformists to the world, though thereby they become the world's wonder, like Joshua and his fellows. See 1 Pet. 4:4.

2dly, Believing, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, ye shall be able to stand the shock of the corrupt example of the world. The eye of faith will discern the greater strength to be on the side of the wrestler against ill example. Hence said Elisha, in another case, to his servant, 2 Kings 6:16, "Fear not: for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them." And says the apostle, 1 John 4:4, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. If God be for us, who can be against us?" And for us he will be, if we trust him for our upbearing against it. He strengthens the spoiled against the strong: and be the force of the current never so great, they "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them," Philip. 4:13.

3. The men of the world fight against the children of God with their hands. There is never a wicked man in the world, but, by his natural make and frame, is a persecutor, Gen. 3:15. And none is fit to travel the road to heaven, but they that are resolute to hold on their way, notwithstanding all the mischief a wicked world may do them. Hence says our Lord, Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot he my disciple." Sometimes indeed God binds their hands, that they can do nothing with them against his people; but the mischievous persecuting nature never leaves the serpent's seed: and according as holy providence looseth the cord, so will they vent it. But resist in faith,

1st, Believing, that it is little they can do, when they do their worst. Hence says our Lord, Luke 12:4, 5, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do, But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea I say unto you, fear him." The utmost reach of the most malicious and powerful persecutors, is but to the body, and things that concern time. And what is the body in comparison of the soul? time-things in comparison of those which are eternal? The faith of this carried up the martyrs, and armed them with a holy contempt of the impotent rage of their persecutors.

2dly, Believing that they are ever under the check and control of a gracious God, engaged on the side of those that keep his way: Psal. 76:10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." So that "he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely, Prov. 10:9. How spitefully did Laban pursue Jacob, and Saul, David? but God put a check on them. Faith will discover in this case an almighty power for protection, and man to be but a worm, a fading thing which shall be like grass, Is. 51:12.

3dly, Believing the eternal rest, peace, and safety, that remains for the people of God: 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal." It is but a short time we are to remain among the inhabitants of this world: the firm faith of that, with the faith of a better life, would make us very easy whether we have their, smiles or frowns. Our great concern is to fight our way to the better world, and resolutely to cleave to the Lord and the way of duty, over the belly both of the things and the men of the world.

Sixthly, There is a fight of faith with sin: Heb. 12:4, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." Of all things, there is nothing so opposite to God as sin is. The devil brought it into the world at first: and fearful havoc has it made therein, ever since its entrance; destroying the most part of Adam's children, wounding and doing mischief to all. And none can reach heaven, but those who both fight and overcome it: and there is no successful fighting against it, but in faith. And that ye may know what you have to fight against here,

1. There is the Captain of this hellish band; that is the sin of our nature.
2. There is a swarm of hellish lusts, as soldiers under the command of the sin of our nature.

First, There is the captain of this hellish band; that is, the sin of our nature, called "the old man, the flesh, and sin," by the way of eminence, Rom. 6:12. Sin is woven into our very natures: our nature has got a wrong set by Adam's fall. It is averse to good, and prone to evil; the bias of it lies quite the wrong way. This corrupt disposition is most active, and by its indwelling and activity fights against the soul. And it exerts itself against the soul especially these three ways.

1. With its guilt, whereby it binds over the soul to the anger of God: the soul out of Christ to his revenging wrath, and even the believing soul to fatherly anger and displeasure, Gal. 3:10; Psal. 89:30, &c. The conscience feeling the band of sin on it is frightened and fired. The man sees himself, by reason of the corruption and pollution of his nature, an object of God's indignation, liable to the fearful strokes of his hand: even as a serpent, or any other poisonous creature, is liable to the stroke of a man's hand wherever he meets with it. Now, if ever ye would break these bonds of guilt, fight against them in faith,

1st, Believing, that the Lord Jesus Christ has made a complete satisfaction to the justice of God, not only for actual sins, but even for the sin of our nature, Rom. 6:6, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed." In respect of the sin of our nature we needed a Saviour; and it was reckoned to him, to be cleared by him, as well as our actual transgressions. So that there is a sufficient remedy provided against the guilt of the sin of our nature, in Jesus Christ; so that no man needs to despond in that case as hopeless.

2dly, Believing, embracing, and trusting to the promise of remission of sin through the blood of Christ: Eph. 1:7, "In him we have redemption through his blood; the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." While the conscience is fired with guilt, faith must discern the promise of remission through Christ held forth in the gospel, like a rope to drowning men, Luke 24:47. And faith must embrace that promise, relying on it as the Lord's own promise; even as the drowning man ventures his life on the rope let down to him: and so shall that guilt be removed, and the conscience purged, Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 3:24, 25. Your warrant is, Acts 13:38, "Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto the you forgiveness of sins."

3dly, Believing and applying to yourselves, and pleading the perfect holiness of Christ's birth and nature, as a public person, Col. 2:10, 11. Thus faith may triumph over the sin of one's nature, as to the guilt of it. While the law says, Thou hast an unholy nature, and therefore must die the death: Yea, may the soul say, True, my nature is unholy in me; but Christ has satisfied for that guilt: and I have a holy nature in Christ, in him as a public person I was born holy, and retain the holiness of nature: and therefore I must not die, but live.

OBJECTION But, alas! I dare not apply Christ's perfect holiness to myself, for I fear I have not right to it. **ANSWER.** There is a twofold right. (1.) To a thing. (2.) In it. What right has a beggar to a penny which a man seriously holds out to him, saying, Hae, there is a penny? He certainly has a right to that penny: he may lawfully take it out of that man's hand, and put in his pocket. Such a right every one of you has to Christ's righteousness, whereof this is a part. It is God's gift to you Rom. 5:17; John 6:32; held out to you to be received and applied by faith, Rom. 1:17. If the beggar neglect or refuse it, though he had a right to it, he is justly deprived of it; and the man may put it in his own pocket again: but if he do take it, then he has a right to it; it is his own in possession, and cannot be taken from him again. Go then, and take the gift of righteousness out of Christ's hand, verily believing that ye have a right to it.

2. With its motions and activity, Rom. 7:5. It is an active principle, still tending to corrupt the soul more, fighting for the throne in the heart, and to cause the soul obey it, in fulfilling its lusts. And it must be fought against, to the breaking of its designs, Rom. 6:12. It is a restless enemy, present at all times with a man, and especially active at some times, and particularly when one would do good: as it was with Paul, Rom. 7:21. It is like a dunghill, still sending forth its filthy steams. And as it strives to strengthen itself, and to have the throne; so the Christian must fight against it, to bear it down, weaken, and get it mortified, Gal. 5:17 And ye must for this cause fight in faith against it,

1st, Believing that it is your most dangerous enemy: for so it is indeed. Never did Paul cry out to be delivered from the most bloody men that were set against him, as from indwelling sin. Rom. 7:24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! It is a domestic enemy; an enemy within, more dangerous

than all the enemies we have without, whether devils or the present evil world. Were it not for it, they would have a cold coal to blow at. But this furnishes them with notable advantages against us.

2dly, Believing Christ to be the great ordinance of God for sanctification, and looking for your sanctification from him, on the credit of the promise held out in the gospel to you, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Men have by nature's light been convinced of the necessity of sanctification; and some have thought one means proper to obtain it, and others another. Pagans have thought washings with water, sacrifices, the study of moral virtue, proper means for it. The Jews have added to these the observation of Moses' law, moral, ceremonial, and judicial. The Papists have thought a multitude of uninstituted ceremonies, fastings, whippings, &c. with the work itself in sacraments, all proper to sanctify the unholy. Legalists look on their own faithless endeavours after holiness, their watchings, &c. as proper means to obtain it. But all in vain.

But God has appointed his own Son to be the great ordinance for sanctification of the unholy, that the praise of our sanctification may be his own, as well as of our justification, 1 Cor. 1:30, 31. And he has lodged the fulness of the Spirit of holiness in him, to be partaken of in the way of believing, Acts 26:18. Look how the stung Israelites were cured in the wilderness by looking to the brazen serpent, believing that by that means they should be healed; so is an unholy sinner made holy, looking unto Jesus, trusting unto him for their sanctification, John 3:14, 15, or as the woman with the bloody issue. Hence the church, believing the promise of sanctification says, Micah 7:19, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

3dly, Struggling against it in the faith of its having got its death's wounds, in the death and resurrection of Christ, as a public person, Rom, 6:6–9. No wonder they be still under the power of indwelling sin, who struggle against it without an eye to the death of Christ. But the soul by faith eying the death and resurrection of Christ, as the death of sin, will thereby be animated to act against it, like a giant refreshed with wine. The sins of all that are Christ's were imputed to him, and he by his sufferings expiated the guilt of them; and so he rose again free of that imputed guilt: so, in virtue of his death and resurrection, it loses its power over those that are his. And by faith of it, we become partakers of it.

4thly, Believing that we shall get the victory over it through Jesus Christ, Rom. 8:24, 25, "O wretched man that I am, (says Paul); who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." They will fight well who are sure of the victory: and it is faith's work to believe the victory over sin, according to the promise, Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." This was included in the first promise, Gen. 3:15, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent; which was proposed to our first parents to be by them believed.

With its sting still sticking close to the soul, Rom. 7:17. It cleaves to us, like a stain that cannot be got fully washed off, while we are in this world. It is like the fretting leprosy in the walls of the house, not to be quite removed, till the house be pulled down. Notwithstanding all the struggles against it, it cannot be got to the door till death. Fight in faith against it,

1st, Making no truce with it, but ever seeking its ruin, in the faith of Christ's excellency, and sin's hatefulness. The eye of faith fixing on the glory of Christ held forth in the gospel, has a transforming virtue.

Hence says the apostle, 2 Cor. 3:18, "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." And thus the heart is separated from sin, and set against it, while yet sin cleaves to the soul. Like the house of David and the house of Saul: no league between them, but the war continued till the house of Saul was quite sunk.

2dly, Believing, that the victory over it will be at length full and complete. Resist it in the faith of this. However it appears to be fixed with bands of iron and brass, yet the breaking thereof shall come suddenly, at an instant. As the walls of Jericho fell down on the seventh day, that were not moved while the Israelites compassed them the six days: so at death these walls will fall down, and be razed to the foundation.

Secondly, There is a swarm of hellish lusts as soldiers under the command of the sin of our nature, Rom. 6:12. These are the members of the old man, the streams flowing from the bitter fountain of the corruption of nature. These "war against the soul," 1 Pet. 2:11. They seek to drive the soul from God, they push on men to satisfy them with forbidden fruit, and at length drown the soul in destruction and perdition, where they get the final victory, 1 Tim. 6:9. Against these also ye must fight in faith, resist them, deny them, weaken, mortify, and crucify them.

It is a difficult fight; but faith will help you out in it, as difficult as it is.

1. Their name may be legion, because they are many, Tit. 3:3. All sin is radically in the corrupt nature of man: and there is never a temptation in the world, but there is in our nature some lust or other akin to it. Look through the world, and see all the abominations

which any where appear there some are athiests, adulterers, &c. But the corrupt affections are in every body's heart naturally, Prov. 27:19, "As in water face answereth to face; so the heart of man to man." But resist ye, believing, that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, the victory is to be got over them all, Psal. 118:12. There is neither strength nor multitude to be feared, where one by faith can oppose to both, the almighty power engaged on the side of the wrestlers against sin. Therefore says the apostle, 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The blood of Christ is of infinite value, the Spirit of Christ of infinite efficacy, and faith must rely on these.

2. Their allies are all the powers of hell; Satan, John 8:44, the world, Tit. 2:12. All the snares and temptations that are in the world, are allied to some lust of the heart, which answers to them as tinder to fire. But ye should resist, believing that greater is he that is in you, than he that is in that combat, 1 John 4:4. Oppose to these by faith the divine attributes, his power, wisdom, &c. the name of the Lord, which is a strong tower, &c.

3. Their lodging is not far off. It is the corrupt heart; thence it is that they issue out against us, Mark 7:21. The heart of man is like a common inn, often so thronged with strangers, that there is no room for the entertainment of the master. But ye must resist them notwithstanding, believing that your helper is as near you as those your enemies, 1 John 4:4. O it is a trying consideration to a gracious soul to think, that sin is woven into one's very nature, mixed with one's very constitution. But let faith discern the union betwixt Christ and the soul; let the Christian believe that Christ dwells in him by his Spirit, in an indissoluble union; so may he see how to get clear of sin at length.

4. Their qualities are very bad. They are the brats of Babel, the offspring of hell. And,

1st, They are greedy and insatiable lusts, Gal. 5:17. They are like the grave and the barren womb, that never say, It is enough. Where they are indulged, and yielded to, they fill the man's hands continually, seeking meat for them, to the provoking of God, Psal. 78:18; James 4:3. And the more they are gratified and fed, the more they still crave: so that they "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt," Is. 57:20.

But ye must resist them, if ye mind for heaven. Ye must deny their cravings, Tit. 2:12. Make no provision for them, but starve them, however painful that may be, Rom. 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." This is the way to rid yourselves of their trouble: for men's lusts are like fire, that will die out if there be no fuel laid to them.

(1.) Believing, that there is a fulness in Christ, enough to satisfy the soul, to give the heart a complete rest, that it shall need none of those things which nourish lusts, Matth. 13:45, 46. The one pearl discovered, stays the pursuit after the many. Hence faith contracts the desires of the soul into one, Psal. 27:4 which is the better part. O what is the cause men are so taken up to satisfy their lusts with their proper food, but the not believing of the fulness of Christ? Psal. 4:6, 7.

(2.) Embracing that fulness of Christ for, and instead of those things your hearts lust after. This is the import of selling all and buying the field, the one pearl; the soul taking Christ for these things, as in buying one takes the commodity bought instead of all he pays. The surest and shortest way to mortification of lusts is this way of believing, whereby the soul makes a happy exchange; for and instead

of such lusts which cleave to him, embracing Christ, from him to draw that content and satisfaction he sought in the lust. Thus men deal with their hearts, as men with children, giving them one thing to get another from them, Rom. 13:14 forecited.

(3.) Believing, that you shall find that rest and satisfaction of heart in Christ, which you sought in your lusts. This is the import of the gospel-offer to all, Matth. 9:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is. 55:1, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." And if you believe it not, you believe not the gospel aright: and always the less ye believe it, the surer gripe will your heart hold of its lusts. But believe it firmly; and the more firmly you believe it, the more will ye let go your gripes of your lusts.

2dly, They are hurtful lusts, 1 Tim. 6:9. And they extend their hurt to the tenderest part of the man, and to the not only wounding, but ruining of it, if the effect thereof be not stopped, destroying the soul. They hurt as water hurteth, drowning the soul, *ibid.*: as fire hurteth, burning it up, Rom. 1:27; as a canker hurteth, eating it away, 2 Tim. 2:17; as poison hurteth, killing it, Psal. 140:3; Is. 59:5. They extend their hurt not only to the party in whose breast they are lodged, but to others, Eccl. 9:18, "One sinner destroyeth much good" Sometimes one's lust involves many in guilt, and many in trouble; like a fire breaking out in a house, burning down the houses nearest it, and putting all into trouble and vexation. Thus Achan's last involved his whole family in guilt, and troubled all Israel. Adam's Inst ruined all the world.

Ye must therefore beware of them, and of the hurt by them. But deceive not yourselves, thinking ye may entertain them, and not be

hurt by them; that ye can take the serpent in your bosom, and not be stung thereby, Prov. 6:27, 28; Eccl. 10:8. Resist the beginnings of your lusts, nip them in the bud. The longer they go on, they will be the harder to master, like a fire, or a water. If they have got up upon you, by all means endeavour to hinder their spreading; and speedily quench them, if they are spread. To do it to purpose, do it in faith,

(1.) Putting yourself under the divine protection, by trusting in the shadow of the wings of a God in Christ. This is the work of faith. Hence says Boaz to Ruth, chap. 2:12, "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." This has the promise of protection, Psal, 91:1, &c. Faith sees the hazard the soul is in from hurtful lusts, and therefore disposeth the soul to all due precaution, and to put the soul in the Lord's band for keeping, as the chickens get in under the wings of the hen, Psal. 31:5.

(2.) Applying the Redeemer's blood for purging away the guilt brought on the soul by these lusts, Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:14. This is the only way to remove the hurt of them in that case. Thus the hurt of the guilt of them shall be cured, Mark 16:17, 18. The guilt of them casts the conscience into a fever; but faith applying the blood of Christ held out in the promise of the gospel, obtains pardon of the guilt, and cools the sick conscience, Is. 33:24. The access to this blood is free to all, Zech. 13:1, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness. 1 Cor. 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

(3.) Trusting to the fulness of the Spirit of sanctification in Christ, for breaking the power of these lusts, 1 Cor. 1:30. We are not man

enough for the least of these powers of hell: therefore we are to trust to borrowed strength, 2 Tim. 2:1, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And going out against them in the name of the Lord, like David with his sling, we shall do valiantly: for he "strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong; so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress," Amos 5:9. Thus many who have long been a prey to their lusts, like dead men lying in the grave to the worms, receiving the Spirit of life from Jesus Christ, have shook them off. "For," says the apostle, "the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8:2. And in them has been fulfilled in a spiritual sense, Is. 14:2, "The people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors." And this in virtue of that, Psal. 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive."

3dly, They are restless lusts; "like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, Is. 57:20. They are like the midges in a summer day, ever in motion, working some annoyance to the soul. For temptations are thick in the world, and they never want something to stir them up, they are warring lusts, they are never at peace, they are ever in the field of battle.

(1.) Warring among themselves, one against another, Jam. 4:1. And the soul of man is what they are warring for, which shall possess it, and be governor of it. In this respect the poor sinner's heart is like a town situated in the confines of the territories of several ambitious princes, which is tossed and harrassed amongst them, he fighting to have it, and he fighting to have it; one turning out another, &c. Thus pride and ambition draw the mind one way, covetousness draws him

another way: contrary lusts at once fight in him. And there is no peace for the man, but by mortifying both the contending parties.

(2.) They war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2:11. All of them are enemies to it, and seek its ruin. Though they be contrary one to another, yet they conspire together for the destruction of the soul; like Herod and Pontius Pilate against Christ. The soul, in respect of its make and constitution, is most allied to heaven, and therefore is the special object of their rage.

Wherefore ye also, if ye mind for heaven, must lay your accounts with a continual warfare. Ye must never let down your watch, nor lay by your armour, but ever stand in a fighting posture, Eph. 6:14, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth," &c. As there is no peace to be made betwixt contrary lusts, so ye must not side with any of the parties, nor be at peace with either, but maintain the fight against both. And fight in faith,

[1.] Believing that this war will have a comfortable end at length, and ye shall have a profound, perfect, lasting peace, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Though the war with your lusts must be a lasting one; it is good news, that it will not be everlasting; but the peace obtained through the complete victory will be so. Take courage, O Christian, the last stroke will be given ere long in this battle, which will be the decisive stroke. The day will come, when the enemies "ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever, Exod. 14:13. In heaven ye will get eternal peace and rest, Rev. 21:5. There the centinels are called from their posts, and the men of war lay by their swords, and put on their crowns.

[2.] Believing that your helper is ever as ready as your enemies, Psal. 16:8. It is a weighty consideration, that Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and our enemies within

are restless. But faith wants not a solid relief to oppose unto this, looking to the promise, Psal. 121:4, "Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep, Is. 27:3, "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." At what time soever the enemies attack us, we may have access to our help: and the faith of the promise will fetch it in as quickly as by a look, Is. 45:22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

[3.] Believing that his grace is ever sufficient for you, 2 Cor. 12:9. Though the war last long, the stock of strength cannot be wasted, in which ye must fight; since it is an inexhaustible treasure in Christ Jesus, to which ye can never come amiss, John 1:16. Indeed, if ye fight in your own strength, ye will soon find it wasted: but faith's work is to fetch in strength from Christ and it is sufficient for the continued warfare, Is. 40:31.

Lastly, They are deceitful lusts, Eph. 4:22. We are apt to be beguiled by them, if we take not good heed. They deceive sinners, and then take them captive, Tit. 3:3; and then slay them, Rom. 7:11. They are the golden cup in Satan's hand, by which he ministers poison to the soul. They are deceitful: for,

(1.) They always promise what they never perform, 2 Pet. 2:19. Who is the man that is not disappointed in them looking for that content and satisfaction he never finds? How was Judas deceived that way?

(2.) They often commend themselves to men under the mask of some harmless thing, or some real virtue, Col. 2:18. Thus, like Satan, they transform themselves into an angel of light. So many call evil good, and good evil, &c.

(3.) There is a hidden mischief in them, when they are most smiling. There is a hook always, which is covered with the bait, James 1:14, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." It is a metaphor taken from fishes caught by the bait, and drawn out of the water. But,

Ye must have your eyes in your head, and not be ignorant of Satan's devices, Prov. 22:3. Be not rash, but try ere ye trust. Forbidden fruit may be fair to look at, and the devil's ground may be very smooth; and the sinner see no hazard where death is at his elbow, Prov. 14:12. Therefore fight as against a deceitful enemy, Eph. 6:11. And fight in faith,

[1.] Believing the testimony of God concerning the heart, Jer. 17:9, that it is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? and therefore keeping a watchful eye, a holy jealousy over it: Prov. 28:14, "Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief." Faith is the soul's going out of itself to the Lord, and brings off the man from leaning to his own understanding, Prov. 3:5, and trusting to his own heart, Prov. 28:26. For these are the things that betray a man into the hands of deceitful lusts.

[2.] Trusting to the conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ, Prov. 3:6. He is the Captain of salvation, the appointed leader of his people, eyes to them in the wilderness. And he will teach those who are willing to be taught, Psal. 25:9. And there is no way to get clear of the deceitful lusts, but by shutting our own eyes, and looking to the Lord for light to discern our way. For he is made wisdom for us, 1 Cor. 1:30, and by faith in him, "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err in the way of holiness," Is. 35:8.

Lastly, There is a fight with death. This is the last enemy ye will have to grapple with: 1 Cor. 15:26, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death." There was never any who escaped this combat, but Enoch and Elias. As for all others, the encounter with it is appointed of Heaven, Heb. 9:27. And there is no freeing of any from this battle, Eccl. 8:8. Many trouble not themselves to fight with temptation, or with sin, but live at peace with these their enemies: but, whether they will or not, they must feel the bitterness of death. If ever ye would fight it so as to overcome, ye must fight in faith. Here consider,

1. How death may attack you; and,
2. In what shapes it may do so.

1st, How death may attack you. And that,

First, With sorrow and heaviness, Psal. 116:3. Death is apt to let in a flood of sorrows upon poor sinners: so that those who have spent their days in mirth, find then all their mirth quite swallowed up in that flood; and they who have had a life of sorrows, feel then the flood of them swelling to the brim. And there are two sluices death opens to let in this flood.

1. The separation of the man from this world, and all things in it, Is. 38:11. It comes to carry the man off from this world; to separate betwixt him and his nearest relations; to put an end to any portion of his under the sun, that he shall no more see the sun rise or set again, and have no more access to his own house, or bed, or board. This is apt to let in a flood of sorrow upon the man. And there is no way to hold out against it, but one of these two;

1st, By turning it into the matter of joy: like those mentioned in Job 3:22, "which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the

grave;" when the man is so wearied of the world, that his heart leaps for joy, when God's messenger, death, knocks at his door.

2dly, By a Christian resignation to the will of the Lord, Luke 2:29, the man being ready calmly to deliver up unto the hands of God, all he has here.

Now, if ye would fight death's sorrows on this head, viz. separation from the world, either of these ways; ye must do it in faith,

(1.) Believing, that, through the alone merits of Christ, ye shall be admitted into a better world, set down in a better house, at a better table, and lie better, even in Abraham's bosom, 2 Tim. 4:7, 8. Nothing else will work the soul into that Christian resignation. The heart of man will never be truly content to give away this world's good things, while it has no comfortable prospect of better: and therefore Christian resignation at death, will be according to faith's view of better things in the other world, Heb. 11:13.

(2.) Trusting the same Lord Jesus with the charge and care of those whom ye are to leave and are concerned for, 1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." With an eye to this, the Lord has made that promise, Jer. 49:11, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." Ungodly men can have no such comfort, in the abundance they have to leave theirs, as a godly man may have in this way of believing, Heb. 11:22.

2. The separation of the soul from the body, Is. 38:13, 14. The soul and body are closely knit; but death comes to loose the silver cord that knits them together; like a whirlwind to separate them, and carry them far asunder. The soul has a sure prospect of a separate

state, which it has no experience of; and the consideration thereof is apt to fill it with sorrow, on the account of its foreseen widowhood.

There is no making head against this, but in faith;

1st, Believing the soul's union with Jesus Christ, and with God through him, Rom. 8:38, 39. Thus the soul has full comfort against the separation that death makes. Though the man's spirit parts with his body, yet the Spirit of God still dwells in the soul. God would have his people believe this particularly: and for that cause he has appointed the sacraments, signifying and sealing their union with Christ.

2dly, Believing and trusting for the blessed resurrection of the body at God's appointed time, Job 19:26. It stays the sorrow of friends at their parting, that they look to meet again in peace: and when the soul and body are parting, the stronger the faith of the joyful resurrection is, the less will the sorrow be on that head. And all that are Christ's have good ground for it: for our Lord has said, John 11:25, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Secondly, Death may attack you with fear and terror. Death is of all terrors the most terrible. Hence we read of being "brought to the king of terrors, Job. 18:14. And therefore the scripture expresseth the greatest consternation by the terrors of death; as in the case of David, Psal. 55:4, "The terrors of death are fallen upon me." And says Job, chap. 24:17, "For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." Death will appal and damp the stoutest heart: it will fill them with fear, who have been a terror to others in the land of the living. But faith will bear out, where natural courage falls like a dyke of sand

before a sweeping flood. Now, there are three sources of the terrors of death.

1. Guilt lying on the soul, 1 Cor. 15:56, "The sting of death is sin." By the guilt of sin, the sinner is bound over to death; so that is the sting wherewith it pierces men. The native guilt of sin binds over the sinner to death in its full extent, even to revenging wrath: the moderated guilt of it binds over the sinner to unstiuged death. When death comes up, it takes the man prisoner as a guilty man; and so fills him with terror. Here must be a close fight of faith to stop this source of fear and terror.

1st, Over the belly of all your doubts, fears, and felt unworthiness, stretching out the hand of faith, and laying it on the head of the great sacrifice Christ, and so transferring all your guilt on him, Rom. 3:25, and 5:11. Ye must believe in, and trust on the obedience and death of Christ, for the removal of your guilt; believing, that, for the sake of a crucified Christ, all your sins shall be pardoned. And for the warrant of your so trusting, ye must discern the pardon offered to you through Christ in the gospel, Acts 2:38, 39; and so, amidst all your doubts and fears, anchor your souls on the faithfulness of God in the promise. Thus ye shall pull out death's sting, obtaining the removal of guilt by faith in his blood.

2dly, Believing and applying to yourselves Christ's full answering of the demands of the law, whereby the law is disarmed of its curse, and the bond of it as a covenant is loosed from off you, Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:14. Death's strength lies in guilt: take away guilt off the soul, death is like Samson without his hair. The strength of guilt lies in the law as a covenant: remove the bond of the law from off the man, and the man's guilt is like the cords the Philistines bound Samson with, which became as flax burnt with fire, Judg. 16:14. Let faith apply to

the soul Christ's obedience and death, and so his fully answering the demands of the law: and, then the law can have no more effect on you, than a subscribed bond fully paid and discharged, blotted and rent in pieces, can have on you.

2. The unseen unknown world, therefore called the land of darkness, Job 10:21. One is apt to be seized with fear, when they are to be carried into a place which they do not know. Death comes to carry us to another world, which we never saw, nor can see till we be there, never to come back: and that makes it terrible. It is the world of spirits: the blessed spirits dwelling in the upper regions; the damned spirits in the lower. We are so unacquainted with the inhabitants of that world, that the sight of a spirit, good or bad, would be enough to frighten us while we are here: what wonder then that death be terrible, coming to carry us, where there are none but spirits? Here is great necessity of faith, to bear up against the fear rising from thence. We must then stay our hearts by faith,

1st, Firmly believing the scripture accounts of the unseen world, Heb. 11:1. Though we have never seen it, yet we have heard of it: though we never were there, yet the map of it has been laid before us in the Bible; and there we have it described both the upper and lower part of it. And in that map, drawn by inspired pens, not capable of erring, the lower part of that world is not more dreadful, than the upper part is pleasant and desirable, John 14:2; Rev. 21. The faith of heaven is staying to the heart in some measure.

2dly, Firmly believing the scripture account of the way to heaven; that Christ is the way to it, John 14:6; and that by faith we walk in him to it, Col. 2:6. If we believe not this, our hearts have nothing to stay themselves on, but are left at an utter uncertainty, in our encounter with death. Therefore labour to strengthen your faith of

this, that it may not be yea and nay, but yea with you, 2 Cor. 1:19, 20; that "he that believeth, shall be saved."

3dly, Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for your safe passage to the upper part of the unseen world, Psal. 73:24, and 31:5; committing your soul to him, rolling the weight of your through-bearing on him as the Captain of salvation appointed of God to bring many sons to glory. Take hold of him, by his word of promise, by the everlasting covenant, 2 Sam. 23:5; and labour to gripe some particular promise for that end, as Is. 43:2, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Heb. 13:5, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is. 35:9, 10, "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

4thly, Believing that your Lord Christ is Lord of the unseen world, and that the whole compass of it above and below is under his dominion, Rev. 1:18. It is in his hand that the disposing of souls to any part of that world is. Neither is he to fight with the prince of darkness, on that side, about any soul. That fight of his with Satan was in this world. When one comes there, the devil cannot touch him, unless given up to him as an executioner. And he has said it, that none that believe in him shall be damned, Mark 16:16. Believe it with application.

5thly, Believing, that as soon as your soul departs out of your body, God will receive it into his own hand, Psal. 31:5. compared with Luke

23:46. So David believed, Psal. 23:4, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It shall be conducted by angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. Believe, that the same God who brought thee out of the womb, safe into this world, when thou wast a naked helpless infant, and by his providence preserved thee, will take the same care of thee, when entering into the unseen world. This is the comfort of faith in death; agreeably to what the Psalmist saith, Psal. 22:9, 10, "But thou art he that took me out of the womb; thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly."

Lastly, That thy God will fit thee both for the place and the company, however unfit thou art for them now, Heb. 12:23. He will do it in a moment, as appears from parity of reason from 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," &c. Believe that he will fit thee, not only for the sight or knowledge of the spirits there before thee, but for communion with them. And thou mayst confirm thy faith of this, by the experience thou hast had (1.) of his fitting thee for communion with the inhabitants of this world, though thou camest into it an infant knowing nobody there, no not the mother that bare thee; and (2.) of his fitting thee for communion with himself, though thou wast by nature dead in sin.

3. The judgment, Heb. 9:27. The appearing before a tribunal is an awful thing. When a guilty creature is lying on a death-bed, drawing his last breath, and considers that in a little he is to be carried before his judge in another world, to be judged, and give account of his deeds done in the body, and to receive his sentence for eternity, in

well or woe; no wonder fear and terror seize him. There is no making head against this but by faith,

1st, Receiving and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his salvation offered to you in the gospel, John 1:12. So in Rev. 22:17, the offer of Christ is made, after the warning given of Christ's coming to judgment: for this only is the way how a sinner may stand before him. While a sinner breathes in this world, he is in the way: and that is the time to agree with the adversary. Christ and all his salvation is offered; that is, pardon, peace, right to glory, sanctification &c. And it is the work of faith to receive them, held forth in the gospel-promise.

For this cause it is necessary to judge ourselves, and condemn ourselves; to call over all our bypast life, with the sin of our nature: and renouncing all confidence in ourselves, to fly to the horns of the altar, confiding in a crucified Christ, upon the ground of God's faithfulness in the promise of the gospel; John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

2dly, Believing, that the same Jesus who is offered, and whom you have embraced, in the gospel, is the judge whom you are to appear before, John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." This is a fit means to abate the terror of the judgment-seat to a believer. For thus, by the eye of faith, the soul may see, that it is the very same person who is its head, husband, advocate, and the redeemer, who is its judge. And thus a full fountain of consolation is opened against the terrors of death, arising from the judgment.

3dly, Believing, that you being in Christ, judgment will not proceed upon you according to the law of works, but according to the law of faith, i. e. the covenant of grace, Rev. 20:12. The law of works

adjudgeth every one that sins in the least to die, Gen. 2:17; Gal. 3:10; and according to it shall all unbelievers be judged; but no believer, Rom. 6:14. The covenant of grace adjudgeth every soul united to Christ by faith, how many soever his sins have been, to live eternally, for the sake of Christ's obedience and death imputed to him, Rom. 8:1; John 3:16.

Lastly, Believing, that the covert of Christ's blood is a perfect covert, within which not one drop of revenging wrath can fall here or hereafter, Is. 32:2; and that faith's plea will never be rejected, for it is established by the covenant betwixt the Father and the Son, and God's faithfulness is impawned for it. Let the believer then, thinking on the tribunal, behold the rainbow about the throne, Rev. 4:3. compared with Is. 54:9. and be comforted against the terror of death from this quarter.

Thirdly, With despondency, Lam. 3:18. This is the most fearful weapon wherewith death attacks a man; when it goes about to raise a man's hope in Christ, making his heart to sink within him as hopeless, filling him with a fearful expectation of eternal destruction, Job 33:22. This may be the case of those that are strangers to Christ, whom death seizing after a lifetime spent in profanity and wickedness, their sins, especially their gross heaven-daring abominations staring them in the face while they are death's prisoners, are apt to fill them with despair of mercy, Job 18:14. It may also be the case of saints after a careless untender walk, Psal. 69:2, 77:7; Matth. 25:5. Here is need of faith in a special manner,

1st, Believing with application the infinite efficacy of the blood and Spirit of Christ Jesus, Heb. 7:25. The soul would behold that blood as the blood of the Son of God, 1 John 1:7, and therefore of infinite efficacy to do away the greatest guilt; as the sea, to quench a house

on fire, as well as a candle: his Spirit is of infinite efficacy, as able to wipe away the deepest stains of sins, as others, 1 Cor. 6:11: a water-flood, sweeping away whole dunghills, as well as mole-hills.

2dly, Believing that ye are still within the compass of the gospel offer, Is. 55:1; Rev. 22:17. Yea, it is directed to you in particular, as Jer. 3:1, "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord." Is. 1:18, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God has made no exception of sinners of any size, who will come in; though ordinarily a profane graceless life has a disagreeable end; they that live gracelessly, for the most part dying hardened, sometimes in sullen despondency: yet the case of the thief on the cross, shews a possibility of its being otherwise.

Lastly, Believing, griping, and hanging by the promise of the gospel, over the belly of all objections. Acts 16:21. Though you are in a boisterous sea, where one wave comes after another to sweep you away; yet quit not your gripe, Heb. 10:39; but hope against hope, as Abraham did; for it is pleasing to God, Psal. 147:11, and will have a good issue, as in the woman of Canaan.

2dly, Consider in what shapes death may attack us. There is one way of coming into the world, but there are many ways of going out of it. Which of them may be ours, we know not; and therefore it concerns us to be ready to encounter death, and fight the last battle successfully, in whatever shape death come upon us. I will take notice of these four.

1. A violent death, by the hands of men. This the heaviest of deaths, when it is an ill cause; as in the case of malefactors, by the hand of public justice; and of men falling sacrifices to their own and others

rage in their private godless quarrels. All I say to that, is, to advise you to live by faith, that ye may be preserved from such a death, Prov. 28:17; Matth. 26:52. But even in a good cause men may be brought to it, whether more solemnly by process of law, or summarily by the hands of bloody men. Death in that shape must be fought,

1st, Believing that that was the kind of death which Christ died, and so has sanctified it to his own, that they may comfortably venture on it for his sake and cause. And the saints of the highest class have died so, dying martyrs, in numberless multitudes. Our Lord will have all his to lay their accounts with it, Luke 14:26, "If any man come to me," says he, "and hate not—his own life, he cannot be my disciple;" though he does not call them all to it. But many who have been called to it have rejoiced in it as their honour.

2dly, Believing that great truth with application, Matth. 16:25. "Whosoever shall save his life, shall loose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." When one's life comes in competition with the honour of Christ and the cause of truth, and they will, for saving themselves, make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; they lose their souls, to save their bodies for a little time: whereas they to whom Christ's honour is more dear than their own lives, their souls shall be saved eternally, and eternal glory will more than make up all their losses.

2. A painful death. Death in any shape can hardly want pain; but death is certainly more painful to some than to others. O what piercing pains, gripes, and torments, do some suffer at their death! What struggles and wrestlings have some with death, before their souls leave their bodies! What measure of these pains is allotted to us

we do not know; but every one will at length feel his own part of them.

Our business is to bear them Christianly and patiently; and that I we will never do to purpose, but by faith,

1st, Cleaving to Christ in them by faith, Job 13:15, and believing, that through his grace they shall have a comfortable end in due time, 2 Tim. 4:6, 7, 8. Faith's view of the eternal rest in heaven, is the best cordial in the pain of death. When the soul believes, that the last pain is coming up, the last sob; after which sorrow and sighing shall for ever fly away; that will make the man stand the shock of the sharpest pains Christianly and patiently.

2dly, Believing that the body of death and sin, which thou hast had many a battle with in thy life, is by that means to be put to the door. Death came in by sin, and sin must go out by death. Every pain and gripe looseth a pin of the tabernacle; and according as death makes its progress in the believer's body, sin is the nearer to a removal out of his soul. And when death has perfected its work on the body, the soul shall then be perfected, Heb. 12:23. A Christian will abide sore thrusts patiently, in the faith of this their thrusting out his worst enemy.

3dly, By the eye of faith discerning death unstinged to thee, by the death of Christ. Our Lord Christ has said it, and done it, Hos. 13:14, "I will ransom thee from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be bid from mine eyes:" and therefore a dying saint should comfort himself in it, and believing sing, as in 1 Cor. 15:55–57, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength, of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord

Jesus Christ." That whereby the believer's dying body is pained, is not death's sting: he may therefore bear it the better. Death's sting stings the soul and conscience, and leaves the venom of the curse there, which will scorch the man eternally. These pains are but as a bee-sting in comparison of that.

3. A longsome or lingering death. Death makes quick harvest with some, but with others death's work is spun out to a great length; whereby they have many deaths in one, are often looking for the last stroke, but it is long a coming. This is a great trial, and we know not but it may be ours. Therefore we should be prepared for it, and lay up timely for it. We will never manage it well, but by faith,

1st, Believing always that it is coming; but at what hour, we know not. The faith of this will make us keep up our watch, Matth. 24:42. They may watch at first, who may let down their watch when they find the Bridegroom delays his coming; and so they may be surprised, as the foolish virgins when their lamps were out. But the faith of this will put us on Job's resolution, chap. 14:14, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

2dly, Believing that therein the Lord has you upon your trials, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7. He is in that case taking a trial of your faith, love, patience, and Christian fortitude. And if God opens to any of us a scene of trial of more variety and greater length than that of others, it is our business to behave well in the trial laid to our hand.

3dly, By the eye of faith discerning the eternal weight of glory, on the other side of the trial: and if we weigh the one by the other, the most longsome struggle with death will appear both light and momentary, 2 Cor. 4:17, 18, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things

which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal."

4. Lastly, A sudden death. Death sometimes makes a wide step, so that it is upon a man ere he can well perceive it coming. It is what may be our lot; for it is common to good and bad. Good Eli died so, as well as Ananias and Sapphira, who died with a lie in their mouth. And therefore it concerns us to be prepared for it; which we can never be but by believing. And,

1st, Securing ourselves within the true ark, timely, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, accepting him in the offer of the gospel covenant, John 1:12. Then come death when and how it will, we are habitually ready for it: and it shall not be able to loose the marriage-knot cast by faith betwixt Christ and our souls, Rom. 8:38. &c. If in that case, it come suddenly on us, it shall but waft us over more speedily into Immanuel's land.

2dly, Resolutely renewing the actings of faith on Christ, at death's sudden approach, Is. 45:22. What a man has done before, he may the more easily do again on a signal given: and a believer may through grace renew his acting of faith, upon death's short warning. If death be sudden, the act of faith, may be as sudden, as reaching in a moment from earth to the highest heavens: and therefore compared to a look.

And thus I have gone through the Christian warfare, even to the last battle. May the Lord thus teach our hands to war, and our fingers to fight.

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