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A Word in Season to Suffering Saints

A SOBER AND SERIOUS DISCOURSE

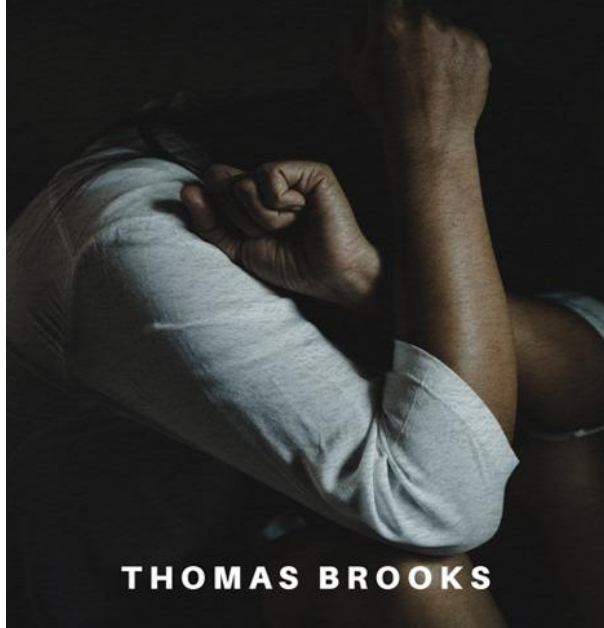


THOMAS BROOKS

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THOMAS BROOKS

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To this Present

GENERATION

OR

A SOBER AND SERIOUS DISCOURSE

About the favorable, Signal and eminent Presence of the LORD with his PEOPLE, in their greatest Troubles, deepest Distresses, and most deadly Dangers.

WITH THE

Resolution of several Questions, concerning the DIVINE PRESENCE, as also the Reasons and improvements of this great and glorious Truth.

All tending to encourage Christians in the way of their Duty, in the face of all Afflictions, Oppositions, and Sufferings that they may meet with for Righteousness sake from the Serpents seed, or from Wolves in Sheeps-cloathing.

By THOMAS BROOKS, the Author of the Golden Key to open hidden Treasures.

But will God indeed dwell on the Earth? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this House that I have builded. 1 Kings 8:27.

Deus unus est, & ubique totus diffusus. Cyprian.

Maximilian the Emperour was so delighted with that Sentence of PAUL, Si Deus nobiscum, If God be with us, who shall be against us, that he caused it to be written upon the Walls in most rooms of his Palace.

LONDON,
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A GENERAL EPISTLE TO ALL SUFFERING SAINTS

To all afflicted and distressed Christians all the world over, especially to those that are in bonds for the testimony of Christ in Bristol; and to those that are sufferers there, or in any other city, town, country, or kingdom whatsoever; and to all that have been deep sufferers in their names, persons, estates, or liberties, upon the account of their faithfulness to God, to their light, to their consciences, to their principles, to their profession, and to Christ the king and head of his church; and to all that have been long prisoners to their beds or chambers by reason of age, and the common infirmities that do attend it, or that are under any other afflictive dispensation: and

more particularly to my ancient dear and honoured friend, Mrs Elizabeth Drink-water, who has been many years the Lord's prisoner, and upon the matter, kept wholly from public ordinances, by reason of her bodily weaknesses and infirmities; though in the want of a greater sanctuary, God has been 'a little sanctuary' to her soul, Ezek. 11:16,—Grace, Mercy, and Peace be multiplied.

DEAR AND HONOURED FRIENDS,—The ensuing treatise about the signal presence of God with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses and most deadly dangers, I present to the service of all your souls. There has not been any treatise on this subject, that hath ever fallen under mine eye; which hath been one great reason to encourage me in this present undertaking. I know several holy and learned men have written singularly well upon the gracious presence of God with his people, in ordinances and in the worship of his house; but I know that none have made it their business, their work, to handle this subject that I have been discoursing on: though a more excellent, noble, spiritual, seasonable, and necessary subject can rarely be treated on.

There are ten things that I am very well satisfied in, and to me they are things of great importance in this present day. And the first is this—viz.,

1. That there is no engagement from God upon any of his people, to run themselves into sufferings wilfully, causelessly, groundlessly. Christians must not be prodigal of their blood, for their blood is Christ's. Their estates, their names, their liberties, their all, is his; they are not their own, they are bought with a price, 1 Cor. 6:20, and 7:23; and therefore to him they must be accountable for their lives, liberties, &c., and therefore they had need be very wary how they part with them. We must not step out of our way to take up a cross. The three worthies were passive, Dan. 3:20, 21, 28. They did not rush into the fiery furnace, but yielded themselves to be cast into the fiery furnace; they did not stubbornly oppose nor struggle against their enemies, but patiently and quietly yielded their bodies to the flames:

neither did the prophets or apostles step over God's hedge, to make way to their own sufferings or martyrdom. No men may, with the Donatists, destroy themselves, rather than they would conform to this or that religion. No man may have a hand in his own destruction, no man may cut his throat with his own hands to avoid a prison, a dungeon, a den, a fiery furnace. Cyprian tells the Christians in his time, that were ambitious of martyrdom, *Non est in tua potestate, sed in Dei dignatione, martyrium.* We may not run ourselves into prison without a *mittimus* from heaven. If righteousness lead me into prison, a righteous God will stand by me in prison, and in the issue, give me a gracious or a glorious deliverance out of prison. But if I wilfully, causelessly run myself into prison, it will be a righteous thing with God, to leave me to shift for myself in prison. If God should meet a man in prison, and say to him—as he did once to Elijah, 'What dost thou here, Elijah?' 1 King 19:9—What dost thou here, O man? is this a fit place for truth's champion? if a man cannot readily answer, Lord, I have not run myself into a prison—but it is thyself, it is thy truth, it is thy interest, it is thy honour, it is my conscience, it is duty that has brought me hither—what confusion would attend him! Philustrius (?) and Theodoret speak of some that would compel men to kill them out of an affectation of martyrdom; but this was a mad ambition, but no true zeal. It was an error in Tertullian, to say that afflictions, that sufferings were to be sought. No man is to make his own cross, nor scourges to whip himself; nor to cast himself into a suffering state, so long as God hath left him a plain open way to escape suffering without sinning: not but that most men are more apt and prone to sin themselves out of smart sufferings, than unwarrantably to run themselves into sufferings; but it is good for every Christian to be upon his guard, and not run till God sends him, Acts 9:23–25; John 20:19, 26. As a Christian must not shun sufferings, so he must not seek them.

(2.) Secondly, That afflictions, sufferings, persecutions, hath been the common lot and portion of the people of God in all the ages of the world. Witness the sufferings of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles,

the primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. Abel was persecuted by Cain, 1 John 3:12; and Isaac by Ishmael, Gal. 4:29; and Jacob by Esau. That seems to be a standing law, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution,' 2 Tim. 3:12. A man may have many faint wishes and cold desires after godliness, and yet escape persecution; yea, he may make some essays and attempts as if he would be godly, and yet escape persecution; but when a man is thoroughly resolved to be godly, and sets himself in good earnest upon pursuing after holiness, upon living a life of holiness, upon growing up in holiness, then he must expect to meet with afflictions and persecutions. The history of the ten persecutions, and that little Book of Martyrs, the eleventh of the Hebrews, and Mr Foxe his Acts and Monuments, with many other histories that are extant, do abundantly evidence that from age to age, and from one generation to another, they that have been 'born after the flesh have persecuted them that have been born after the Spirit,' Gal. 4:29; and that 'the seed of the serpent hath been still a-multiplying of troubles upon the seed of the woman,' Gen. 3:15. As there was no way to paradise but by a flaming sword, nor no way to Canaan but through a howling wilderness, so there is no way to heaven but by the gates of hell; there is no way to a glorious exaltation but through a sea of tribulation, of persecution, Acts 14:21, 22. The way to heaven is not strewed with roses, but full of thorns and briars, as those 'of whom this world is not worthy' have always experienced, Heb. 11. The serpentine brood takes a very great pleasure to be still a-representing the people of God as foolish, hypocritical, precise, proud, schismatical, seditious, factious, and as persons against order and government, against good laws and customs, as disturbers and troublers of the peace. Thus Ahab accounts Elijah 'the troubler of Israel,' 1 Kings 18:17; and Haman laid it to the charge of the Jews, that 'they were disobedient to the king's laws,' Esth. 3:8; and the adversaries of the Jews told Artaxerxes the king that 'Jerusalem was a rebellious city, hurtful unto kings and princes,' Ezra 4:15; and the unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica did as much for the apostles, they said they were the men 'that turned the world upside down,' Acts 17:6. So Luther was called 'the trumpet of rebellion;' and Tertullus

calls Paul 'a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition,' Acts 24:5; Λοιμὸν, a pestilence, a botch. Foolish Tertullus mistook the antidote for the poison, the remedy for the disease. Now if so precious a man as Paul, than whom, saith Chrysostom, the earth never bare a better since it bore Christ, were accounted and called a pest, a botch, let us think much if the choicest saints in our days are accounted and esteemed as so many pests and botches. This is the reward the ungrateful world gives the servants of Christ for their zeal and faithfulness in the cause of Christ; instead of encouraging them, they load them with ignominious and hateful terms of rebellion and turbulency, &c., labouring thereby to make them odious, and to enrage the people against them, as the persecutors of old used to wrap the christians up in bears' skins, and lions' skins, &c., and then to bait them with dogs. It is a very great vanity to think of passing to heaven without suffering. The saints in all ages have found the way thither paved with troubles, and it would be a foolish, childish thing for any of us to think of finding it otherwise now. Constantine the Great, as piously as wittily, told Acesius the Novatian, that if he, would not take up with persecution, and such like dealing, he must provide him a ladder and climb alone to heaven. We must go to heaven some other way than the saints have done of old, except we resolve of going thither through much tribulation, Acts 14:22.

3. Thirdly, That no person or persons on earth may sinfully shift off sufferings, or avoid sufferings. There being infinitely more evil in the least sin than there can be in the greatest sufferings that can befall us in this world, it is best, it is safest to choose suffering rather than sinning, as Moses did. So Daniel chose rather to be cast among lions than that his conscience should be a lion within him, Dan. 6; and the three children, or champions rather, who were holily wilful, chose rather to burn in the fiery furnace than to bow to the image that the king had set up, Dan. 3. He that values peace with God, and peace with conscience, and the honour of God, and the credit of religion, the silencing of sinners, and the rejoicing of the saints, must choose to suffer rather than to sin. When storms arise, and troubles and dangers approach, many begin to consult, not how they may glorify

God by suffering, but how they may provide for their own safety by sinning. Plato knew much of God, but, as Josephus shews, durst not set it down for fear of the people; and Lactantius charges the same upon Tully: 'Thou darest not,' saith he, 'undertake the patronage of the truth, for fear of the prison of Socrates;' and Augustine doth as much for Seneca; he spends a whole chapter in shewing how he held the truth in unrighteousness, telling us how he revered that which he reprov'd, did that which he condemn'd, and worshipp'd that which he found fault with.³ Though these wise men saw the vanity of the heathenish deities, and the worship that was given to them, and looked upon them as utterly unworthy of respect from wise and sober men, nay, secretly scorn'd and derid'd them; yet would they not openly declare against them, and that for fear of the people who so much doted upon them. But Daniel's three young worthies were men of that heavenly gallantry, that they peremptorily resolv'd upon this, that though they should not be deliver'd by their God, yet they would not sin against their God, nor so much as demur, deliberate, or take time to consider whether they should suffer or sin; it was past dispute with them, brave and noble souls that they were. It is observable that when Paul speaks of his afflictions, his sufferings, he calls them 'light,' 2 Cor. 4:17; but when he speaks of his sin, he speaks of it as a burden that press'd him down, and made him cry out, 'O wretched man that I am!' and to cry out again, 'we groan, being burdened,' Rom. 7:23; 2 Cor. 5:2, 4. Moses his choice is famous, and celebrated all the world over; for it was not made when he was a child, but when he came to forty years of age, Heb. 11:25–27; then he preferred suffering, not only before sinning, but before all the honours, riches, and pleasures of Egypt, accounting the worst of Christ, viz., reproaches, better than the best of the world. When Eleazar was promised to be saved from torments and death if he would but make show of yielding, he courageously answer'd, 'It becometh not our age in anywise to dissemble,' 2 Mac. 6:24; whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being fourscore and ten years old, were now gone to a strange religion. Thus also one of the seven brethren, in the name of the rest, 'We are ready to die, rather than transgress the laws of our fathers,' chap. 7:2; meaning

such laws as God of old had given to their fathers, to be observed by them, and by their posterity age after age. Polycarpus, when the governor promised to let him go free if he would deny Christ, answered, I have served him fourscore and six years, and he never hurt me in anything; how shall I curse him who hath saved me? And the governor adding one while promises, another while threatenings, Polycarpus thus cuts off all, Why dost thou make delays? inflict what thou lists.² So Galeacius, [Carraciolus,] a gentleman of great estate, who suffered martyrdom at St Angelo in Italy, being much pressed by his friends to recant, and save his life, he replied, that death was much more sweet to him with the testimony of verity, than life with the least denial of truth. Hooper desired rather to be discharged of his bishopric, than yield to certain ceremonies. A man were better displease all his friends, all his relations, yea, all the world, than to displease his God, and displease his own conscience. So Cyprian,—Augustine relates the story,—when the emperor, as he was going to execution, told him that he would give him space to consider whether he were not better cast in a grain into the fire, than be so miserably slain; to which he replied, *In re tam sancta deliberatio non habet locum*, There needs no deliberation in this case. The like we read in the history of France, in the year 1572, presently after that tragical and perfidious slaughter and massacre of so many thousands of protestants by treacherous bloody papists, Charles the Ninth, king of France, called the Prince of Conde, and proposed to him this choice, either to go to mass, or to die presently, or to suffer perpetual imprisonment; to which he returned this noble answer, That by God's help he would never choose the first; and for either of the two latter, he left it to the king's pleasure, and God's providence. Thus you see that the people of God have, when put to it, chose rather to suffer than to sin. But,

4. Fourthly, That they shall be sure to suffer with a witness, that refuse to suffer, or are afraid to suffer, when Christ calls them to a suffering state. No men can suffer so much for Christ, as they shall be sure to suffer from Christ, if through weakness or wickedness they either disdain or refuse to suffer for Christ: Mark 8:35, 'For

whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.' There is no loss, but gain, in losing for Christ. It is a very dangerous thing for men to prefer the safety of their natural lives before the glory of Christ, the cause of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and the profession of his name. It is certain that the glory of Christ ought to be more dear and precious to us than our very lives. Christ, for our redemption and salvation, freely and readily lays down his life, 'I lay down my life for my sheep,' John 10:15; and shall we stand with him for ours, when our call is clear, to lay them down for his sake and the gospel's sake? He that shall attempt to save his life by crossing his light, by shifting of the truth, or by forsaking of Christ, shall lose it. It is a gainful loss to suffer for the truth; it is a lossful gain, by time-serving and base complying with the times, the lusts, the wills, the humours of the men of this age, in whom the spirit of Cain and Esau works so furiously, to provide for our present safety, security, plenty, peace, and ease, &c., either by denying the truth, or by betraying the truth, or by exchanging the truth, or by forsaking the truth: Mat. 10:39, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it.' This is a strange expression, a riddle to the world, a seeming contradiction, such as natural reason can never reconcile. 'He that findeth his life;' that is, redeemeth it with the forfeiture of his faith, with the shipwreck of his conscience, 1 Tim. 1:19, 20, makes a loser's bargain; he makes more haste than good speed, whilst in running from death as far as he can, he runs to it as fast as he can. See it in some great instances. When Henry the Fourth of France had conquered his enemies, he turned papist, and gave this reason of it, that he might settle himself in peace and safety. Bavaillac, who slew him as he was riding abroad in his coach to refresh himself, confessed that the reason why he stabbed him was because he was of two religions; and thus, by his sinful endeavours to save his life, he lost it. There was one Philbert Hamlin in France, having converted a priest to the profession of the truth, was, together with the priest, apprehended, and cast into prison at Bourdeaux; but after a while, the priest, being terrified with the prison and fear of death, renounced Christ, and was set at liberty. Whereupon Philbert said unto him, O unhappy and more than miserable man! is it

possible that, to save your life for a few days, you should so deny the truth? Know, therefore, though you have avoided the corporal fire, yet your life shall not be prolonged; for you shall die before me, and you shall not have the honour to die for the cause of Christ; but you shall be an example to apostates; and accordingly, as he went out of the prison, two gentlemen, that had a former quarrel with him, met him, and slew him; and thus, also, he lost his life by endeavouring sinfully to save it.² The Angrognians that yielded to the papists, and complied with them, that they might sleep quietly in a whole skin, were more sadly and cruelly handled by the papists than those that continued stout, courageous, and resolute for the truth. Under the fourth persecution there were some Christians who, for fear of torments and death, denied their faith, and sacrificed to idols, yet did not their bloody persecutors spare them; and it was observed that, being full of guilt, they went to their deaths with dejected and ill-favoured countenances, so that the very Gentiles took notice of it, and reproached them as base apostates, and as such who were worthy to suffer as evil-doers. West, that was chaplain to Bishop Ridley, refusing to die in Christ's cause with his master, said mass against his conscience, and soon after pined away with sorrow and grief. A smith in King Edward the Sixth's days, called Richard Denton, was a forward professor of religion, and, by his Christian instruction, the happy instrument of the conversion of a young man to the faith. Afterwards, in the reign of Queen Mary, this young man was cast in prison for his religion; who, remembering his old friend and spiritual father, the smith, to whom he always carried a reverent respect for the good he had received by him, sent to know whether he was imprisoned also, and finding that he was not, desired to speak with him; and when he came he asked his advice, whether he thought it best for him to remain in prison, and whether he would encourage him to burn at a stake for his religion. To whom the smith answered, that his cause was good, and that he might with comfort suffer for it; but for my part, said the smith, I cannot burn. But shortly after, he that could not burn for religion, by God's just judgment was burned for his apostasy; for his shop and house being set on fire, and he over-busy to save his goods, was burnt in the flames. They that will

not burn for Christ when he calls them to it, shall burn whether they will or no. He that will not suffer for Christ, shall be sure to suffer worse things from Christ than ever he could have suffered for Christ. And therefore Dr Taylor, the martyr, hit the nail when he said, If I shrink from God's truth, said he, I am sure of another manner of death than Judge Hales had, who being drawn, for fear of death, to do things against his light and conscience, did afterwards drown himself.² Cyprian, in his sermon, De Lapsis, makes mention of divers who, forsaking the profession of their faith, were given over by God to be possessed by evil spirits, and so died fearfully and miserably, making good that word that is more worth than a world, John 12:25, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' A man that is sparing of his life when Christ calls for it, doth take the ready way to lose it; and he that doth hazard it for him at his call, is sure to live eternally. Christ approves of no followers who are not resolved on the loss of what is dearest to them, yea, even of life, for his sake; therefore doth he mention our life to be hated, which is not to be understood absolutely, as if it were a sin to love life, as it is the gift of God, or that they should be weary of it, but comparatively, that they should not love it more than Christ, his word, his worship, his ways. He that resolves to save his temporal life upon any terms, he takes the shortest cut to lose both temporal and eternal life also. 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.' He that prefers the honour and service of Christ above his own life, he takes the surest way to preserve both body and soul into eternal life; for 'he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' Though life be sweet, and every creature makes much of it, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, yet woe, woe to him that is set upon saving of it when Christ calls upon him to lay it down for his sake, or the gospel's sake. No fool to him that thinks to avoid a less danger by running himself into a greater danger, who thinks to save his body by losing his soul, and to save his temporal life by losing eternal life. There is no loser to him who, by sinful attempts to save his life, shall lose a better life than ever he can save. But,

5. Fifthly, Consider, That of old there had been a very great willingness, readiness, forwardness, and resoluteness in the people of God, cheerfully to suffer for Christ, his truth, his gospel, his worship, his ways, his ordinances, his interest, his honour. Consult the scriptures in the margin, and many others of the like import, which all knowing Christians can turn to at pleasure. To these I shall add a few examples amongst a multitude of those blessed souls, who willingly, readily, cheerfully, resolutely hazarded all for Christ while they were on earth, and are now a-receiving their reward with him in heaven. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy, said Mr Philpot, the martyr, that I am so near the apprehension of eternal life! I with my fellows were carried to the coal-house, where we do rouse together in the straw as cheerfully, we thank God, as others do in their beds of down.² Mr Glover, the martyr, wept for joy of his imprisonment: and Mr Bradford put off his cap and thanked the Lord when his keeper's wife brought him word that he was to be burnt the next day: and Mr Taylor fetched a pleasant delightful frisk when he was come near to the place where he was to suffer. Mr Rogers, the first that was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did sing in the flames: Vincentius, laughing at his torments, said that death and tortures were to Christians *jocularia et ludicra*, matters of sport and pastime; and he joyed and gloried when he went upon hot burning coals, as if he had trod upon roses. Fire, sword, death, prison, famine, are all pleasures, they are all delightful to me, saith Basil; and in his oration for Barlaam that famous martyr, saith that he delighted in the close prison as in a pleasant green meadow; and he took pleasure in the several inventions of tortures, as in several sweet flowers. William Tims, martyr, in a letter to a friend of his a little before his death, writeth thus, 'Now I take my leave of you till we meet in heaven, and hie you after. I have tarried a great while for you; and seeing you are so long in making ready, I will tarry no longer for you! you shall find me merrily singing, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabbath, at my journey's end,' &c. And when they kindled the fire at the feet of James Bainham, Methinks, said he, you strew roses before me. When the prefect urged Basil to comply with the emperor, and threatened him with death if he denied, he gave him this resolute and stout

answer, 'Thou threatenest me with death,' saith he, 'and I would that it would fall out so well on my side, that I might lay down this carease of mine in the quarrel of Christ, and in defence of the truth, who is my head and captain:' and when the prefect pressed him to remember himself, and obey the emperor; he, rejecting all, told him, What I am to-day the same thou shalt find me to-morrow.⁴

When Chrysostom was greatly threatened by the cruel empress and others, he made this answer, 'If they keep me poor, I know Christ had not a house to put his head in: if they silence me, and put me out of the synagogue; so was that poor man that confessed Christ, and the apostles enjoined not to speak in the name of Jesus: if they cast me into prison, so was Jeremiah, St Peter, and St Paul, and many more: if I am forced to flee my country, I have that beloved John, and that Atlas-like Athanasius, for precedents of the like nature: or whatsoever else should be done unto me, I have the holy martyrs for my fellow-sufferers; and I will never count my life dear unto me, so I may finish my course with joy; but I will, by God's help be every ready, with all my heart, to suffer anything for the name of Jesus Christ, and for the least jot of his truth,' John 9:22, 24; Acts 5:40, &c., and 12; Eph. 6:20; Rev. 1.

Neither were they only a few choice persons who willingly, readily, cheerfully, and resolutely endured martyrdom in Christ's cause; but such multitudes, year after year, month after month, week after week, and day after day, as that one of the ancients testifieth that there was never a day in the year, except the first of January, whereunto the number of five hundred martyrs at least might not be ascribed. So many, one after another, in one day suffered, as the executioner blunted his sword, and, with the pains he took, fainted.² That which many of them endured, though to flesh and blood it seemed intolerable, yet with much patience, excellent cheerfulness, and divine courage, they endured it. They were not like bears hauled to the stake; but while persecutors were sitting on their judgment-seats, and condemning some Christians, others leaped in and professed themselves Christians, and suffered the uttermost that

could be inflicted, with joyfulness and a kind of pleasantness, singing psalms as long as their breath lasted.

Bucer, in an epistle to Calvin, tells him that there were some that would willingly redeem to the commonwealth the ancient liberty of worshipping Christ with their very lives. True grace makes a Christian of a very heroic nature. Holy zeal will make a Christian very ready to endure anything, or to suffer anything for Christ, his worship, his ways, his truth.

It is a high vanity for any man to think of getting to heaven without suffering. In all the ages of the world the saints have found the way to happiness paved with troubles, and we must not think of finding it strewn with rosebuds.

When Paul and Silas were in prison, their hearts were so full of joy that they could not hold; but at midnight, when others were sleeping, they must fall a-singing out the praises of the Most High, Acts 16:25. They found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, more comfort than torment in their bonds. The consolations of the Spirit rose so high in their souls that their prison was turned into a palace, yea, into a paradise. Paul was a man that took a great deal of pleasure in his sufferings for Christ: 2 Cor. 12:10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.' He did not only bear his sufferings patiently, but cheerfully also; he often sings it sweetly out, 'I Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' Col. 4:3, 10; Rom. 16:7; Eph. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:16, &c.; not I Paul an apostle, nor I Paul rapt up into the third heaven, nor I Paul that have more gifts, parts, and learning, than others; but 'I Paul a prisoner,' to shew how much he-rejoiced in his bonds and sufferings for Christ. Chrysostom did not hold Paul so happy for his rapture into paradise as he did for his imprisonment for Christ.

Oh, the sweet looks, the sweet words, the sweet hints, the sweet incomes, the sweet joggings, the sweet embraces, the sweet influences,

the sweet discoveries, the sweet love-letters, the sweet love-tokens, and the sweet comforts that Christians experience in their sufferings for Christ! In all their troubles and persecutions they may truly say, We have sweetmeats to eat, and waters of life to drink, and heavenly honeycombs to suck that the world knows not of; and, indeed, when should the torch be lighted but in a dark night; and when should the fire be made but when the weather is cold; and when should the cordial be given but when the patient is weak; and when should the God of comfort, the God of all kinds of comfort, and the God of all degrees of comfort, comfort his people, but under their troubles and persecutions; for then comfort is most proper, necessary, seasonable, and suitable, and then God will be sure to pour in the oil of joy into their hearts? 2 Cor. 1:3–5. But,

6. Sixthly, Consider, That there is a great truth in that old maxim, *Non pœna, sed causa facit martyrem*; It is not the punishment, but the cause, that makes a martyr. Let every man look that his cause be good. It is not the blood, but the cause, that makes a martyr. It is no ways meet that I should engage to suffer in every cause. Every cause will no more bear a man out in suffering than every shoulder will bear every burden, or than every little river will bear every ship that is of the greatest burden. One man suffers as a murderer, another suffers as a thief, another suffers as an evil-doer, and another suffers as a busybody in other men's matters; but all such sufferers are rather malefactors than Christ's martyrs. 'Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters,' 1 Pet. 4:15. It is but one word in the original, *ἀλλοτριεπίσκοπος*, as bishops in another's diocese, as pryvers into other men's matters, as pragmatistical persons that meddle with other men's concernments, without cause or call. It is not suffering for evil-doing, but suffering for well-doing that carries the crown, 2 Tim. 2:12. It is not just, but unjust suffering that hath the recompense of reward annexed to it, 1 Pet. 3:14, and 4:14. It is not sufferers for the evil of sin, nor sufferers of the evil of sin; but sufferers of the evil of punishment, for the avoiding of the evil of sin, whose cause is good. When I consider the cause of my condemnation, said Mr Bradford, I

cannot but lament that I do no more rejoice than I do; for it is for God's verity and truth. So that the condemnation is not a condemnation of Bradford simply, but rather a condemnation of Christ and of his truth. Bradford is nothing but an instrument in which Christ and his doctrine is condemned. Christ and the thieves were in the same condemnation; Samson and the Philistines in the same destruction by the downfall of the house. *Similis poena, dissimilis causa*, saith Augustine. Martyrdom is a crown, as old age, if it be found in a way of righteousness. Though life be a poor little thing to lay down for that Christ that has done such great things for us, and that has suffered such grievous things, and that has prepared such glorious things for us; yet, it is too precious to lay down in any cause but what is honourable, just, and good, Isa. 53; John 14. Luther professed to Spalatine that he rejoiced with all his heart, that God called him to suffer for so good a cause, acknowledging himself unworthy of such a favour. It is the goodness of a man's cause that makes him divinely merry with the martyrs, and to sing in a prison with Paul and Silas, Col. 1:24. When a man's cause is good he may call his sufferings the sufferings of Christ, and his scars and marks, *στίγματα*, brands and marks of the Lord Jesus, Gal. 6:17. The Jews have been hated and persecuted for many ages; first by the Romans, and since by all other nations, but not for any just or righteous cause, but for their impiety, obstinacy, and contempt of Christ and his gospel, and for killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent amongst them, Mat. 22:2–8, and 23:30, 34, 37, 38. But gracious persons are endued, not only with reason, but also with spiritual understanding and divine wisdom, which makes them well weigh what they do, and what they suffer. Sincere Christians advisedly endure what they endure for the faith's sake, 'So fight I, not as one that beateth the air,' 1 Cor. 9:26; that is, not as a madman that fighteth with a shadow, not weighing what he doth, but as a man of understanding, that doth very well know that I have good cause to do what I do. Persecutors commonly judge suffering saints to be no better than sots, idiots, frantics, mad, &c., not knowing the goodness of the cause for which they suffer, nor the noble ends which they aim at in suffering, nor the blessed fruits that attend their sufferings.

But when may a man safely and groundedly conclude that his cause is good, or that he suffers for well-doing, or for a good cause, and as a Christian? Now to this question I shall give these following answers:

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[1.] First, When a man suffers for doing that which Christ commands, then he suffers for well-doing, then he suffers as a Christian, and then his cause is good, 1 Pet. 4:15, 16. You know there is nothing in all the Scripture that God stands more upon than purity of religion, than purity of worship, than purity of ordinances, in opposition to all mixtures and corruptions whatsoever, James 1:27; Phil. 3:3; John 4:23, 24. O sirs! the great God stands upon nothing more in all the world than upon purity in his worship. There is nothing that does so provoke and exasperate God against a people as mixtures in his worship and service, Mat. 21:12, 13; John 2:15–17. And no wonder, for mixtures in his worship are expressly cross to his commands, and pollutions in worship do sadly reflect upon the name of God, the honour of God, the truth of God; and therefore his heart rises against them. Defilements in worship do sorely reflect upon the wisdom of Christ and the faithfulness of Christ, as if he were not faithful enough, nor wise enough, nor prudent, nor understanding enough, to order, direct, and guide his people in the matters of his worship; but must be beholden to the wisdom, prudence, and care of man, of vain man, of sinful man, of vile and unworthy man, to complete, perfect, and make up something that was wanting in his worship and service, &c., Heb. 3:4–6. Now if a man suffers for owning pure worship and ordinances, for standing for pure worship and ordinances, and for being found in the practice of pure worship and ordinances, his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian. But,

[2.] Secondly, When a man suffers for refusing, or for not doing, that which Christ condemns in his word, then his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian for well-doing. Now in matters of divine worship, God condemns all mixtures, all inventions and devices of men. The very spirit, life, and soul of the second commandment lies in these words, 'Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.'

God abhors that men should mix their water with his wine, their dross with his gold, their chaff with his wheat, &c. When men will venture to be so hardy and bold with God as to defile his worship with their mixtures, then God is fully resolved to be a swift and terrible witness against them, as you may clearly see by comparing those notable places of Scripture together in the margin. There is no sin that does so greatly incense and provoke God to jealousy and wrath against a people, as mixtures in his worship. God can bear with defilements anywhere rather than in worship and service. God did bear much and bear long with the Jews; but when they had defiled and corrupted his worship, then God gave them a bill of divorce, and scattered them as dung among the nations. Now when a man suffers for refusing to worship God with a mixed worship, or with an invented or devised worship, which Christ in his word doth everywhere condemn, then his cause is good, and he suffers as a Christian. But,

[3.] Thirdly, They that stoutly and resolutely assert that the blessed Scriptures are a sufficient rule to order, guide, and direct them in all matters of worship, they have a good cause, Luke 10:25, 26; and they that suffer upon this account suffer as Christians for well-doing. Such vain men greatly detract from the sufficiency of the Scripture, who mingle their own or other men's inventions with divine institutions; and who set their posts by God's posts, and their thresholds by God's thresholds, Ezek. 43:9. The precepts and traditions of men, with their inventions and additions to the worship of God, are styled posts and thresholds, because the authors of them do lean and stand so much upon them, and set them in the way to hinder others from the enjoyment of temple-privileges, unless they will own and comply with them in their way and mode of worship; but upon all such posts and thresholds, that are of men's setting up in the worship of God, you may run and read folly, weakness, rottenness, and madness. It is only God's posts, God's thresholds, God's institutions, God's appointments, that have wisdom and holiness, beauty and glory, written upon them. For men to set up their posts by God's posts, and to give their posts equal honour and authority with God's posts, this

is a defiling of the worship of God, and a profaning of the name of God, which he will certainly avenge; for he will admit no rival or proprietary in the things of his worship. O sirs! the blessed Scriptures are sufficient to direct us fully in everything that belongs to the worship and service of God, so as that we need not depend upon the wisdom, prudence, care, and authority of any man under heaven to direct us in matters of worship: 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' The Scriptures are sufficient to inform the ignorant, to confute the erroneous, to reform the vicious, and to guide and direct, support and comfort, those that are gracious. Here a lamb may wade, and an elephant may swim; here is milk for babes, and meat for strong men; here is comfort for the afflicted, and succour for the tempted, and ease for the troubled, and light for the clouded, and enlargement for the straitened, &c. Oh, how full of light, how full of life, how full of love, how full of sweetness, how full of goodness, how full of righteousness and holiness, &c., is every chapter, and every verse in every chapter, yea, and every line in every verse! The Rabbins say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word of Scripture, yea, upon every title of Scripture. When the people of God have been in any outward or inward distresses or troubles, God never sends them to the shop of men's traditions and inventions, but he still sends them to the blessed Scriptures: Isa. 8:20, 'To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light' (שחר, no morning) 'in them:' chap. 34:16, 'Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and my Spirit it hath gathered them.' And in the New Testament, Christ sends his hearers to the Scriptures: John 5:39, 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.' The Greek word, ἐρευνᾶτε, that is here rendered 'search,' signifies a strict, narrow, curious, diligent search. We must search the Scriptures as we would search for gold, or for some precious stones, which we would fain find; we must search the

Scriptures as hunters seek and search out their game. The Scripture is so perfect a rule that the most specious observances, the most glorious performances, the most exact worship, is no way acceptable unto God if not directed in his word. They may have λόγον σοφίας ἐν ἐθελοθρησκεία, 'a show of wisdom in will-worship,' to the pleasing of men, not to the honour of God,' Col. 2:23. God gave Moses a pattern for the making of the tabernacle, Exod. 25:9, and David for the temple, Heb. 8:5, and all things were to be ordered, and regulated according to this pattern, God hath set us a perfect rule of worship in his word, and no service pleaseth him but what is according to this rule. As our Saviour told the woman of Samaria concerning the Samaritan worship at Mount Gerizim, and the Jewish worship at Jerusalem, that the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what, John 4:20–22; the Jews knew what they worshipped, for salvation was of the Jews. Why so? Because the Jews had God's special direction and appointment of God's word for their worship and service, which the Samaritans had not. All our worship must be regulated by God's will, not our own: *Non ex arbitrio Deo serviendum, sed ex imperio*; Not according to our own fancy, but God's command and prescription. I say of all human-invented will-worship of God, as Tertullian of the heathen worship, *Ex religione superstitio compingitur, et eo irreligiosior, quanto Ethnicus paratior*; Men in this are no better than laboriously superstitious, taking pains to be irreligious. And so the apostle, 2 Pet. 1:19–21, sends his hearers to the Scriptures, as to a surer word than that of the revelation, all which speaks out the sufficiency of the Scripture, to direct us in all matters of divine worship, and in whatever else may help on the internal and eternal welfare of our precious and immortal souls.

That which bred the popish religion, superstition, idolatry, and pompous worship, was men's departing from the word, and not cleaving to the word as a sufficient rule to direct them in all matters of worship; and what woeful mischiefs and miseries have been brought upon the people of the Lord in this land and elsewhere by men that make not the word the rule of their worship, but cry up an outward pompous worship, I have no mind to enumerate at this

time. But how will these vain men, that accuse the holy Scriptures of insufficiency, blush, be ashamed, and confounded, when in the great day the Lord shall plead the excellency and vindicate the sufficiency and authority of his blessed book, in opposition to all the mixtures of men's traditions with divine institutions! Now they that suffer for asserting the holy Scriptures to be a sufficient rule to order, guide, and direct them in all matters of worship, they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing. But,

[4.] They that are assertors of the true God, in opposition to the idols of the nations, have a good cause; and they that suffer upon this account suffer as Christians for well-doing. Upon this foot the Christians under the heathen emperors in the primitive times suffered great things; and are there none that suffer this day upon this account by the Romish powers? But,

[5.] Fifthly, They who assert that God will not bear with mixtures in his worship and service, but revenge himself upon the corrupters of his worship, they have a good cause; and they that suffer upon that account suffer as Christians for well-doing. All mixtures debase the worship and service of God, and makes the worship a vain worship, Isa. 29:13, 14; Mat. 15:3, 6, 8, 9. As the mixing of water with wine is the debasing of the wine, and the mixing of tin with silver, or brass with gold, is debasing of the silver and gold, so for men to mix and mingle their traditions and inventions with God's institutions is to debase the worship and service of God, and to detract from the excellency and glory of it. You know that the kings and princes of the world have most severely punished such who by their base mixtures have imbas'd their coin; and assuredly there is a day a-coming when the King of kings will most severely punish all such who have imbas'd his worship and service, by mixing human inventions and Romish traditions with his holy institutions: Rev. 22:18, 'For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.' And no wonder; for what horrible pride, presumption, stoutness, and baseness is it in foolish

man to be so bold with the great God, as to dare to mix anything of his own with his worship and service, which, according to divine institution, is so perfect and complete. God will never bear it to see men lay their dirt upon his gold, and to put their rags upon his royal robes. Ah, Christians, it is best to stand up for holy ordinances and pure worship, in opposition to all mixtures whatsoever. Oh, do not touch a polluted worship, do not plead and contend for a polluted worship, but let Baal plead for Baal, 1 Kings 18:21; and though all the world should wonder after the beast, yet do not you wonder² after the beast, Rev. 13:3, 4, 6, 17; and though every forehead should have the mark of the beast upon it, yet do you abhor his mark, and whatever else it be that does but smell and savour of the beast, Rev. 14:9, 11. It is a very dangerous thing for any mortals to be adding to God's worship and word; there is a horrible curse that hangs over the heads of all such that add or detract from the blessed Scriptures. If falsifiers of coin are liable unto the civil curse of the law, how much more shall the anathema of eternal damnation be inflicted upon the corrupters of God's word and worship. 'To them that add thereto, God will add all the plagues of this book'—to wit, the seven last plagues—'and cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet,' Rev. 19. Now they that suffer for asserting that God will not bear with mixtures in his worship and service, but revenge himself upon the corrupters of his worship and service, they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing. But,

[6.] Sixthly, They who are hated, scorned, despised, reproached opposed, persecuted, imprisoned, ruined for their non-compliance with the times, and with the wills and lusts of men, and with the worship of the world and the ways of the world, they have a good cause, and they suffer as Christians for well-doing, 1 Pet. 4:4, 5; Jude 15; Rev. 3:4; 1 Cor. 7:23; Gal. 1:10. And is not this the very case of the people of God this day? for would they, or durst they, comply with the times, and with the wills and lusts of men, and with the worship of the world and the ways of the world, they should be white boys, and instead of prisons might stand in princes' palaces as well as

others, and might eat the fat and drink the sweet, and live at ease, and grow rich as well as others. But some do not love that we should either harp hard or long upon this string; and therefore,

[7.] Seventhly, They that are assertors of Christ, of the true Messiah, and his glorious gospel and gospel ordinances, in opposition to all such as either deny him or his gospel, or that make head against him or gospel ordinances, gospel administrations, they have a good cause, and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing. The sufferings of the people of God for the first three hundred years, were clearly stated for Christ and the gospel in common. It was the administration of the gospel in the whole and in every part of it, and Gentilism advanced instead thereof, that brought on a warm persecution. Seeing serious Christians are for pure ordinances and pure administrations, and what they have suffered and do daily suffer upon that account, all that do not wilfully shut their eyes may easily discern. It is sad when such men's mouths must be stopped who are qualified, gifted, graced, and called, both by God and men, to preach the glorious, the everlasting gospel, 2 Cor. 4:4. But when the devil and his factors have done their worst, the gospel will get ground by all the opposition that is made against it, Rev. 14:6. Among many other visions that John had, 'he saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth; and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people; saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him,' &c., Rev. 14:7, 8. Now mark what next follows: 'Another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; Babylon the Great is fallen.' Now behold the efficacy and power of gospel-preaching. Let but the gospel be sincerely preached, and Babylon must down. The devil and Dagon must fall before the ark of God's presence; whatsoever the purposes, projects, pretences, policies, conspiracies, combinations, and confederacies of lewd, superstitious, atheistical, wicked wretches be, yet they shall never be able to stop the stream of God's word, dam up the wells of salvation, or hinder the free passage of the gospel, no more than they are able to bind up the wind in their fists, or stop the sun from running its race, or hinder the clouds from

watering the earth. It is true that the faithful ministers of the gospel may, by the instruments of Satan, be stocked, stoned, sawn asunder, burned with fire, slain with the sword, clapped up in prison, fettered in chains, plundered, &c., yet the gospel may be, nay is, in lively operation, a light that cannot be put out, a heat that cannot be smothered, a power that cannot be broken; for even then the courageous and constant sufferings of God's faithful ministers, and their cheerful and patient bearing of the cross, doth, as by a lively voice, publish and proclaim the truth of the gospel for which they suffer, and serves to win many to the faith of Christ. Paul's bonds fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, Phil. 1:7, 12–14, 17. Paul's iron chain was more famous and glorious all the world over, than all the golden chains in Nero's palace. Whatsoever persecuting popes and persecuting emperors have attempted against the gospel, Christ has turned it all to the furtherance of the gospel. The pope's bulls, and the emperor's thunderbolts, did not amaze and discourage men, but did exceedingly animate and encourage them to own the gospel, to embrace the gospel, and to stand up in the defence of the gospel. Cæsar sending the Protestants' confession abroad to other Christian princes, as desiring their advice about it, dispersed and spread it more in all parts than all the Lutheran preachers could have done; for which cause Luther laughs not a little at the foolish wisdom of the papists, in a certain epistle of his to the elector of Saxony.² Julian, observing that the more ministers and Christians were persecuted the more they increased, he gave over persecution, and spared those whom he could have wished out of the world. And would it not be the wisdom and the interest of the persecutors in our days to write after Julian's copy? and if they will not, then let them remember that it is the most effectual way under heaven to propagate those truths, opinions, ways, principles, and practices, which their hearts rise and swell against, by laying them in bonds which stand up most eminently in the defence of those truths, opinions, ways, principles, and practices. The nature of man is very curious and inquisitive. Men, as men, are led by common compassion to desire to understand the grounds of men's sufferings. By this means the sufferings, especially the imprisonment of the apostles, carried the doctrine of

the gospel to many places where the apostles themselves never came, nor perhaps could come; no doubt but the fame of their suffering went faster and farther too than they could go. But,

[8.] Eighthly, They that are assertors of any one fundamental truth, in opposition to error and heresy truly so called, have a good cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing, Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 11:9; 2 Pet. 2:1; Gal. 5:20. Such were those Christians that suffered under the Arian emperors, Constantius, Valens, and others, who suffered for maintaining that Christ was co-essential, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father; and such were Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, &c. Are there none this day among us that suffer in their names, in their estates, in their persons, in their liberties, for asserting and maintaining the great truths of the gospel, in opposition to Socinianism, Arianism, Popery, will-worship, &c.? Are there no Socinian atheists among us who deny with open face the godhead of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, as if Christ were a constituted God, and not of the same substance with the Father from all eternity; not a God by nature, but by donation in time? And though God hath raised up several champions in this his Israel, to disarm them of all their subtilties, and to beat them out of all their trenches, though they were dug as low as hell; yet, how have they put on a brow of brass, and do all they can to bring on a warm persecution upon their opposers? Prov. 27:22. But,

[9.] Ninthly, They that plead for the reduction of all ordinances, worship, church-government, and discipline, to the primitive pattern and institution, in opposition to all human and antichristian inventions, traditions, and innovations in the worship of God, they have a good cause; and they that suffer upon that account, suffer as Christians for well-doing. Surely this is a truth we must live and die by, viz., That no ordinance, worship, government, or discipline, is to be held up or maintained in the church but what has the stamp of a divine institution upon it. The worshipping of God in spirit and in truth is that worship which God commands, commends, accepts, and

rewards; and therefore let us make it our business, our work, our heaven, to keep close to this kind of worship, John 4:23, 24; Rom. 1:9; Phil. 3:3. Christ will shortly come in flames of fire, and vindicate this kind of worship against all opposers, 2 Thes. 1:7–10. Hold out faith and patience a little, and Christ will call all the troublers of his church and people into the valley of decision, Joel 3:14; and there, with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm, he will plead with them, and with all such as have muddied the waters of his sanctuary, and polluted those silver streams; and then it will appear whether the outward ceremonious worshipping of God, or the worshipping him in spirit and in truth, be the true worship, Isa. 40:10; Jer. 21:5; Ezek. 32:2. Judicious Hooker determines, that in God's service to do that which we are not to do is a greater fault than not to do that which we are commanded. Amongst other reasons, he gives this to our purpose, because in the one we seem to charge the law of God with hardness only, and in the other, with foolishness and insufficiency, which God gave us as a perfect rule of his worship and service. But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, They that are assertors of those precious privileges that are the purchase of the blood of Christ, they have a good cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing, Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18; Phil. 2:6–10. As for instance,

First, Christ as mediator hath purchased for himself a headship and supremacy over his church. Now such as stand up for the headship of the Lamb, against all those that would rob him of his headship, either at Rome or elsewhere, they have a righteous cause; and if they suffer upon that account, they suffer as Christians for well-doing.

Secondly, He has purchased for his people a liberty to serve and worship him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life, Luke 1:69, 70, 74, 75. He has purchased for his people a liberty from the ceremonies of Moses' law, which were originally the commands of God himself; how much more then from all Paganish

and Antichristian ceremonies! Gal. 5:1. The imposition of traditional observances and ceremonies, is to reduce us under the Jewish yoke, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, Acts 15:10; or to impose them as equally obligatory to conscience, as divine commands; or to impose them as the immediate worship of God, or as duties essentially necessary in order to salvation: Christians justly abhor, as the tyranny of Rome, as the infringement of Christian liberty, and as a violation and making void the commandment of God; as our Saviour told the Pharisees of old, that 'they made the commandment of God of none effect,' Mat. 15:6. The Greek word ἠκυρώσατε, signifies 'to deprive of all rule and authority.' They had such a superstitious esteem of their traditions, ceremonies, &c., that they sought to shoulder God out of his throne, to divest and spoil him of his rule and authority, to ungod him, as it were, by making his commandment void and invalid. Christ reprehends three things in the Jewish traditions; (1.) That they obtruded outward cleanness on God, instead of the purity of the heart; (2.) That by their human traditions, they made void the worship of God; (3.) That they preferred human traditions before the divine precepts; and were so taken with their traditions, that they neglected the divine precepts; yea, made them altogether vain as the papists, and others that are popishly affected, do this day. They that are the most zealous for the introducing of useless ceremonies in the church, are usually the most negligent to preach the cautions in using them; and simple people, like children in eating of fish, swallow bones and all, to the danger of choking. Besides, what is observed of horse-hairs, that lying nine days in water, they turn to snakes; so some ceremonies, though dead at first, in continuance of time quicken, get stings, and may do much mischief; especially in such an age, wherein the meddling of some have justly awakened the jealousy of all.² Now, whoever shall suffer for asserting of any of the precious privileges, that are the purchase of Christ's blood, they suffer in a righteous cause, they suffer as Christians, for well-doing. And thus you see how a man may know when his cause is good, just, and righteous, and when he suffers as a Christian for well-doing. But,

7. Seventhly, Consider, That it is not enough for a man to have a good cause, but he must have a clear call; else he may be a sufferer, but no martyr. Some may have a good cause, and yet want a clear call. Some may suffer for the cause of God, and yet sin in suffering, for want of a call. Christ calls not all to suffer; to some it is given, to others it is not given. When a man's call is clear, his peace will be sweet, his courage will be high, and his comforts will be strong, though his sufferings be never so great, nor never so long. Though it be a high honour to suffer for the gospel, yet 'no man ought to take this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God.' Christians must take as much heed how they espouse a suffering state, as how they shun a suffering state. I am not to go to prison upon choice, but upon a call, but upon a warrant under God's own hand; though it be an argument of a gracious spirit, to be always of a ready and forward mind to suffer for Christ. And when he demands, Who will go with me? who will bear my cross? cheerfully to answer, I will go, Lord, let me bear it: yet should we take heed, that as we hang not back when he says go; so that we run not before he sends us, before he calls us.

Quest. But how shall I know when I am called to suffer, when I am called to lay down life, liberty, and all, for the profession of Christ and the gospel? To this I answer:—

[1.] First, When the truth will suffer, and the name of God suffer, and the gospel will suffer, should we decline suffering, then we are called to suffer. It is our duty to suffer anything, to suffer the worst of things that the worst of men can inflict, rather than that the truth should suffer, or the name of God suffer, or the gospel suffer.

[2.] Secondly, When the case stands so with us, that we cannot keep life, estate, liberty, &c., without denying of Christ or the gospel, or without concealing this precious truth or that, or without turning our backs upon this ordinance or that, &c., then we are called to suffer. When we cannot preserve our lives, our liberties, our estates, without denying of Christ, or the concerns of Christ, in one degree or another, in one kind or another, then we are called to lay down our lives, our

liberties, our estates, &c., at the feet of Christ, as the saints and martyrs of old have done before us.

[3.] Thirdly, When our way is so hedged up with thorns, Hosea 2:6, that we must either sin or suffer, when sin and sufferings surround us, so that we cannot get out or come off, but we must either sin or suffer, then I must, with the three champions, choose rather to burn than to bow; and with Daniel to the lion's den, than to omit my duty, Dan. 3:17; and with Moses, choose to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, Heb. 11:24–26. I may safely and groundedly conclude, that Christ calls me to suffer, when I must either sin or suffer. When the case stands thus, then I may be confident of the singular presence of God with me, the special blessing of God upon me, and a gracious or a glorious deliverance out of all my sufferings. But,

[4.] Fourthly and lastly, When a Christian, to the best of his understanding, has seriously weighed all things and circumstances, and is well satisfied in his mind and conscience that his sufferings will be the exaltation of Christ, the furtherance of the gospel, the stopping of the mouths of the wicked, the confirmation of those that are strong, and the strengthening and encouraging of those that are weak, then he may safely conclude that Christ calls him to suffer. But,

8. Eighthly, Consider, That the sufferings of the saints in these days are light and easy to the sufferings that were inflicted upon the Jews in the days of Antiochus, and on Christians in the times of the ten notorious persecutions under the Roman emperors, and to those that have been inflicted upon the martyrs since. So cruel was the sight of those tortures which persecutors inflicted, as exceeds all expression.² Constant Christians had their flesh torn from their backs with rods, scourges, whips, and cords, so as their bones lay bare; and the raw parts of their bodies were washed with vinegar and salt. They were stretched on racks, their legs were broken, and so left miserably to perish; they were gored with sharp pricks under the

lowest parts of their nails; their bodies were scraped with shells to death; their backs were flayed; their skins were pulled over their heads, from the brow to the chin; their noses, lips, ears, hands, and feet were cut off, and they, as sacrifices, cut in gobbets; their tongues were cut out by the roots, and pulled out of their jaws; their eyes were bored, and digged out; their bodies were rent and pulled in pieces by strong boughs forced together by instruments, and let loose when the limbs of the bodies of martyrs were tied fast unto them; their limbs were also pulled to pieces with wild horses; their brains were knocked out with fuller's clubs; their legs were broken in pieces; they were burnt with fire; they were a long while together parched with hot burning coals; being hanged by the heels, and their heads downward over a soft fire, they were choked with smoke; they were roasted at the fire, as flesh to be eaten used to be roasted; they were leisurely broiled on gridirons over the fire; they were fried in red-hot iron chairs, as in a frying-pan, which annoyed the standers-by with a stench; hot boiling lead was poured down their throats; they clapped fiery plates of brass upon the most tender parts of their bodies. A persecuting tyrant, considering the nature of the country, that it was terrible cold, and the time of the year, that it was winter, and a night wherein the cold extremely increased, and that the north wind then blew there, commanded forty Christians to be set stark naked under the open air in the midst of the city to freeze to death. Then, when they heard that charge, with joy casting away even their innermost vestment, they went on to their death by cold.² They endured the violence of leopards, bears, wild boars, and bulls. Attalus and Alexander were twice baited with wild beasts, to be torn in pieces by them, as Eusebius reports. Attalus, escaping the beasts, was reserved to other torments, to be burnt to death in an iron chair, heated red fire hot. Macedonius, Theodulus, and Tatianus were laid upon a gridiron, and broiled to death.⁴ There were many Christians together stopped up in lakes or caves, artificially made close, which lakes or ditches were filled with a company of dormice, kept hungry, to gnaw and feed upon the poor Christians, they being all the while bound hand and foot, that they could not keep off those hunger-starved creatures, which were kept without meat also, purposely that they

might fasten with the more eagerness upon the bodies of those precious Christians. They were destroyed with hunger, thirst, and cold. Such as were stifled in prisons, they cast to dogs, setting watchmen night and day, lest any of them should be buried. And such remainders as were left both of beasts and fire, in part torn, and in part burnt, together with the heads and bodies of others, they cast out in like manner, unburied, and committed them some days to the custody of soldiers.⁶ Thus the barbarous cruelty of persecutors extended itself as far as it could beyond them temporal lives of the martyrs. Ecclesiastical histories tell us that all the apostles died violent deaths. Peter was crucified with his heels upwards. Christ was crucified with his head upwards, but Peter thought this was too great an honour for him to be crucified as his Lord, and therefore he chose to be crucified with his heels upward; and Andrew was crucified by Egeus, king of Edessa; and James, the son of Zebedee, was slain by Herod with the sword, Acts 12:2; and Philip was crucified at Hierapolis, in Asia; and while Bartholomew was preaching the glad tidings of salvation, multitudes fell upon him, and beat him down with staves, and then crucified him; and after all this, his skin was flayed off, and he beheaded; Thomas was slain with a dart at Calumina, in India; and Matthew was slain with a spear, say some; others say he was run through with a sword; and James, the son of Alpheus, who was called the Just, was thrown down from off a pinnacle of the temple; and yet having some life left in him, he was brained with a fuller's club. Lebbeus was slain by Agbarus, king of Edessa, and Paul was beheaded at Rome by Nero; and Simon the Canaanite was crucified in Egypt, say some; others say that he and Jude were slain in a tumult of the people; and Matthias was stoned to death, and John was banished into Patmos, Rev. 1:9; and afterwards, as some histories tell us, he was by that cruel tyrant Domitian cast into a tub of scalding oil, and yet delivered by a miracle. Thus all these worthies, 'of whom this world was not worthy,' Heb. 11:38, except John, died violent deaths, and so, through sufferings, entered into glory. To conclude, Lactantius saith, not only the men among the Christians, and those of stronger years and hearts, but even our women and little children, saith he, have

endured all torments, and been too hard for their tormentors. No rack, no fire could fetch so much as a groan from them, which the stoutest thieves and malefactors among their persecutors could not undergo, but they would roar and cry out through impatience and disability to endure them. I suppose that more cruel torments cannot be invented than of old have been inflicted on Christians. Persecutors have acknowledged that they were overcome, and had no more to inflict.² Such torture and torments so courageously and manfully have sundry Christians in all ages suffered as to them who only heard thereof they seemed incredible; and to many who were eye-witnesses thereof they seemed so strange, and beyond admiration, as they thought the martyrs to be mad, witless, and senseless: but the martyrs had peace and rest and quiet within, and the favourable presence of God so shining upon their souls, that they were encouraged and enabled with a holy and heavenly bravery of spirit to bid defiance to their most cruel persecutors.

Now, Christians, if you compare your most cruel sufferings with the sufferings of the saints of old, how easy and light will they be found to be! What are molehills to mountains, scratches upon the hand to stabs at the heart? No more are your greatest sufferings to those that the saints have met with in former ages. And therefore, though men frown upon you, and threaten you with censures, imprisonment, banishment, confiscation, and all the evil human might and cruelty can do unto you, yet be not moved, but account yourselves happy that you have any opportunity to do or suffer anything whereby you may testify that Christ and his concerns do lie near your hearts, and whereby you may further his opposed interest, and bear witness to his despised truth, 1 Pet. 4:14, 15. But,

9. Ninthly, Consider, That the saints and martyrs of old have made little reckoning or account of their lives, liberties, relations, or estates, when they stood in competition with Christ, or his truth, worship, ways, ordinances, interest, or with their profession of the Christian faith. Witness that glorious testimony that the apostle gives of them, 'They would not accept deliverance.' He means deliverance

from death, or preservation of life. This, though offered, they would not accept—namely, on persecutors' terms or conditions, which was to deny the truth of God, or renounce their faith in him. They scorned deliverance upon base terms, and would rather die than deny Christ or his truth. This phrase, 'Not accepting deliverance,' presupposeth that deliverance was offered to them, otherwise they could not have rejected it, for their not accepting was a rejecting. Their persecutors offered them deliverance upon their compliance with their wills, lusts, ways, worship, &c. This is evident by that which Nebuchadnezzar said to Daniel's three champions when they were accused for not worshipping his idol, which was this, 'If ye be ready to fall down and worship the image,' Dan. 3:15. He hereby implies that they should be spared; for he addeth, 'If you worship not, you shall be cast into a fiery furnace.' And this is further evident in those to whom the apostle hath reference—viz., the Maccabees, 2 Mac. 6:18–31. And this was the common practice of the persecuting emperors in the ten persecutions; and after them, with the Antichristian persecutors; and more particularly, with the high persecutors in Queen Mary's days. But the Christians in those several ages had such a mighty presence of God with them, that they chose rather to suffer the worst of deaths than to preserve their lives by complying with the wills, lusts, ways, and worship of their persecutors. For ever remember this, that the envy and malice of persecutors is more against the glorious truth the saints profess than it is against their persons; for let but Christians relinquish the truth, deny the truth, reproach the truth, or oppose the truth, and presently they shall be white-boys, great favourites, good sons of the church, and what not. That the envy and malice of persecutors is more against the truth than the professors of it, is most evident, in that they persecute strangers whom they never knew before. It is said of Paul, that 'if he found any such, he brought them bound,' Acts 9:2. All was fish that was caught in his net. If father or mother, brother or sister, child or cousin profess the truth, plead for the truth, stand up for the truth, men of persecuting spirits will prosecute and persecute them to the death: 'The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall rise up against their

parents, and cause them to be put to death,' Mat. 10:21; Luke 21:16. Alphonsus Diarius delivered up his own brother John at Neuberg in Germany into his enemies' hands. So Dr London⁴ made Filmer the martyr's own brother witness against him, by supplying of him with meat and money, and by telling of him he should never want. So one Woodman was delivered by his own brother into his enemies' hands. And in the civil wars of France, not to mention that of England, the sons fought against their fathers, and brothers against brothers; and even women took up arms on both sides for defence of their religion. And Philip, king of Spain, could frequently say that he had rather have no subjects than heretics, as he called the Protestants; and out of a blind, bloody zeal he suffered his eldest son Charles to be murdered by the cruel Inquisition, because he seemed to favour the Protestant side, [Jerome.] Truth is a glorious, shining light, that discovers the ignorance and darkness, the wickedness and baseness, the unsoundness and hypocrisy, the superstition and vain conversation, of persecutors; and therefore they cannot endure this light, they hate this light, and will do all they can to suppress this light, and those that hold out this light to the world, John 3:19. The saints and martyrs of old were as willing to die as to dine. Pliny, writing to Trajan the emperor, declares to him that such was their zeal and courage in behalf of their God, that nothing could stir them from it. Neither the imperious checks of the potent emperors, nor the soft language of the eloquent orators, could draw them from the faith; but they steadfastly owned it, and constantly persevered in the defence of it, and were ready and willing to lay down their lives for it. When Ignatius was to suffer, It is better for me, saith he, to be a martyr than to be a monarch. It was a notable saying of a French martyr, when the rope was about his fellow, Give me, said he, that golden chain, and dub me knight of that noble order. Let, saith Ignatius, fire and cross, invasion of beasts, breaking of bones, pulling asunder of members, grinding of my whole body, and what else the devil can inflict, come, so I may hold Jesus Christ.³ Lucius thanked him that brought him forth to suffer, and said that he should be free from those evil masters, and go to God, a good Father and King. Germanieus, when he was brought forth to be torn in pieces and

devoured by wild beasts, the governor, persuading him to be mindful of his youth, that he might be spared, of his own accord incited the beasts against himself. Sanctus, being under tortures for professing himself to be a Christian, unto every question propounded to him, he answered, I am a Christian; whereby he occasioned his torments to be continued to death.⁵ Can we think that St Laurence would have accepted of deliverance, who, lying on a red-hot gridiron, over burning coals, with an invincible spirit thus said to the tyrants: Turn the side broiled enough, and see what thy burning fire hath done; and being turned, and thoroughly broiled on the other side, saith thus again: Eat that which is broiled, and try whether raw or broiled be the sweeter. Hippolytus, when he was tied to wild horses to be pulled asunder, thus prayed: Let them rend my limbs; do thou, O Christ, wrap up my soul. To omit other particulars of the ancient martyrs in the primitive times, with whose courageous speeches, manifesting a contempt of death, of which volumes might be filled, it is indefinitely recorded of many, who were famous for their wealth, nobility, glory, eloquence, and learning, that nevertheless they preferred true piety and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ before all those. And though they were entreated by many of their kindred and friends otherwise, yea, and by others in great place, and by the judge himself, that they would take pity of themselves, their wives, and children; yet would they not be induced and entreated by so many, and great ones, so to be affected with the love of this life as to forbear the confession of our Saviour, and to set light by the denial of him. Thus you see what little reckoning or account the Christians of old have made of their lives, liberties, and estates, or whatever else was near or dear unto them, when these things stood in competition with Christ, his truth, his worship, his ways, his interest, or with their profession of the Christian faith.

Take a few instances of a later date. John Huss being at the stake, a pardon was offered him if he would recant; to which he answered, I am here ready to suffer death. So Jerome of Prague: If I had feared the fire, said he, I had not come hither. Francis Camba, a martyr, in the diocese of Milan, being much assailed by his friends, and terrified

by his foes, by no means could be overcome; but gave thanks to God that he was accounted worthy to suffer a cruel death for the testimony of his Son; and such were his expressions of joy in his sufferings, that his persecutors caused his tongue to be bored through, that he might speak no more to the people. Another [Mrs Anne Askew] being offered the king's pardon if she would recant, gave this resolute answer: I came not here to deny my Lord and Master. By that which she with admirable courage and constancy endured, she verified that which of old Julitta spake concerning their sex, viz., We women ought to be as constant as men in Christ's cause. Another [Walter Mill] who suffered martyrdom in Scotland, being solicited to recant, made this reply: ye shall know that I will not recant the truth, for I am corn, I am no chaff; I will not be blown away with the wind, nor burst with the flail; but I will abide both. Another, [Mr John Rogers,] being the first martyr in Queen Mary's days, being solicited to recant, that so he might save his life, boldly replied, That which I have preached I will seal with my blood. Another, [Hooper, bishop of Gloucester,] when a pardon was set before him in a box, cried out, If you love my soul, away with it; if you love my soul, away with it. Another [Mr Thos. Hawks, a gentleman in Essex] on the like occasion, gave this resolute answer, If I had a hundred bodies I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces, rather than abjure or recant. So another [Bishop Ridley] spake to the like purpose. So long, said he, as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth. Another [Father Latimer] used such a speech to one that advised him to spare himself, as Christ did to Peter on the like occasion, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' There are a world of other instances of the like nature, but enough is as good as a feast. By all these instances, you may see that blessed word verified, 'They loved not their lives unto the death,' Rev. 12:11. They were willing to lay down their lives for the glory of Christ, and for the truth of Christ; so that οὐκ ἠγάπησαν, 'They loved not,' is put for ὀλιγόπησαν, 'they neglected or contemned' their life, as Brightman hath well observed. They slighted, yea, despised their lives, and rather exposed them to hazard and loss, than to deny

Christ, or their holy profession. It is a paraphrase of the constancy of their faith, even unto martyrdom for the name of Christ. But,

10. Tenthly, Consider, That God puts a great deal of honour upon suffering saints. To suffer for Christ is honourable, Phil. 1:29. God will not put this honour upon every one, he puts this honour only upon those that are vessels of honour. By grace God makes men vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and then casts them into the fire to melt and suffer for his name, 2 Tim. 2:20, 21; and a higher glory he cannot put upon them on this side glory. The crown of martyrdom is a crown that the blessed angels, those princes of glory, are not capable of winning or wearing; and oh, who art thou? and what art thou, O man, that God should set this crown upon thy head? Mark at what a rate Peter speaks: 1 Pet. 4:14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.' The very suffering condition of the people of God is at the present a glorious condition, 'for the Spirit of glory rests upon them;' and therefore they must needs be glorious, yea, very glorious, upon whom the Spirit of glory falls, and in whom the Spirit of glory dwells, Rom. 8:9, 11. What a glorious mould and metal were the three children made up of, that were cast into the fiery furnace, Dan. 3; and what a deal of honour and glory did God put upon them in the eyes of all the world! The apostles all along accounted their own sufferings, and the sufferings of the saints for Christ, to be the highest honour and glory that God could put upon them in this world, as will be evident by our comparing the scriptures in the margin together. To suffer for Christ is the greatest honour and promotion that God gives in this world, said old Father Latimer; and, therefore, when sentence was pronounced against him, he cried out, I thank God most heartily for this great honour. So Saunders, 'I am the unmeetest man for this high office that ever was appointed to it.' So Careless, the martyr, 'This is such an honour,' said he, 'as the greatest angel in heaven is not permitted to have.' God forgive me mine unthankfulness,² &c. John Noyes took up a fagot at the fire, and kissed it, saying, 'Blessed be the time that ever I was born to

come to this preferment.' So when they had fastened Alice Driver with a chain to the stake to be burnt, 'Never,' said she, 'did neckerchief become me so well as this chain.' So Balilus, the martyr, when he was to die, requested this favour of his persecutors, viz., that he might have his chains buried with him as the ensigns of his honour. 'What are we, poor worms, full of vanities and lies,' said Calvin, 'that we should be called to be maintainers of the truth; for sufferings for Christ are the ensigns of heavenly nobility.' To die for Christ is the greatest promotion that God can bring any in this vale of misery unto, said Mr Philpot, the martyr. A French soldier, for his zealous profession of the Reformed religion, was condemned to the fire with others, only he should have the favour of going to the stake without a wyth; but he desired that he might wear such a chain as his fellows did, esteeming this rebuke of Christ more glorious than the ensigns of St Michael's order. It was an excellent saying of Prudentius, 'Their names,' saith he, 'that are written in red letters of blood in the church's calendar, are written in golden letters in Christ's register, the book of life.' The passion-days of the martyrs were anciently called the Natalitia salutis, the birthdays of salvation, the daybreak of eternal brightness. We count it a great honour to have princes to be our companions; Christ, the Prince of peace, and the angels, those princes of glory, are our companions in all our sufferings. Such is the honour that God puts upon his suffering saints, that nothing shall hinder him from being their companion in all their sufferings, in all their afflictions, in all their temptations; and this, believe it, is no small honour. I have read³ how that, in the primitive times, when some good people came to comfort some of the martyrs that were in prison and ready to suffer, they called them blessed martyrs; Oh no, said they, we are not worthy of the name of martyrs! These holy humble hearts thought martyrdom too high an honour for them. And Luther, writing to those which were condemned to death, saith, The Lord will not do me that honour after all that bustle I have made in the world. In the primitive times they were wont to call martyrdom by the name of Corona Martyrii, the crown of martyrdom. We read of a woman-martyr who, having her child in her hand, gave it to another, and offered herself to

martyrdom. Crowns, said she, are to be dealt out this day, and I mean to have one. You see what high and honourable thoughts the saints had of their sufferings in those days; and oh that all suffering saints would labour to write after that noble copy that they have left upon record! But,

11. Eleventhly, Consider, That suffering saints do put a great deal of honour and glory upon God, Christ, religion, and upon God's truth, worship, and ways. What a spreading fame and glory of God did the sufferings of the three worthies scatter all the world over! Dan. 3:28, 29. God is acknowledged and adored by Nebuchadnezzar: a decree is made that 'Every people, nation, and language, which speak amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill,' &c. Here God's glory wonderfully shines out of their sufferings; here this poor, blind, idolatrous heathen prince is forced to confess that there is no God like Israel's God. Basil and Tertullian do well observe of the primitive martyrs, that divers of the heathen, seeing their zeal, courage, and constancy, glorified God, and turned Christians. Religion is that phoenix which hath always revived and flourished in the ashes of holy men; and truth hath never been so honoured and gloriously dispersed as when it hath been sealed by the blood of the saints. This made Julian to forbear to persecute; non ex clementia, sed invidia, not out of piety, but envy; because the church grew so fast, and multiplied, as Nazianzen well observes. We read that sometimes the sufferings of one saint have begot many to the love of the truth. We read that Cecilia, a poor captive virgin, by her gracious behaviour in her martyrdom, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ. Justin Martyr was also converted by observing the cheerful and gracious carriage of the saints in their sufferings. And so Adrianus, seeing the martyrs suffer readily and joyfully such grievous torments, asked why they would endure such misery, when they might, by retracting, free themselves. Upon which one of them cited that text: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him,' 1 Cor. 2:9. Upon the naming of this scripture, and seeing of them

suffer so willingly, cheerfully, and resolutely, such a divine power took hold of his heart, that he was converted, and afterwards became a martyr. Now God, and Christ, and truth, and religion are never more honoured than when poor souls are soundly converted. Surely the crown of martyrdom is a glorious crown; and every soul won over to God by a dying martyr will be as an Orient pearl and precious diamond in his crown, of far more value than that adamant found about Charles Duke of Burgundy, slain by the Switzers at the battle of Nantz, sold for twenty thousand ducats, and placed, as it is said, in the pope's triple crown.² Oh, what foretastes of glory, what ravishments of soul have many of the blessed martyrs had in their sufferings for Christ! Holy Lord, stay thy hand, I can bear no more, said one of the martyrs; like weak eyes, that cannot bear too great a light. Is it not a high honour to a king to have such captains and champions as will not yield to their sovereign's enemies, but stand it out to the uttermost till they get the victory, though it cost them their lives to get it? yet no mortal king can, as Christ doth, put spirit, courage, and strength into a subject; only we may well conceive and conclude that such valorous soldiers as are ready to hazard their lives for their sovereign serve a good master. Thus do suffering Christians and martyrs give persecutors to understand that they serve a good Master, and that they highly prize him, who hath done more, and suffered more for them, than their dearest blood is worth; and who enables them, with courage, constancy, and comfort, to endure whatsoever, for his name's sake, can be inflicted on them; and therein to be (ὑπερνικῶμεν) more than conquerors, or above conquerors, Rom. 8:37. How can that be? Can a man get more than the victory? The meaning is, 'we do over-overcome,' supersuperamous—that is, triumph or overcome before we fight We are famous and renowned conquerors, we easily conquer, we conquer by those things which are used to conquer us, we beat our enemies with their own swords, as Julian sometime said, being confuted by heathen learning, 2 Cor. 2:14. Martyr and Piscator expound it thus, We do more than overcome—that is, we obtain a noble, a famous victory. And is not this a great honour to Christ, the captain of our salvation? The invincible courage of suffering

Christians puts life and spirit into others. In an army valorous leaders much animate the rest of the soldiers, and embolden them to follow their leaders, Heb. 2:10. Now you know the church is an army with banners, Cant. 6:4, and suffering ministers and suffering saints are as leaders; they courageously and victoriously make the onset, and other Christians, by their pious examples, are pricked on to follow them so far as they are followers of the Lamb. But,

12. Twelfthly, Consider, That all the sufferings and persecutions that you meet with on earth shall advance your glory in heaven. The more saints are persecuted on earth, the greater shall be their reward in heaven. Look, as persecutions do increase a Christian's grace, so they do advance a Christian's glory. In heaven the martyrs shall have the highest degree of glory; for though God doth not reward men simply for their works, namely, for the merit of them, yet he rewards according to their works, and proportions the degree or measure thereof according to the kind of work which on earth is done, and according to the measure of grace whereby he enables men to do it. Now martyrdom is the most difficult, the most honourable, and the most acceptable work that on earth can be done, and therefore in heaven martyrdom shall be crowned with the highest degree of glory. On this ground, they who set down the different degrees of celestial glory by the different fruits which the good ground brought forth, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold, Mat. 13:8; apply the hundredfold, which is the highest and greatest degree of glory, to martyrdom. Doubtless God's suffering servants, and amongst them especially his martyrs, shall sit down in the chiefest mansions and in the highest rooms in the kingdom of glory. According to the degrees of our sufferings for Christ will be the degrees of our glory. 'What shall we have,' says Peter, that have suffered so many great and grievous things for thy name, 'that have forsaken all, and followed thee?' 'Verily,' says our Saviour, 'every one that hath forsaken houses, &c., shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life; but ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' Mat. 19:27–29. A Christian will never repent of all the hard things that he has suffered for Christ or his truth, whenas every one of his

sufferings shall be a sparkling jewel to give a lustre to his crown of glory. Suffering for Christ and religion is the most gainful kind of merchandise. Christ is so well pleased with the sufferings of his saints, that he has engaged himself to make up whatever they lose upon his account, yea, to repay all with interest upon interest to a hundred times over. Oh, who would not then turn spiritual purchaser! Christ is a noble, a liberal paymaster, and no small things can fall from so great a hand as his is: Mat. 5:10–12, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.' Luke 6:22, 23, 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.' They that are now excommunicated and anathematised as notorious, shameful, and abominable offenders,—they that are now opposed and persecuted by men, shall at last be owned and crowned by God; yea, and the more afflictions and persecutions are multiplied upon them in this world, the greater shall be their recompense in another world. The original words ἀγαλλιᾶσθε in Matthew, and σκιρτήσατε in Luke, signify 'exceeding great joy,' such as men usually express by skipping and dancing. Let your hearts leap, and let your bodies leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven. A Dutch martyr, seeing the name to come to his beard, said he, What a small pain is this, to be compared to the glory to come. Helen Stirk, a Scotch woman, when her husband was at the place of execution, she said to him, Husband, rejoice; for we have lived together many joyful days; but this day, in which we must die, ought to be the most joyful to us both, because we must have joy for ever; therefore I will not bid you good-night, for we shall suddenly meet within the kingdom of heaven. The subscription of Mrs Anne Askew to her confession was this, Written by me, Anne Askew, that neither wisheth for death nor feareth his

might, and as merry as one that is bound toward heaven. Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy, said Mr Philpot, that I am so near the apprehension of eternal life! God forgive me mine unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy of the reward prepared for me most wretched sinner, that though I be in a place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, but both night and day am so joyful as though under no cross at all; yea, in all the days of my life I was never so merry; the name of the Lord be praised therefore for ever and ever! The same author, in a letter to the congregation, saith, Though I tell you that I am in hell in the judgment of this world, yet assuredly I feel in the same the consolation of heaven; and this loathsome and horrible prison is as pleasant to me as the walks in the garden in the King's Bench.² Thus you see that suffering saints have had a heaven beforehand,—they have had an exuberancy of joy such as no good could match nor no evil overmatch, 1 Pet. 1:8. Bernard, speaking of persecutors, saith, That they are but his Father's goldsmiths, who are working to add pearls to the saint's crown. It is to my loss, saith Gordius the martyr, if you abate me anything of my present sufferings. Sufferings for Christ are the saints' greatest glory. *Crudelitas vestra, gloria nostra*, your cruelty is our glory, say they in Tertullian, and the harder we are put to it, the greater shall be our reward in heaven. Chrysostom hit the nail when he said, If one man should suffer all the sorrows of all the saints in the world, yet are they not worth one hour's glory in heaven. By the consent of the schoolmen, all the martyrs shall appear in the church triumphant, bearing the signs of their Christian wounds about with them, as so many speaking testimonies of their holy courage, that what here they endured in the behalf of their Saviour, may be there an addition to their glory. O Christians, all your sufferings will certainly increase your future glory; every affliction, every persecution, will be a grain put into the scale of your heavenly glory, to make it more weighty in that day, wherein he will richly reward you for every tear, for every sigh, for every groan, for every hazard, and for every hardship that you have met in the way of your duty, 2 Cor. 4:16–18. For light afflictions you shall have a weight of glory; and for a few afflictions you shall have as many joys, pleasures,

delights, and contents, as there be stars in heaven, or sands on the sea-shore; and for momentary afflictions you shall have an eternal crown of glory. If you have suffering for suffering with Christ on earth, you shall have glory for glory with Christ in heaven. Ah, Christians, your present sufferings are but the seeds of your future glory; and the more plentiful you sow in tears, the more abundant will be your harvest of glory, Ps. 126:5, 6. Christ our general, the captain of our salvation, promises a crown, Rev. 2:10, and a throne, chap. 3:21, to all his afflicted and persecuted ones, which are the greatest rewards that a God can give, or that man can crave. It troubled one of the martyrs when he was at the stake that he was going to a place where he should be for ever a-receiving of wages for a little work. But,

13. Thirteenthly and lastly, Afflictions, sufferings, persecutions, will discover what metal men are made of. All is not gold that glisters. Many there be that glisten, and look like golden Christians; but when they come to the fire they prove but dross. He is a Christian more worth than the gold of Ophir, who remains gold when under fiery trials. The stony ground did glisten and shine very gloriously, for it received the word with joy for a season, Mat. 13:20, 21; but when the sun of persecution arose upon it, it fell away. Men that in times of liberty and prosperity embrace the word, will, in times of persecution, distrust the word, reject the word, and turn their backs upon the word, if it be not rooted in their understandings, judgments, wills, affections, and consciences. Men may court the word, and compliment the word, and applaud the word, and seemingly rejoice in the word, but they will never suffer persecution for the word, if it be only received into their heads, and not fast rooted in their hearts. The house built upon the sand, Mat. 7:26, 27, was as lovely, as comely, as goodly, and as glorious a house to look upon as that which was built upon a rock; but when the rain of affliction descended, and the floods of tribulation came, and the winds of persecution blew and beat upon the house, it fell, and great was the fall of it. No professors will be able to stand it out in all winds and weathers, but such as are built upon a rock; all others will sink,

shatter, and fall when the wind of persecution blows upon them. As sure as the rain will fall, the floods flow, and the winds blow, so sure will an unsound heart give out when trials come. No heart but a sound heart will hold out bravely when sufferings come; no heart but a sincere heart will bear the brunt of persecution. The three worthies, Dan. 3:17, 18, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, would rather burn than bow, they would rather suffer than sin, which was an evident proof of their sincerity and ingenuity; they would be Nonconformists, though court, city, and country cried up conformity, which was a sure argument of their integrity. Hypocrites have heart enough for themselves, but none for God. If they see their names, estates, or carnal interest any way touched, they are all on fire, and ready to be burnt up with the flames of their own zeal; but they can see the name, truth, and interest of God, assaulted and torn in pieces, and never stir. In their own concerns, they are as if they were all heart; but in the cause of God, they are as if, with Ephraim, they had no heart at all, Hosea 7:11. Oh, it is sad that men should have a heart for themselves, and none for God; that they should have courage in their own cause, and none in his. As the soul is the glory of the body, so integrity is the glory of the soul. A sincere Christian, with Job, will rather let all go than let his integrity go, Job 27:5; he will sooner let the blood be pressed out of his veins, and his soul out of his body, than his integrity out of his soul. Oh, how bravely did the primitive Christians carry themselves as to this matter. Pliny, writing to Trajan, declares to him that such was their zeal and courage in the behalf of their God, that nothing could stir them from it; neither the imperious checks of the potent emperors, nor the soft language of the eloquent orators, could draw them from the faith; but they steadfastly owned it, and constantly persevered in the defence of it. But now base unsound hearts will exceedingly shuffle and shift to shake off persecution. Witness those false teachers, Gal. 6:12, 'As many as desire to make a fair show,' or, as the Greek has it, to set a good face on it, in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' Mark, at this time the Jews, out of zeal to their law, did sorely persecute those that did either preach or practise anything contrary to their

law. Now these false teachers set a good face on it, and make a fair show, as if they were all for carnal rites and ceremonies; and they pressed circumcision upon the Galatians, but not out of any true affection or zeal that they did bear to the law, but only to procure favour on the one hand, and to avoid and escape the malice and persecution of the Jews on the other hand. They that were no Jews, to avoid persecution, would comply with them that were; they would seem to be very earnest for Judaism, but not for Christianity, that so they might escape the fury of the Jews. Unsound hearts will say anything, and do anything, and be anything, to avoid persecution, and to ingratiate themselves with persecutors. The Samaritans, so long as the Jewish religion flourished, and was in honour, caused a temple to be built on Mount Gerizim, that therein they might not be inferior to the Jews; and they boasted themselves to be of the progeny of Joseph, and worshippers of God with them. But when they perceived that the Jews were cruelly afflicted and persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes for worshipping of the true God, and fearing lest they should be handled in the like manner, they changed both their coat and their note, affirming that they were not Israelites, but Sidonians, and that they had built their temple, not unto God, but unto Jupiter. Thus you see that times of affliction and persecution will distinguish the precious from the vile, Jer. 15:19. It will difference the counterfeit professor-from the true. Persecution is a Christian's touchstone; it is a Lapis Lydius that will try what metal men are made of, whether they be silver or tin, gold or dross, wheat or chaff, shadow or substance, carnal or spiritual, sincere or hypocritical. Nothing speaks out more soundness and uprightness than keeping close to Christ, his worship, truth, and ways, in a day of warm persecution. To stand close and fast to God and his interest in fiery trials, argues much integrity within.

These thirteen particulars are so great truths, written with the beams of the sun, that no man or devil can deny, and therefore I shall make no apology to the persecutors of the day to excuse my writing of this general epistle; but shall beg hard of God that it may be so owned and crowned and blessed from on high, that it may really and fully

answer to all those holy and gracious aims and ends that the author had in his eye and upon his heart when he writ it. And thus much for this general epistle.

SOME WORDS OF COUNSEL TO A DEAR FRIEND

DEAR LADY AND SISTER IN THE LORD,—I shall now address myself to you in a few lines, and so conclude. I know you have for many years been the Lord's prisoner. Great have been your trials, and many have been your trials, and long have been your trials; but to all these I have spoken at large in my treatise called 'The Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod,' which you have in your hand, which you have read, and which God has greatly blessed to the support, comfort, quiet, and refreshment of your soul under all your trials; and therefore I shall say no more as to those particulars. But knowing that the many weaknesses that hang upon you, and the decays of nature that daily do attend you, seem to point out an approaching dissolution, I shall at this time give you this one word of counsel, viz., that every day you would look upon death in a scripture glass, in a scripture dress, or under a scripture notion; that is,

1. First, Look upon death as that which is best for a believer: Phil. 1:23, 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' The Greek is very significant, 'far, far the better,' or far much better, or much more better. It is a most transcendent expression. Eccles. 7:1, 'Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth.' A saint's dying day is the daybreak of eternal righteousness. In respect of pleasure, peace, safety, company, glory, a believer's dying day is his best day. I have read of one Trophonius, that when he had built and dedicated that stately temple at Delphos, he asked of Apollo, for his recompense, that thing which was best for man. The oracle wished him to go home, and within three days he should have it; and within that time he died. It was an excellent saying of one of the ancients, 'That is not a death, but life, which joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not a life, but death, which separates a living man from Christ.' But,

2. Secondly, Look upon death as a remedy, as a cure. Death will perfectly cure you of all corporeal and spiritual diseases at once: the crazy body and the defiled soul, the aching head and the unbelieving heart: *ultimus morborum medicus mors*. Death will cure you of all your ails, aches, diseases, and distempers. At Stratford-Bow, in Queen Mary's days, there was burned a lame man and a blind man at one stake. The lame man, after he was chained, casting away his crutch, bade the blind man be of good comfort; For death, saith he, will cure us both; thee of thy blindness, and me of my lameness. And as death will cure all your bodily diseases, so it will cure all your soul distempers also. Death is not *mors hominis*, but *mors peccati*; not the death of the man, but the death of his sin. Death will work such a cure as all your duties, graces, experiences, ordinances, assurances, could never do; for it will at once free you fully, perfectly, and perpetually from all sin; yea, from all possibility of ever sinning more. Sin was the midwife that brought death into the world, and death shall be the grave to bury sire And why, then, should a Christian be afraid to die, unwilling to die, seeing death gives him a writ of ease from infirmities and weaknesses, from all aches and pains, griefs and gripings, distempers and diseases, both of body and soul? When Samson died, the Philistines also died together with him; so when a saint dies, his sins die with him. Death came in by sin, and sin goeth out by death; as the worm kills the worm that bred it, so death kills sin that bred it. But,

3. Thirdly, Look upon death as a rest, a full rest. A believer's dying day is his resting day. It is a resting day from sin, sorrow, afflictions, temptations, desertions, dissensions, vexations, oppositions, and persecutions. This world was never made to be the saints' rest. Arise, for this is not your resting-place. They are like Noah's dove, they can rest nowhere but in the ark and in the grave. 'In the grave,' saith Job, 'the weary are at rest.' Upon this very ground some of the most refined heathens have accounted mortality to be a mercy, for they brought their friends into the world with mournful obsequies, but carried them out of the world with all joyful sports and pastimes, because then they conceived they were at rest, and out of gunshot.

Death brings the saints to a full rest, to a pleasant rest, to a matchless rest, to an eternal rest. But,

4. Fourthly, Look upon your dying day as a reaping day: 2 Cor. 9:2; Gal. 6:7–9; Isa. 38:3; Mat. 25:31, 41. Now you shall reap the fruit of all the prayers that ever you have made, and of all the tears that ever you have shed, and of all the sighs and groans that ever you have fetched, and of all the good words that ever you have spoken, and of all the good works that ever you have done, and of all the great things that ever you have suffered. When mortality shall put on immortality, you shall then reap a plentiful crop, a glorious crop, as the fruit of that good seed that for a time hath seemed to be buried and lost, Eccles. 11:1, 6. As Christ hath a tender heart and a soft hand, so he hath an iron memory; he punctually remembers all the sorrows, and all the services, and all the sufferings of his people, to reward them and crown them, Rev. 22:12. But,

5. Fifthly, Look upon your dying day as a gainful day. There is no gain to that which comes in by death: Phil. 1:21, 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' A Christian gets more by death than he doth by life, Eccles. 7:1; to be in Christ is very good, but to be with Christ is best of all, Phil. 1:23. It was a mighty blessing for Christ to be with Paul on earth, but it was the top of blessings for Paul to be with Christ in heaven. Seriously consider of a few things:—

[1.] First, That by death you shall gain incomparable crowns. (1.) A crown of life, Rev. 2:10; James 1:12; (2.) A crown of righteousness, 2 Tim. 4:8; (3.) An incorruptible crown, 1 Cor. 9:24, 25; (4.) A crown of glory, 1 Pet. 5:4. Now there are no crowns to these crowns, as I have fully discovered in my discourse on 'The Divine Presence,' to which I refer you. But,

[2.] Secondly, You shall gain a glorious kingdom: Luke 12:32, 'It is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom.' But death is the young prophet that anointeth them to it, and giveth them actual possession of it. They must put off their rags of mortality, that they may put on

their robes of glory. Israel must first die in Egypt before he can be carried into Canaan. There is no entering into paradise but under the flaming sword of this angel death, who standeth at the gate. Death is the dirty lane through which the saint passeth to a kingdom, to a great kingdom, to a glorious kingdom, to a quiet kingdom, to an unshaken kingdom, to a durable kingdom, to a lasting kingdom, yea, to an everlasting kingdom. Death is a dark, short way, through which the saints pass to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, Heb. 12:28; Dan. 2:44, and 4:3; Rev. 19:7. But,

[3.] Thirdly, You shall gain a safe and honourable convoy into that other world, Luke 16:22. Oh, in what pomp and triumph did Lazarus ride to heaven on the wings of angels! The angels conduct the saints at death through the air, the devil's region; every gracious soul is carried into Christ's presence by these heavenly courtiers. Oh, what a sudden change does death make! behold, he that even now was scorned by men, is all on a sudden, carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. But,

[4.] Fourthly, You shall gain a glorious welcome, a joyful welcome, a wonderful welcome into heaven. By general consent of all antiquity, the holy angels and blessed Trinity rejoice at the sinner's conversion; but oh, what inexpressible, what transcendent joy is there, when a saint is landed upon the shore of eternity, Rev. 4:8–11; Luke 15:7, 10; Heb. 12:23. God and Christ, angels and archangels, all stand ready to welcome the believer as soon as his feet are upon the threshold of glory. God the Father welcomes the saints as his elect and chosen ones, Jesus Christ welcomes them as his redeemed and purchased ones, and the Holy Spirit welcomes them as his sanctified and renewed ones, and the blessed angels welcome them as those they have guarded and attended on, Heb. 1:14. When the saints enter upon the suburbs of glory, the glorious angels welcome them with harps in their hands, and ditties in their mouths. But,

[5.] Fifthly, You shall gain full freedom and liberty from all your enemies within and without—viz., sin, Satan, and the world, Luke

1:70, 71, 74, 75. (1.) Death will free you from the indwelling power of sin, Rom. 7:23. In heaven there is no complaints. As in hell there is nothing but wickedness, so in heaven there is nothing but holiness. (2.) Death will free you from the power and prevalency of sin. Here sin plays the tyrant, but in heaven there is no tyranny, but perfect felicity. (3.) Death will free you from all provocations, temptations, and suggestions to sin. Now you shall be above all Satan's batteries. Now God will make good the promise of treading Satan under your feet, Rom. 16:20. Some say serpents will not live in Ireland. The old serpent is cast out, and shall be for ever kept out of the new Jerusalem above, Rev. 12:8, 9, and 21:27. (4.) Death will free you from all the effects and consequents of sin—viz., losses, crosses, sicknesses, diseases, disgraces, sufferings, &c. When the cause is taken away, the effect ceases; when the fountain of sin is dried up, the streams of afflictions, of sufferings, must be dried up; the fuel being taken away, the fire will go out of itself. Sin and sorrow were born together, do live together, and shall die together. To open this fourth particular a little more fully to you, consider these four things:

First, That death will free you from all reproach and ignominy on your names. Now Elijah is accounted the troubler of Israel, Nehemiah a rebel against his king, and David the song of the drunkards, and Jeremiah a man of contention, and Paul a pestilent fellow. Heaven wipes away all blots, as well as all tears; as no sins, so no blots are to be found in that upper world. The names of all the saints in a state of glory are written, as I may say, in characters of gold. But,

Secondly, Death will free you from all bodily infirmities and diseases. We carry about in our bodies the matter of a thousand deaths, and may die a thousand several ways each several hour. As many senses, as many members, nay, as many pores as there are in the body, so many windows there are for death to enter at. Death needs not spend all its arrows upon us; a worm, a gnat, a fly, a hair, the stone of a raisin, the kernel of a grape, the fall of a horse, the stumbling of a foot, the prick of a pin, the paring of a nail, the cutting of a corn; all

these have been to others, and any one of them may be to us, the means of our death, within the space of a few days, nay, of a few hours. Here Job had his blotches, and Hezekiah had his boil, and David his wounds, and Lazarus his sores, and the poor widow her issue of blood, Job 2:6, 7; Isa. 37:21; Ps. 38:5; Luke 16:20; Mat. 9:20. Now the fever burns up some, and the dropsy drowns others, and the vapours stifle others; one dies of an apoplexy in the head, another of a struma in the neck, a third of a squinancy in the throat, and a fourth of a cough and consumption of the lungs; others of obstructions, inflammations, pleurisies, gouts, &c. We are commonly full of complaints; one complains of this distemper, and another of that; one of this disease, and another of that; but death will cure us of all diseases and distempers at once. But,

Thirdly, Death will free you from all your sorrows, whether inward or outward, whether for your own sins or the sins of others, whether for your own sufferings or the sufferings of others, Ps. 38:18; 2 Cor. 7:11; Ps. 119:136; Neh. 1:3, 4. Now, it may be, one shall seldom find you but with tears in your eyes, or sorrow in your heart; Oh, but now death will be the funeral of all your sorrows, death will wipe all tears from your eyes, 'and sorrow and mourning shall flee away,' Isa. 51:11. But,

Fourthly, Death will free you from all those troubles, calamities, miseries, mischiefs, and desolations, that are a-coming upon the earth, or upon this place or that, Isa. 57:1; Micah 7:1–7. A year after Methuselah's death, the flood came and carried away the old world. Augustine died a little before the sacking of Hippo. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem; and Luther himself died a little before the wars brake forth in Germany. Dear lady, death shall do that for you, which all your physicians could never do for you, which all your relations could never do for you, which all ordinances could never do for you, nor which all your faithful ministers could never do for you. It shall both instantly and perfectly cure you of all sorts of maladies and weaknesses, both inward and outward, or that respects either your body or your soul,

or both. O my dear friend, is it not better to die, and be rid of all sin; to die, and be rid of all temptations and desertions; to die, and be rid of all sorts of miseries; than to live, and still carry about with us our sins, our burdens, and such constant ailments, as takes away all the pleasure and comfort of life? Here both our outward and inward conditions are very various; sometimes heaven is open, and sometimes heaven is shut; sometimes we see the face of God, and rejoice, and at other times he hides his face, and we are troubled, Lam. 3:8, 44, 54–57; Ps. 30:7; 1 Thes. 4:17, 18; Isa. 35:10. Oh, but now death will bring us to an invariable eternity. It is always day in heaven, and joy in heaven.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, You shall gain a clear, distinct, and full knowledge of all great and deep mysteries, 1 Cor. 13:10, 12. The mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of Christ's incarnation, the mystery of man's redemption, the mysteries of providences, the mysteries of prophecies, and all those mysteries that relate to the nature, substances, offices, orders, and excellencies of the angels. If you please to consult my 'String of Pearls, or the Best Things Reserved till Last,' with my sermon on Eccles. 7:1, 'Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth;' which is at the end of my 'Treatise on Assurance'—both which treatises you have by you—there you will find many more great and glorious things laid open that we gain by death; and to them I refer you. But,

6. Sixthly, Look upon death as a sleep. The Holy Ghost hath phrased it so above twenty times in Scripture, to shew that this is the true, proper, and genuine notion of death. When the saints die, they do but sleep: Mat. 9:24, 'The maid is not dead but sleepeth.' The same phrase he also used to his disciples concerning Lazarus, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,' John 11:11. The death of the godly is as a sleep; Stephen fell asleep, Acts 7:60; and 'David fell asleep,' Acts 13:36; and 'Christ is the firstfruits of them that sleep,' 1 Cor. 15:20; 'Them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him,' 1 Thes. 4:14. The saints of God do but sleep when they lie down in the grave. That which we call death in such, is not death indeed; it is but the image of death, the

shadow and metaphor of death, death's younger brother, a mere sleep, and no more. I may not follow the analogy that is between death and sleep in the latitude of it, the printer calling upon me to conclude. Sleep is the nurse of nature, the sweet parenthesis of all a man's griefs and cares. But,

7. Seventhly, Look upon death as a departure: 2 Tim. 4:6, 'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.' He makes nothing of death. It was no more betwixt God and Moses, but go up and die, Deut. 32:49, 50; and so betwixt Christ and Paul, but launch out, and land immediately at the fair haven of heaven: Phil. 1:23, 'For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.' Paul longed for that hour wherein he should loose anchor, and sail to Christ, as the Greek word ἀναλύσαι imports. It is a metaphor from a ship at anchor, importing a sailing from this present life to another port. Paul had a desire to loose from the shore of life, and to launch out into the main of immortality. The apostle, in this phrase, ἀναλύσαι, hath a reference both to his bonds and to his death; and his meaning is, I desire to be discharged and released, as out of a common jail, so also out of the prison of my body, that I may presently be with Christ my Saviour in heaven, in rest and bliss. After Paul had been in the third heaven, his constant song was, 'I desire to be with Christ.' Nature teacheth that death is the end of misery; but grace will teach us that death is the beginning of our felicity. But,

8. Eighthly and lastly, Look upon death as a going to bed. The grave is a bed wherein the body is laid to rest, with its curtains close drawn about it, that it may not be disturbed in its repose: so the Holy Ghost is pleased to phrase it, 'He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, every one walking in their uprightness,' Isa. 57:2. As the souls of the saints pass to a place of rest and bliss, so their bodies are laid down to rest in the grave, as in a bed or bedchamber, there to sleep quietly until the morning of the resurrection. Death is nothing else but a writ-of-ease to the weary saints; it is a total cessation from all their labour of nature, sin, and affliction, 'Blessed are the dead

that die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours,' Rev. 14:13, &c. Whilst the souls of the saints do, rest in Abraham's bosom, their bodies do sweetly sleep in their beds of dust, as in a safe and consecrated dormitory. Every sincere Christian may, like the weary child, call and cry to be laid to bed, knowing that death would send him to his everlasting rest. Now you should always look upon death under scripture notions, and this will take off the terror of death; yea, it will make the king of terrors to be the king of desires; it will make you not only willing to die, but even long to die, and to cry out, 'Oh that I had the wings of a dove, to fly away, and be at rest!' At death you shall have an eternal jubilee, and be freed from all incumbrances. Now sin shall be no more, nor trouble shall be no more, nor pain nor ailments shall be no more. Now you shall have your quietus est, now 'the wicked shall cease from troubling, and now the weary shall be at rest,' Job 3:17, now 'all tears shall be wiped from your eyes,' Rev. 7:17, now death shall be the way to bliss, the gate of life, and the portal to paradise. It was well said of one, so far as we tremble at death, so far we want love. It is sad, when the contract is made between Christ and a Christian, to see a Christian afraid of the making up the marriage. Lord, saith one, [Austin,] I will die that I may enjoy thee; I will not live, but I will die, I desire to die, that I may see Christ; and refuse to live, that I may live with Christ. The broken rings, contracts, and espousals contents not the true lover, but he longs for the marriage day. It is no credit to your heavenly Father for you to be loath to go home. The Turks tell us that surely Christians do not believe heaven to be such a glorious place as they talk of; for if they did, they would not be so unwilling to go thither. The world may well think that the child hath but cold welcome at his father's house, that he lingers so much by the way, and that he does not look and long to be at home. Such children bring an ill report upon their father's house, upon the holy land; but I know you have not so learned Christ, I know you long with Paul, 'to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' Phil. 1:23; and with old Simeon, to cry out, 'Lord, let thy servant depart in peace,' Luke 2:29. That God whom you have long sought and served will make your passage into that other world safe, sweet, and easy. Now to the everlasting

arms of divine protection, and to the constant guidance and leadings of the Spirit, and to the rich influences of Christ's sovereign grace, and to the lively hopes of the inheritance of the saints in light, he commends you, who is, dear sister, yours in the strongest bonds,

THO. BROOKS.

THE SIGNAL PRESENCE OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE

IN THEIR GREATEST TROUBLES, DEEPEST DISTRESSES, AND MOST DEADLY DANGERS.

'Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.'—2 Tim. 4:17.

IN my text you have three things that are most remarkable:—

First, You have Paul's commemoration of that singular experience that he had of the favourable presence of Christ with him, and of his strengthening of him, 'Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me,' or παρέστη, 'by me, and assisted me,' Acts 23:11; though I was deserted by men, yet I was aided and assisted by Christ, 2 Tim. 4:16; though all men left me to shift for myself, yet the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me with wisdom, prudence, courage, and constancy, in the want of all outward encouragements, and in the face of all outward discouragements, 2 Tim. 1:15.

Secondly, Here is the end for which the Lord stood by him, assisted, strengthened, and delivered him, viz., that he might preach the gospel to the nations, Rom. 11:13; Phil. 4:22, that he might have more time, and further opportunity, to spread abroad the everlasting gospel among the Gentiles, whose apostle he was. Rome, at this time, was the queen of the world, and in its most flourishing condition; people from all parts of the world flocked to Rome. Now when they should hear and see Paul's prudence, courage, constancy, and boldness, in professing of Christ, and in preaching and professing the gospel, even before that grand tyrant, that monster of mankind, Nero, they could not but be wrought upon, and the fame of the

glorious gospel could not but by this means be spread all the world over.

Thirdly, Here is the greatness of the danger from which he was delivered, viz., 'from the mouth of the lion.' Some authors [Calvin, Estius, &c.] do conceive these words, 'and I was delivered from the mouth of the lion,' to be a proverbial speech, noting some eminent, present, devouring danger; 'I was delivered from the extremest hazard of death,' even as a man rescued out of a lion's mouth, and pulled from between his teeth. Others more genuinely and properly, by 'the mouth of the lion,' do understand Nero's rage and cruelty, who, for his potency in preying on the flock of Christ, is here fitly compared to a lion, which devoured and destroyed the flock of Christ. This cruel lion Nero put a world of Christians to death, and made a bloody decree, that whosoever confessed himself a Christian, he should, without any more ado, be put to death as a convicted enemy of mankind. Tertullian calleth him the dedicator of the condemnation of Christians.² This bloody monster, Nero, raised the first bloody persecution. To pick a quarrel with the Christians he set the city of Rome on fire, and then charged it upon the Christians, under which pretence he exposed them to the fury of the people, who cruelly tormented them as if they had been common burners and destroyers of cities, and the deadly enemies of mankind; yea, Nero himself caused them to be apprehended and clad in wild beasts' skins and torn in pieces with dogs; others were crucified; some he made bonfires of to light him in his night-sports. To be short, such horrid cruelty he used towards them as caused many of their enemies to pity them. But God found out this bloody persecutor at last, for being adjudged by the senate an enemy to mankind, he was condemned to be whipped to death, for the prevention whereof he cut his own throat.

The words being thus briefly opened, the main point I shall insist upon is this—viz.,

That when the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then the Lord will be most favourably, most signally, and most eminently present with them.

The schoolmen say that God is five ways present—(1.) In the humanity of Christ, by hypostatical union; (2.) In the saints, by knowledge and love; (3.) In the church, by his essence and direction; (4.) In heaven, by his majesty and glory; (5.) In hell, by his vindictive justice.

Hemingius saith, There is a fourfold presence of God:—(1.) There is a presence of power in all men, even in the reprobates; (2.) A presence of grace, only in the elect; (3.) A presence of glory, in the angels, and saints departed; (4.) A hypostatical presence of the Father with the Son. But, if you please, you may take notice that there is a sixfold presence of the Lord:—

1. First, There is a general presence of God, and thus he is present with all creatures: 'Whither shall I flee from thy presence?' Ps. 139:7. Empedocles, the philosopher, said well, That God is a circle, whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. God is included in no place, and excluded from no place, saith another: Non est ubi, ubi non est Deus. They could tell us that God is the soul of the world; and that as the soul is *Tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte*, so is he; his eye is in every corner, &c. To which purpose they so portrayed their goddess Minerva, that which way soever one cast his eye, she always beheld him. Though heaven be God's palace, yet it is not his prison. Diana's temple was burned down when she was busy at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together, but God is present both in paradise and in the wilderness at the same time: 1 Kings 8:27, 'But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?' By the heaven of heavens is meant that which is by the learned called the empyreal heaven, where the angels and the saints departed do enjoy the glorious and beatifical vision of God; and it is called the heaven of heavens, both

because it is the highest and doth contain the other heavens within its orb, and also by way of excellency, as the 'most holy place' in the temple is called the 'holy of holies,' because it far surpasseth all the rest in splendour and glory, Isa. 66:1; Prov. 5:21; Heb. 4:13; Job 26:6. Jer. 23:24, 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I should not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.' Prov. 15:3, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.' God is πανόφθαλμος, all eye. The poor heathen could say, Deus intimior nobis intimo nostro: God is nearer to us than we are to ourselves. Repletively he is everywhere, though inclusively nowhere: Job 34:21, 'For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings;' ver. 22, 'There is no darkness, nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.' Sinners shall never be able to shroud themselves nor their actions from God's all-seeing eye. The Rabbins put Makom, which signifies place, among the names of God. Bythner brings them in expounding that text in Esther 4:14, 'Deliverance shall arise from another place;' that is, from God. They called him Place, because he is in every place, though in the assemblies of his saints more eminently and gloriously. God is present with all his creatures—(1.) Viâ productionis, by raising them up; (2.) Viâ sustentationis, by staying of them up; they are his family, and he feeds and clothes them, Mat. 5:45; Acts 17:27, 28; Ps. 33:13, 14; (3.) Viâ inclinationis, by giving unto them power of motion; man could neither live nor move unless the Lord were with him; (4.) Viâ observationis, by taking notice of them; he observeth and marks both their persons and their actions—he sees who they are, and how they are employed; (5.) Viâ ordinationis, by governing and ruling of them and all their actions, to the service of his glory and the good of his poor people, Acts 4:25–29. But this is not that presence that we are to discourse of.

2. Secondly, There is a miraculous presence of Christ, and this some of the prophets of old had, and the apostles and others had in Christ's time; and by virtue of this miraculous presence of Christ with them, they cast out devils, healed diseases, and did many wonderful things, Mat. 7:22; Mark 3:15. But this is not the presence

that falls within the compass of that main point we purpose to speak to.

3. Thirdly, There is a relative presence of Christ, and that is his presence in his ordinances, and with his churches. Of this presence the Scripture speaks very largely: Exod. 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee;' Exod. 25:8, 'And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell amongst them;' Exod. 29:45, 'And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God;' Lev. 26:11, 'And I will set my tabernacle amongst you, and my soul shall not abhor you;' ver. 12, 'And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people;' Ps. 76:1, 'In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel;' ver. 2, 'In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion;' Isa. 8:18, 'From the Lord of hosts which dwelleth in mount Zion;' Ps. 9:11, 'Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion.' The churches are said to be the temples in which the Lord doth dwell, and the house of the living God, and the golden candlesticks amongst which he doth walk. Oh, how much does it concern all the churches to prize their church state, and to keep close together, and to walk suitable to that gracious presence of God, that shines in the midst of them! But this is not that presence that falls under our present consideration. But,

4. Fourthly, There is a majestic and glorious presence of Christ, and thus he is said to be in heaven: Ps. 2:4, 'He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision;' Heb. 1:13, 'But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool?' chap. 9:24, 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.' Not that heaven is *circulus concludens*, a place wherein Christ is shut up, but, *palatium resplendens*, the court, as it were, where his majesty, in acts of wisdom, and power, and mercy, and conjunction of grace and glory, doth most of all appear. As the soul of man, though it be in every part of man, yet it doth

principally appear and manifest itself in the heart and brain; so here, &c. Monica, Austin's mother, standing one day and seeing the sun shine, raised this meditation, 'Oh, if the sun be so bright, what is the light of Christ's presence in glory!' But this is not the presence we design now to discourse of.

5. Fifthly, There is a judicial or wrathful presence of the Lord; and thus he is present with wicked men, sometimes blinding of them, sometimes hardening of them, sometimes leaving of them to their own heart's lusts, sometimes giving them up to their own heart's lusts, sometimes filling their faces with shame, and their consciences with terrors. He is judicially present with wicked men by a particular observation of their persons and ways, Ps. 33:13, 14; Job 34:21, 22. He sees who they are, and how they are employed against his honour, his interest, his saints, his ways, and by a special detestation of their persons and ways, &c. But this is not that presence that at this time falls under our consideration; and therefore,

6. Sixthly and lastly, There is a gracious, a favourable, a signal, or eminent presence of the Lord with his faithful people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, as the Scriptures do everywhere evidence. Take a taste of some: Gen. 39:20, 'And Joseph's master toot him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound, and he was there in the prison;' ver. 21, 'But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.' A prison keeps not God from his. Witness the apostles and martyrs, whose prisons, by God's presence, became palaces, and their stocks a music-school, Acts 16:25. Bradford, after he was put in prison, had better health than before, and found great favour with his keeper, who suffered him to go whither he would upon his promise to return by such an hour to his prison again. If men knew by experience the sweet that is in suffering for Christ, they would desire with Chrysostom, if it were put to their choice, rather to be Paul a prisoner of Jesus Christ than Paul rapt up in the third heaven. Basil, in his oration for Barlaam,³ that famous martyr, saith, 'He delighted in the

close prison as in a pleasant green meadow, and he took pleasure in the several inventions of tortures, as in several sweet flowers.' Luther reports of that martyr, St Agatha, that as she went to prisons and tortures, she said she went to banquets and nuptials. The sun enlightens the world, saith Cyprian, but he that made the sun is a greater light to you in prison, &c. Fire, sword, prisons, famines, are pleasure, they are all delightful to me, saith Basil. Paul rattles his chain which he bears for the gospel, and was as proud of it as a woman of her ornaments, saith Chrysostom. Paul and Silas in a prison found more pleasure than pain, more joy than sorrow, and when they were whipped, it was with rosemary branches, as I may say. Paul greatly rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ, and therefore often sings out, 'I, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ,' not I, Paul, rapt up in the third heaven. Christ shewed his great love to him in rapping him up in the third heaven, and he shewed his great love to Christ in a cheerful suffering for him. Eusebius tells of one that writ to his friend from a stinking dungeon, and dated his letter 'From my delicate orchard.' Mr Glover the martyr wept for joy of his imprisonment; and God forgive me, said Mr Bradford when a prisoner, my unthankfulness for this exceeding great mercy, that among so many thousands he chooseth me to be one in whom he will suffer. I was carried to the coal-house, saith Mr Philpot, the martyr, where I with my fellows do rouse together in the straw as cheerfully, we thank God, as others do in their beds of down.⁵ Philip, landgrave of Hesse, being a long time prisoner under Charles the Fifth, was asked what upheld him in his long imprisonment. He answered that he felt the divine consolations of the martyrs: Gen. 49:23, 'The archers,' or, as the Hebrew here hath it, the arrow-masters, 'have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.' These arrow-masters were his barbarous brethren that sold him, his adulterous mistress that, harlot-like, 'hunted for his precious life,' his injurious master that, without any desert of his, imprisoned him, the tumultuating Egyptians, that pined with hunger, perhaps spake of stoning of him, and the envious courtiers and enchanters that spake evil of him before Pharaoh, to bring him out of favour; but by divine assistance, and God's favourable preference, 1 Sam. 30:6, he proved

too strong for them all. Ver. 24, 'But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob,' &c. Joseph is likened to a strong archer, that, as his other enemies as archers shot at him, so his bow was steadfast, and his arms strong by the signal presence of God with him. Such an eminent presence of God had Joseph with him, that he never wanted courage, comfort, or counsel when he was at the worst. The divine presence will make a man stand fast and firm under the greatest pressures. It made Joseph use his bow against his adversaries, as David did his sling against Goliath. He slung, saith one, as if he had wrapped up God in his sling. Ps. 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.' The presence of the Lord with his people in the most deadly dangers fills their souls full of courage, confidence, and comfort. That darkness which comes upon a dying man, a little before he gives up the ghost, is the greatest darkness; and yet let a Christian then have but God by the hand, and he will not fear the most hideous and horrid representations of death: Dan. 3:24, 'Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king;' ver. 25, 'He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' The presence of the Son of God turned the fiery furnace into a garden of delights, a gallery of pleasure. This divine presence in the midst of fire and flame kept them from fainting, sinning, and shrinking, and filled their souls with comfort, peace, ease, and heavenly refreshing. One of the ancients [Augustine] rhetorically speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, who said, 'he saw one like the Son of God,' 'Whence came this?' saith he. 'Who told thee that this was the Son of God, what law, what prophet? He is not yet born into the world, and the similitude of him that was to be born is known to thee. Whence came this? Who told thee this, but the divine fire enlightening thee within, that whilst thou beholdest these three as thine enemies in the fire, thou mightest give testimony to the Son of God?' This heathenish

prince looked upon the fourth person as one like a son of the gods, or like some young god, most bright and glorious, exceeding fair, and excelling in beauty, as if he were not of human, but of divine offspring. But whatever notions or apprehensions Nebuchadnezzar had, we may very safely understand this fourth to be, as the words do literally bear, the very true Son of God, our Lord and Saviour, who is signally present with his people in their greatest extremities and most deadly dangers: Zech. 1:8. 'I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood amongst the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were three red horses, speckled, and white.' The man riding upon the red horse is the man Christ Jesus; it is the captain of the Lord's host, and the captain of our salvation. Christ is here represented in his kingly state, under the type of a man riding on a red horse, and having his royal attendants; for under the type of red horses, speckled, and white, behind him, is represented his having angels for ministers, and all creatures ready for every dispensation; whether sad, represented by red; or comfortable, represented by white; or mixed of mercy and judgment, represented by speckled horses. Christ is here represented as a man on horseback, ready to make out or sally forth for the good of his people when they are at the lowest. The low, afflicted, and suffering state of the church is fitly compared to myrtle-trees that grow in a shady grove, in valleys, and bottoms, and by water-sides. Now, when his people are in a very low condition, then Christ appears on horseback, for his people's protection, and their enemies' confusion. Christ will be sure to lodge with his people when they are at lowest. When the church is in danger Christ is not asleep; he is always ready upon his red horse, watching all opportunities and advantages, to shew his zeal and courage for his people, and his severity and fury against their enemies. The man that stood amongst the myrtle-trees, ver. 10, is that man Christ Jesus, whose special residence is with his people when they are in the most low, dangerous, and forlorn condition. No troubles, no distresses, no dangers, can banish Christ from his people, or make him seek another lodging: Isa. 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,' The Israelites went through the Red Sea, and were not drowned; and the three children walked up and down in the fiery furnace, and were not so much as singed, Dan. 3:27. By 'fire and water' we may well understand the various troubles, distresses, and dangers that may attend the people of God. Now in all these various troubles, &c., the Lord will be signally present with them, to protect and defend, to secure and deliver them out of all their various troubles, their deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. 2 Cor. 4:9, 'Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.' Persecuted by men, but not forsaken by God. The saints may be shaken, not shivered; persecuted, not conquered; cast down, but not cast off. Luther, speaking of his enemies, saith, They may thrust me, but not throw me; shew their teeth, but not devour me; kill me, but not hurt me, &c., because of that favourable and signal presence of Christ that is with me. Now this is that presence of the Lord that falls under our present consideration.

But for the further opening of this important point, let us a little inquire how the Lord does manifest his favourable, his signal, his eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now to this question I shall give these twelve answers:—

(1.) First, The Lord does manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by raising their faith to more than an ordinary pitch at such a time: Exod. 14:10, 'And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lift up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them, and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord;' ver. 11, 'And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth of Egypt?' ver. 12, 'Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians,

than that we should die in the wilderness.' Thus you see their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, they having a Red Sea before them, and a cruel, bloody, and enraged enemy just at the heels of them. Now in this extremity, see to what a high pitch Moses his faith rises: ver. 13, 'And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more forever.' He saith they shall never see the Egyptians again, that is, in that manner as they saw them that day insulting against them and pursuing after them, as the Septuagint do well interpret it, ὄν τρόπον ἐώρακατε, 'after what sort ye have seen them,' for they saw them afterward, but drowned, and lying dead upon the shore, Exod. 14:30: ver. 14, 'The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.' A strong faith will help a Christian at a dead lift. Though Moses had received no particular promise how the Israelites should be delivered, yet he rested upon God's general promise before, that he would get himself honour upon Pharaoh and his host: 'The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall be still.' As if he had said, Ye shall be merely passive, and do nothing at all towards the subduing of your enemies, neither in words nor deeds; the Lord shall fight against your enemies, and defeat them himself by a strong hand and an outstretched arm; compose yourselves, act faith and hope in God, without doubting, murmuring, grudging, fainting, or fretting; for God deferreth his chiefest aid until man's greatest need. When the enemy is highest, salvation is nearest; when the danger is greatest, the help of God is readiest, as at this time they found it.

2 Chron. 13:3, 'Abijah set, the battle in array, with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him, with eight hundred thousand chosen-men, being mighty men of valour.' Jeroboam had two to one: ver. 7, 'And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them.' Rehoboam was no warrior, he was no

expert prince in the use of arms; he was but young, not in age, but in experience, policy, and valour; he was hen-hearted, he had no courage, no mettle. Jeroboam takes hold of these advantages, and gathers eight hundred thousand Racas, brainless fellows, light and empty, yokeless and masterless persons; men of no piety, civility, ingenuity, or common honesty. Now see what a mighty spirit of faith God raised in the children of Judah: ver. 17, 'And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.' A monstrous and matchless slaughter, the greatest number that ever we read slain in any battle; far beyond that of Tamerlane when he took Bajazet, or Atius the Roman prefect, when he fought with Attila and his Huns in the fields of Catalonia, where were slain on both sides one hundred sixty-five thousand: ver. 18, 'Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed,' because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers. Faith at a dead lift never miscarrieth. God never has, nor never will, fail those that place their confidence upon him in their greatest dangers.

Esth. 4:14, 'For if thou altogether hold thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' Their great trouble, their deep distress, and their most deadly danger you have in that, Esth. 3:13, 'And the letters were sent by the posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, (which is the month Adar,) and to take the spoil of them for a prey.' Haman, that grand informer, with his wicked crew, would have spoiled them of their lives and goods, but that they were prevented by a miraculous providence, as you know. Now in this deep distress and most deadly danger, at what rate doth Mordecai believe? 'For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement'—[Heb., respiration]—'and deliverance arise'—[Heb., stand up, as on its basis or bottom, so as none shall be able to

withstand it.] This Mordecai speaketh not by a spirit of prophecy, but by the power and force of his faith, grounded upon the precious promises of God's defending his church, hearing the cries of his people, arising for their relief and succour, and grounded upon all the glorious attributes of God, viz., his power, love, wisdom, goodness, and all-sufficiency, &c., all which are engaged in the covenant of grace, to save, protect, and secure his people in their greatest troubles and most deadly dangers. Mordecai's faith in this black, dark, dismal day, was a notable faith indeed, and worthy of highest commendation. Faith can look through the perspective of the promises, and see deliverance at a great distance, salvation at the door. What though sense saith, Deliverance will not come; and what though reason saith, Deliverance cannot come; yet a raised faith gets above all fears, and disputes, and says, Deliverance will certainly come, redemption is at hand.

Num. 13:30, 'And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it;' chap. 14:9, 'Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread before us; their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not.' The spies by their lies did what they could to daunt and discourage the people, by crying up the strength of the Anakims, and the impossibility of the conquest, Num. 13:32, 33. These hollow-hearted hypocritical spies blow hot and cold almost in a breath, Num. 13:23–28. First, they make a narrative of the fruitfulness of the land, and presently they conclude that it was a land that was not sufficient to nourish the inhabitants, yea, a land that did devour the inhabitants, ver. 32. Liars have no iron memories. But now behold to what a mighty pitch Caleb's faith is raised. 'Let us go up at once, and possess it, for we are able to overcome it.' Or, nearer the Hebrew, 'Marching up, march up, subduing, subdue.' Let us, saith believing Caleb, march up to the land of Canaan courageously, resolutely, undauntedly, for the day is our own, the land is our own, all is our own. 'They are bread for us,' we shall make but a breakfast of them, we shall as easily and as surely root them out, and cut them down

with our swords, as we cut the bread we eat. 'Their defence is departed from them.' In the Hebrew it is, 'Their shadow is departed from them.' The shadow you know guards a man from the scorching heat of the sun, Ps. 91:1, and 121:5, 6. Caleb, by faith, saw God withdrawn from them; by the eye of his faith he looked upon them as a people without a fence, a shadow, a guard, a covert, a protection; and therefore, as a people that might easily be subdued and destroyed. His faith told him that it was not their strong cities, nor their high walls, nor their sons of Anak, that could preserve, shelter, secure, or defend them, seeing the Lord had forsaken them, and would be no longer as a shadow or a shelter to them. 'And the Lord is with us,' to make us victorious, to tread down our enemies, and to give us a quiet possession of the good land.

So Dan. 3:16, 'Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter,' Ver. 17, 'If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king.' In the fiery furnace they are protected by a divine providence, they escape death beyond all men's expectations, for the fire touched them not, neither could it burn during their abode in the furnace, for God so fortified their bodies that they could not be consumed by fire, which accident made them in great estimation with the king, for that he saw that they were virtuous, and beloved of God, and for that cause they were highly honoured by him. Here is a fiery furnace before them, and a proud, boasting, tyrannical, enraged prince domineering over them, for not obeying his idolatrous will. Now to what a mighty pitch is their faith raised! 'Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us.' Their faith was bottomed upon their propriety in God: 'Our God;' and upon the power, providence, and all-sufficiency of God: 'Is able to deliver us;' and upon the gracious readiness and willingness of God: 'And he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king.' When dangers are greatest, then God commonly raises the faith of his people highest; faith doth most and best for us, when we are at a dead lift. It quenches the violence of fire, Heb. 11:34; as the apostle

speaks, pointing at the faith of these three children, or rather champions. Though now the fiery furnace was heat[ed] seven times hotter than it used to be at other times, yet such was the strength, and might, and power of their faith, that it so quenched the flames, that they had not one hair of their heads singed, nor their coats changed, nor the smell of fire found upon them, Dan. 3:27; and thus the blessed martyrs may be said by their faith, patience, and constancy to quench the violence of the fire, though their bodies were consumed to ashes in the fire. So Dan. 6:16. Daniel is cast into the den of hungry, enraged lions; innocent Daniel is exposed to the cruel paws and hungry jaws of lions. This kind of capital punishment was not unusual among the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, and among the Romans also, with whom it was a common saying in Tertullian's time, Let the Christians be cast to the lions. The faces of the lions are stern, and their voices are terrible, Amos 3:8; they are roaring and ravening, they are greedy of their prey. They are vigilant and subtle. Lying in wait to get their prey, they sleep little, and when they sleep, it is *apertis oculis*, with open eyes. They mind their prey much, and are cunning to catch it, Ps. 17:12. The lion hides himself, and when the prey comes near he suddenly surprises it. They are proud and stately, they go alone, they eat not with the lioness, much less with other creatures, they will not stoop to any, or turn away from any, they do what they list; they are most cruel, bloody, devouring creatures; they have terrible claws, sharp teeth, and are strong and mighty to crush and break the bones; and it is very dangerous to meddle with lions. Num. 24:9, 'He lieth down as a lion, as a great lion: who shall stir him up?' Lions if offended and provoked are very revengeful. In the hunting or taking of lions, the lion observes who wounds him, and on him if possible he will be revenged. Ælian tells of a bear that came into a lion's den, and bit the whelps she found there. The lion returning, the bear to shift for herself got up into a high tree. The lioness watched at the foot of the tree. The lion ranged abroad in the woods, and meets with a man that had an axe, and used to fell trees; this man the lion brings to the den, shewed him the wounded whelps, directs him to the tree where the bear was, which he cut down; the bear being torn in pieces, the

man was safely dismissed. By these hints we may guess at the deadly danger that Daniel was in. Some writers tell us, that if a cloth be cast upon the eyes of a lion to cover them, he will not hurt a man; or if he be full.—Josephus, to illustrate the history, saith, that these princes pleaded before the king, saying that the lions were full and gorged, and therefore they would not touch Daniel;³ which he hearing, being displeased with their injurious malice, said, that the lions should now be fed, and then they cast in to see when they were gorged, whether they could likewise escape: but this being done, they were suddenly destroyed, before they came to the bottom of the den, Dan. 6:24. To what a fatal end came these informers! As to their wives and children that were cast into the den of lions, it is most probable that they were accessory to that wicked conspiracy against Daniel, by stirring up and provoking their husbands and fathers, to engage all their power, interest, and policy against him, and never to suffer a poor captive to be advanced in honour and dignity above them; and how just and righteous a thing was it with God, that they who had plotted together, and contrived together, the ruin and destruction of a holy innocent person, that these should suffer together, and go to the den together, and be torn in pieces together. Sinners, look to yourselves; if you will sin with others, you must expect to suffer with others.—Or if a man hath been beneficial to him; or if a man lieth prostrate before him, in the manner of a supplicant. But Daniel was not safe, he was not secured by any of these means, but God secured him in the midst of these dreadful dangers by the ministry of an angel. 'My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me,' Dan. 6:22. Others say, that God secured Daniel, by taking away the lions' hunger from them at that time, and by causing in them a satiety. And some tell us, that God secured him, by raising such a fantasy in the lions that they looked upon Daniel, not as a prey, but as on one that was a friend unto them. But now in the midst of this dreadful danger, how doth Daniel's faith sparkle and shine: ver. 23, 'Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den; so Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.' Daniel in a fiery furnace

looks upon God as his God, in the midst of the flames he acts faith upon the power of God, the promises of God, &c. Of all living creatures lions are most fierce, cruel, and irresistible, and yet such was the strength and force of Daniel's faith, that it stopped their mouths, see Heb. 11:33; Judges 14:6; 1 Sam. 17:34. Though Daniel was but one man, yet such was the power of his faith, that it stopped the mouths of many lions. As Luther says of prayer, so may I say of faith; it hath a kind of omnipotency in it; it is able to do all things, est quædam omnipotentia precum. Thus you see by these famous instances to what a mighty pitch the Lord has raised the faith of his people, when they have been in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers; and this is the first way wherein the Lord doth manifest his favourable, his signal, his eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

(2.) Secondly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, his signal, his eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by his teaching and instructing of them; Ps. 94:12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.' This divine presence turn every lash into a happy lesson. In this psalm the Holy Ghost useth six arguments to prove that a man is blessed who is chastened. [1.] Because he is instructed by being afflicted, as here. [2.] Because the end why God lays affliction on his people is to give them rest from the days of adversity, ver. 13. [3.] Until the pit be digged for the wicked, in the same verse, until the cold grave hold his body, and hot hell hold his soul. [4.] Because God will support them under all their afflictions. When God casteth his people into the furnace of afflictions, his everlasting arms shall be underneath them. Though God may cast down his people, yet he will never cast off his people. [5.] Because there shall be a glorious restoration: ver. 15, 'Judgment shall return unto righteousness.' [6.] Because all the upright in heart shall follow it, in the same verse—viz., in their affections they are carried out after it, earnestly desiring that dear day when God will unriddle his providences, and clear up his proceedings with the sons

of men. Jerome, writing to a sick friend, hath this expression: 'I account it a part of unhappiness not to know adversity; I judge you to be miserable, because you have not been miserable.' Demetrius saith, Nothing seems more unhappy to me than he to whom no adversity hath happened: *Impunitas, securitatis mater, virtutum noverca, religionis virus, tinea sanctitatis*: Freedom from punishment is the mother of security, the stepmother of virtue, the poison of religion, the moth of holiness, [Bernard.] It was a speech of a German divine, [Gaspar Olevianus,] in his sickness: In this disease, saith he, I have learned how great God is, and what the evil of sin is. I never knew to purpose what God was before, nor what sin meant before. God's corrections are our instructions, his lashes our lessons, his scourges our schoolmasters, his chastisements our advertisements. And to note this, the Hebrews and Greeks both express chastening and teaching by one and the same word, *מוסר*, *musar*, *παιδεία*; because the latter is the true end of the former, according to that in the proverb, 'Smart makes wit, and vexation gives understanding.' Job 36:8. 'And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction;' ver. 9, 'Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded;' ver. 10, 'He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.' Sanctified afflictions open men's ears to discipline, and turn them from iniquity, which is a piece of learning that a Christian can never pay too dear for. Affliction is *verus Scripturæ commentarius*: An excellent comment upon the Scriptures. Afflictions make way for the word of the Lord to come to the heart. Affliction sanctified is *Lex practica*, a practical law. Bernard had a brother of his, who was a riotous and profane soldier; Bernard gives him many good instructions and admonitions, &c., but his brother slighted them, and made nothing of them. Bernard comes to him, and puts his hand to his side. One day, saith he, God will make way to this heart of yours by some spear or lance. And so it fell out; for, going into the wars, he was wounded, and then he remembers his brother's instructions and admonitions, and then they got to his heart, and lay upon it to some purpose: Job 33:16, 'Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.' *Oculos quos peccatum*

claudit, poena aperit: The eye that sin shuts, afflictions open, [Gregory.] The cross opens men's eyes, as the tasting of honey did Jonathan's. By correction God seals up instruction; God sets on the one by the other; as when a schoolmaster would have a lesson learned indeed, he sets it on with a whipping. As Gideon taught the elders of the city and the men of Succoth with the thorns and briars of the wilderness, so God teaches his people by affliction many a holy and happy lesson, Judges 8:16. By afflictions, troubles, distresses, and dangers, the Lord teaches his people to look upon sin as the most loathsome thing in the world, and to look upon holiness as the most lovely thing in the world. Sin is never so bitter, and holiness is never so sweet, as when our troubles are greatest and our dangers highest. By afflictions the Lord teaches his people to sit loose from this world, and to make sure the great things of that other world. By affliction God shews his people the vanity, vexation, emptiness, weakness, and nothingness of the creatures, and the choiceness, preciousness, and sweetness of communion with himself, and of interest in himself. Christ, though he knew, 'yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered,' Heb. 5:8; that is, he shewed obedience more than before; not as if Christ were to go to school to learn, or as if by certain acts he were to fit himself for obedience; he did not learn that which he knew not before, but did that which he did not before. He that was put upon the trial of his obedience, he came to know by experience what a hard matter it was thus to obey God. By God's favourable presence a man comes to learn many lessons in a time of adversity which he never learned in a day of prosperity; for we are like idle boys and bad scholars, that learn best when the rod is over us. Hezekiah was better upon his sick-bed than when he was shewing of his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, Isa. 39:1–5; and David was a better man when he was in his wilderness-condition than when he sat upon his royal throne, Ps. 30:6, 7. The Jews are ever best when in the worst condition; the Athenians would never mend till they were in mourning. When Munster lay sick, and his friends asked him how he did, and how he felt himself; he pointed to his sores and ulcers, whereof he was full, and said, These are God's gems and jewels wherewith he decketh his

best friends, and to me they are more precious than all the gold and silver in the world. Here, as that martyr phrased it, we are but learning our A B C, and our lesson is never past Christ's cross, and our walking is still home by Weeping-Cross. Usually men are worst in a prosperous condition. In a prosperous condition God speaks to us, and we mind him not: 'I spoke to thee in thy prosperity, but thou wouldest not hear: and this hath been thy manner from thy youth upwards,' Jer. 2:21. Pope Martin reported of himself that, whilst he was a monk and lived in the cloister, he had some evidences for heaven; when he was a cardinal, he began to fear and doubt; but after he came to be pope, he utterly despaired. The Lord never shews more of his favourable, signal, and eminent presence, than by teaching of his people many gracious and gospel lessons by their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers. But

(3.) Thirdly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, his signal, his eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by raising, strengthening, and acting, their suffering graces—viz., their faith, hope, love, patience, prudence, courage, boldness, zeal, constancy. Thus in the text, 'The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me.' He put new life, and strength, and vigour into all my graces. Although there are habits of grace always resident in the hearts of the saints, yet those habits are not always in exercise. The habits of grace cannot act of themselves, there must be renewed strength imparted to set them on work. 'Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight,' Ps. 119:35. Though David had a spirit of new life within him, yet he could not actually walk in the path of God's precepts, till by an additional force he was set agoing: Cant. 4:16, 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south wind, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.' By the garden we may safely understand a sanctified soul, and by the spices in this garden we may understand the several graces planted in the soul. Now these spices can never flow out, and send forth their fragrant smell, till the north and south wind blows upon them. Habitual grace cannot operate, and dilate, and put forth itself into exercise, till by the concurrent presence and

assistance of Christ it is educed into act. No saint can act that grace he hath received, by his own strength, without the presence and assistance of Christ: 1 Cor. 15:16, 'But by the grace of God, I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labour more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me.' He does not say, the grace of God which was in me, that habitual grace which I had; but the grace of God which was with me. So then it is not the strength of habitual grace that will carry a man through doing or suffering work, but the auxiliary, the assisting, the conquering grace of Jesus Christ. It is his grace with us, more than his grace in us. So John 15:5, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Ye that are my disciples, ye that have the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' The habits of grace, the actings of grace, and the perfecting of grace, are all from Jesus Christ. It is more emphatical in the original, for there you have two negatives, 'cannot do nothing.' He does not say, 'Without me ye cannot do many things,' but, 'Without me ye can do nothing;' nor he does not say, 'Without me ye can do no great thing,' but, 'Without me ye can do nothing;' nor he does not say, 'Without me ye can do no difficult thing,' but, 'Without me ye can do nothing;' nor he does not say, 'Without me ye can do no spiritual thing,' but, 'Without me ye can do nothing.' Whatever a saint may do by the power of gifts, or habits of grace received, yet he can do nothing in a lively spiritual acceptable way without the presence of Christ, without a constant dependence upon Christ, without a sweet and special communion and fellowship with Christ. If we cannot put forth a natural action without him—for in him we live, move, and have our being, Acts 17:28—how much less can we perform a spiritual action, in a spiritual manner, without his presence and assistance? Let the king sit but at his table, and then our spikenard will send forth a sweet smell, Cant. 1:12; that is, let Jesus Christ be but present with us, and then our graces, which are compared to spikenard, will send forth a sweet smell. Sitting at the table with King Jesus intimates the sweetest friendship and fellowship with him. It was held a great honour and happiness to stand before Solomon, 1 Kings 10:8; what is it then to sit with Christ at his table? 'My spikenard sendeth forth the

smell thereof;' that is, My faith is actuated, and all my other graces are exercised and increased. Christ's presence puts life into all our graces: Isa. 41:10; Luke 21:14, 15, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness:' 2 Cor. 12:10, 'When I am weak, then am I strong.' When I am weak in myself, then am I strong in Christ. If the sun shine upon the marigold, how soon does the marigold open; so when the Sun of righteousness does but shine upon a Christian's graces, how do they open and act! Mal. 4:2. To shew how the presence of Christ has acted the faith, love, courage, boldness, and patience, &c., of the saints in the Old and New Testament, the primitive Christians and the martyrs, in the latter ages of the world, when they have been in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, would take up more than a little time; besides, in my other writings I have opened these things more fully to you, and to them I must refer you. And therefore,

(4.) Fourthly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by laying a law of restraint upon every wicked man, and by bridling and checking, their fury and insolency, that they shall not add afflictions to the afflicted, as otherwise they would; as he did upon Laban: Gen. 31:24, 'And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad.' Ver. 29, 'It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of your fathers spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob, either good or bad.' see what a law of restraint God laid upon Esau, Gen. 33:1-4; and upon Abimelech, Gen. 20:6-8, 17, 18; and upon Benhadad, 1 Kings 20:1, 10, 29, 30; and upon Haman, as you may see by comparing the 3d and 6th chapters of Esther together; and upon Pharaoh, Exod. 15:9, 10; and upon Sennacherib, Isa. 37:28, 29, 33-36; and upon Herod, Acts 12. Maximinus set forth a proclamation engraven in brass for the utter abolishing of Christ and religion: he was eaten up of lice. Valens

being to subscribe an order for the banishment of Basil, was smitten with a sudden trembling of his hand that he could not subscribe the order; afterwards he was burned to death by the Goths.

Domitian, the author of the second persecution against the Christians, having drawn a catalogue of the names of such as he was to kill, in which was the name of his own wife and other friends; upon which he was, by the consent of his wife, slain by his own household servants with daggers in his privy-chamber. His body was buried without honour, his memory cursed to posterity, and his arms and ensigns were thrown down and defaced. Julian vowed to make a sacrifice of the Christians upon his return from the wars; but, in a battle against the Persians, he was deadly wounded, and throwing his blood in the air, in a high contempt of Christ, he died with that desperate blasphemous expression in his mouth, *Vicisti tandem, Galilæe*, 'Thou Galilean hast overcome me.'

Felix, Earl of Wurtemberg, was a great persecutor of the saints, and did swear that ere he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of the Lutherans; but the very same night, wherein he had thus sworn and vowed, he was choked in his own blood.

The judgments of God were so famous and frequent upon the persecutors of the saints in Bohemia, that it was used as a proverb among the adversaries themselves, that if any man were weary of his life let him but attempt against the Piccardines—so they called the Christians—and he should not live a year to an end. By these short hints you may see that all along God has made good that word that is more worth than a world, 'Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain'—Hebrew, 'Shalt thou gird,' that is, curb, and keep within compass; or as the Greek hath it, 'It shall keep holiday to thee,' that is, cease from working or acting outwardly, how restless soever it be within. 'The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain,' that is, those that are left alive of thy wrathful enemies, that have still any malice against thy people, thou wilt curb and restrain, and not suffer their wrath to be so great as formerly; or

if they go about to recruit their forces, and to set again upon thy people, thou wilt set such bounds to their wrath that they shall not accomplish their desires, nor shall they proceed one step further than shall make signally for thy glory and thy people's good; so some carry the words. The more eager and furious the enemies are against God's people, the more honour and glory will God get in protecting and securing his people, and in girding, binding, and tying up their enemies. Were it not for this favourable, signal, and eminent presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, wicked men would still be a-multiplying of their sorrows, increasing their troubles, and adding of burden to burden. It is this favourable presence of God that binds wicked men over to their good behaviour, and that chains them up from doing that mischief that they design and intend. But,

(5.) Fifthly, The Lord does manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by guiding and leading them into those paths and waves which make most for their own peace and quiet, safety and security, contentation and satisfaction, happiness here, and blessedness hereafter, Exod. 12:21, 22; Isa. 63:12–14; Ps. 5:8. Deut. 32:10, 'He found me in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.' A wilderness-condition is, you know, a condition of straits, wants, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now when his people were in this condition he instructs them by his words and works, and he takes them by the hand, as I may say, and leads them with all care, tenderness, gentleness, and sweetness, as a man would do a poor helpless infant, which he should find in a desert, in a waste howling wilderness. God never left leading of his people till he had brought them at last through the wilderness to the land of Canaan. Ah! this leading presence of God turns a wilderness into a paradise, a desert into a Canaan. Let a Christian's troubles, distresses, and dangers, be never so many or never so great, yet as long as he has the guiding presence of God with him, he is safe from dangers in the midst of dangers. 'The fire shall not burn him, nor the

waters overflow him,' Isa. 43:2: Ps. 107:4, 'They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in:' ver. 5, 'Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them:' ver. 6, 'Then they cried unto the Lord in their troubles, and he delivered them out of their distresses.' Here you see their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers; and now God gives them his hand, ver. 7, 'And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation;' that is, to a state of settlement, say some, to Jerusalem, say others, or to that 'city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,' saith another, Heb. 11:10. In that 32d Psalm you may see David's great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers: ver. 3, 'When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long:' ver. 4, 'For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.' But will God be his guide now? Oh yes, ver. 8, 'I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.' Let the hand of the Lord be never so heavy upon a person, yet the presence of God guiding and instructing of him will keep him from utter fainting and sinking under that hand, Isa. 30:21; Ps. 73:24. When the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, he leads and guides them, Ps. 25:9, 12, and 5:8. [1.] Into supernatural ways: Prov. 15:24, 'The way of life is above to the wise.' He hath his feet where other men's heads are, and, like a heavenly eagle, delights himself in flying high. [2.] Into good ways, Jer. 6:16. [3.] Into strait and strict ways, Mat. 7:14. Hence they are called right or straight paths which lie betwixt two extremes; or, if you will, which directly lead you to the view of heaven. They are paths which lie level with the rule and with the end. A man may see salvation and heaven at the end of them. [4.] Into pleasant ways: Prov. 3:17, 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.' Such as were those of Adam before his fall, strowed with roses and paved with peace. Some degree of comfort, pleasantness, and peace, follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, as beams and influences issue from the sun. [5.] Into right paths: Prov. 4:11, 'I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths:' Hosea 1:9, 'The ways of the Lord are

right, and the righteous shall walk in them.' The ways of his will, the ways of his word, and the ways of his worship, are all right ways, they carry us on in a straight line unto a right end. [6.] Into old and ancient ways: Jer. 6:16, 'Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls:' Jer. 18:15, 'They have caused them to stumble in their way from the ancient paths.' The ways of holiness are of the greatest, highest, and ancientest antiquity. The first ways of Adam were ways of holiness. The ways of sin are of a later edition than the ways of holiness. God stamped his image of holiness upon man before ever Satan assayed to tempt him. Holiness is of the ancientest house, of the greatest antiquity. Sin is but an upstart, holiness is the firstborn. The way of holiness is the eldest way, the way of holiness is gray-headed and of ancientest institution. All other ways are but of yesterday, they are but new ways to the ways of holiness. The stamp of antiquity upon many things is a praise and an honour to them, as old gold, old friends, old manuscripts, old monuments, old scars, and old holiness. The stamp of antiquity upon the ways of holiness is the praise and honour of the ways of holiness. [7.] Into paths of righteousness: Ps. 23:3, 'He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake;' or in plain, smooth, easy paths, or in sheep-tracks, wherein I may walk unweariedly and unblamably. Herein he alludes to the shepherd's care in leading his sheep gently in fair and plain ways, and not through deep mire, brambles, and briars, or over craggy ways that must needs be hard and troublesome for them to go in. The word here used is metaphorical; sometimes respecting the blind, who cannot walk without a guide; sometimes little or weak children, who cannot go without a leader; and here the weak and wandering sheep, which stand in need of the shepherd to go in and out before them. [8.] Into paths of salvation: Acts 16:17, 'These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.' [9.] Into ways of truth: 2 Pet. 2:2, 'And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.' 'The way of truth,' that is, the true Christian religion revealed from heaven, which shews the way to true happiness, to eternal salvation. [10.] Into ways of uprightness: Prov. 2:13, 'Who

leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.' Now when the people of God are in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, the Lord by leading them [1.] into supernatural ways, [2.] into good ways, [3.] into strict and straight ways, [4.] into pleasant ways, [5.] into right ways, [6.] into old and ancient ways, [7.] into righteous ways, [8.] into ways of salvation, [9.] into ways of truth, and [10.] into ways of uprightness, does gloriously manifest his favourable, his signal, and his eminent presence with them. There is nothing below a mighty presence of God that can enable a Christian—especially when he is under great troubles, and in deep distresses, and most deadly dangers—to do these five things:—[1.] To approve of the ways of God; [2.] To choose the ways of the Lord; [3.] Highly to prize them; [4.] To delight and take pleasure in them; [5.] To walk in them and to keep close to them; and yet in all these five things the Lord doth greatly and graciously help his poor people, when they are, as it were, in the very mouth of the lion. But,

(6.) Sixthly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable presence, his signal and eminent presence with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by encouraging, imboldening, animating and heartening up his people in the midst of all their troubles, distresses, and dangers, and by putting new life, spirit, and mettle into them, when they are even in the very mouth of the lion: Josh. 1:6, 'Be strong and of a good courage.' Ver. 7, 'Only be thou strong and very courageous.' Ver. 9, 'Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' 2 Chron. 13:12; Num. 13:32, 33, compared with 14:9. Joshua was a sword-man as well as a book-man; he had his name changed from Oshea to Joshua, from Let God save, to God shall save, Num. 13:16. Christ will never want a champion to stand up for his church. If Moses dies, Joshua shall stand up. There shall be a succession of sword-men and bookmen, of rulers and teachers, to carry on Christ's work in the world till the top-stone be laid with grace unto it, Zech. 4:7; Mal. 2:15. The residue of the Spirit is with the Lord, and

therefore he can and will put such an anointing of his Spirit upon one and another as shall fit them to carry on his works in the world. Joshua was very valiant, and a man of singular good mettle, yet because he was sure to meet with such troubles, deep distresses, and deadly dangers, as would put him to it, therefore he is pressed so frequently to be courageous: ver. 6, 'Be strong and of good courage.' Ver. 7, 'Only be thou strong and very courageous.' Ver. 9, 'Be strong and of a good courage.' Ver. 18, 'Only be strong and of a good courage.' Deut. 31:7, 'And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage,' &c. And why all this? Not because Joshua had discovered any faintheartedness or cowardice, but because the work he was to undertake was so weighty and perilous, in regard of those many and mighty nations whom he was to destroy, and plant the Israelites in their room. The work that Joshua was to undertake was attended with many great difficulties and dangers, in respect of the enemies he was to encounter, as being men of vast and giant-like statures and strength, and dwelling in cities with high walls and strongly fortified. Now the main argument to raise his courage and mettle is drawn from God's special presence and assistance: Josh. 1:9, 'For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.' We are not to understand it of God's general presence in all places, but of his special, favourable, signal, and eminent presence, which God would manifest in his preservation, and protection, notwithstanding all the difficulties, enterprises, dangers, and enemies that he was to encounter with. So 2 Chron. 32:7, 'Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him.' Ver. 8, 'With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles,' &c. At this time the king of Assyria was the greatest monarch in the world, and the most formidable enemy Israel had. He had a mighty army, for there was a hundred fourscore and five thousand of them slain in one night, ver. 21. Now the great thing they were to mind and attend was to look narrowly to it, that the favourable, signal, and eminent presence of God with them, did raise all their hearts above all discouragements, fears, and

dismayedness. What is the chaff to the whirlwind? what are thorns and briars to a consuming fire? what is an arm of flesh to the arm, strength, and power of a God? what is weakness to strength, and the nothing-creature to the Lord of hosts? Now if the special signal presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and most deadly dangers won't put singular courage, life, and mettle into them, what will? Acts 23:10, 'And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.' Ver. 11, 'And the night following the Lord stood by him, [namely, in a vision, or in a dream, or in an ecstasy,] and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.' The favourable, signal presence of the Lord with him turned his prison into a palace. Mr Philpot, being a prisoner for the testimony of Jesus, writes thus to his friends: 'Though I tell you that I am in hell in the judgment of this world, yet assuredly I feel in the same the consolation of heaven, I praise God; and this loathsome and horrible prison is as pleasant to me as the walks in the garden of the King's Bench.' When Paul was in great danger the Lord stood by him, to cheer, comfort, and encourage him, see Acts 27:23, 24. Now God claps him on the back, and puts new life and mettle into him.

When Dionysius was given up by the executioner to be beheaded, he remained constant and courageous, saying, Come life, come death, I will worship none but the God of heaven and earth.

When Chrysostom had told Eudoxia the empress that for her covetousness she would be called a second Jezebel, she thereupon sent him a threatening message, to which he gave this stout and resolute answer, 'Go tell her, nil nisi peccatum timeo, I fear nothing but sin.'

When the executioner had kindled the fire behind Jerome of Prague, he bade him kindle it before his face; For, said he, if I had been afraid

of it, I had not come to this place, having had so many opportunities offered me to escape it. At the giving up of the ghost he said, *Hanc animam in flammis offero, Christe, tibi*, This soul of mine, inflames of fire, O Christ, I offer thee.

The emperor, coming into Germany, sent for Luther to Worms; but many of his friends, from the danger they apprehended hanging over his head, dissuaded him from going; to whom he gave this prudent, courageous, and resolute answer, 'That these discouragements were cast in his way by Satan, who knew that by his profession of the truth in so illustrious a place, his kingdom would be shaken; and that, therefore, if he knew that there were as many devils in Worms as there were tiles on the houses, yet he would go.'

The German knight, in his apologetical letter for Luther against the pontifical clergy, saith, 'I will go through with what I have undertaken against you, and will stir up men to seek their freedom. I neither care nor fear what may befall me, being prepared for either event, either to ruin you to the great benefit of my country, or myself to fall with a good conscience,' &c.

William Flower the martyr said, 'That the heavens should as soon fall as I will forsake my profession, or budge in the least degree from it.'

Apollonius being asked, 'If he did not tremble at the sight of the tyrant,' made this answer, 'God, which gave him a terrible countenance, hath given also unto me an undaunted heart.'

When Gardiner asked Rowland Taylor if he did not know him, &c., to whom he answered, 'Yea, I know you, and all your greatness, yet you are but a mortal man; and if I should be afraid of your lordly looks, why fear ye not God the Lord of us all?'

Basil affirms of the primitive Christians, that they had so much courage and magnanimity of spirit in their sufferings, that many heathens, seeing their heroic zeal, resoluteness, and undauntedness, turned Christians.

When one of the ancient martyrs was terrified with the threatenings of his persecutors, he replied, 'There is nothing of things visible, nor nothing of things invisibles that I fear; I will stand to my profession of the name of Christ, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, come on it what will.'

By these instances, which may be of great use in this trying day, you may clearly see how the Lord has manifested his favourable, signal, and eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by raising up in them a spirit of courage, magnanimity, and holy gallantry. But,

(7.) Seventhly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence to his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by preserving them from troubles in the midst of troubles, from dangers in the midst of dangers: Dan. 3:25, 'He answered, and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' The presence of the Son of God preserves these three valiant champions from dangers in the midst of dangers. 'They fell down bound in the fiery furnace,' saith my author, [Polanus,] 'and they walked loose in the midst of the fire without any hurt, for the angel of the Lord descended together with them in the same moment, who shook the flames of the fire forth out of the furnace, and preserved the servants of God safe without any trouble, being cooled, as it were, with a dew coming upon them in a pleasant manner.' But give me leave to say, that these words, 'One like the Son of God,' doth not argue that in this vision there was not a representation of the Son of God to come afterwards in the flesh, but rather that this great mystery was here shewed for the greater comfort of the faithful, that they might courageously bear all their sufferings, having the Prince and Head both of angels and men present with them herein to mitigate their pains, and carry them through with joy; this being a greater wonder of grace and love than to have the protection of a mere angel, concerning whose power also, whether he can change the nature of fire, that it shall not burn, is

very doubtful and questionable, seeing this argueth omnipotency, which is in God alone, and not communicable to any creature. Where, by the way, you may observe a strong and solid argument to prove that Jesus is the Son of God against all gainsayers, thus: he whom Nebuchadnezzar saw in the fiery furnace was the Son of God in a human shape; but he was typically Jesus, ergo, &c. The major is proved, because he did that which none but God could do, viz., he qualified the most fierce and raging fire, which burned up some coming but near it, and had no power, at the same instant of time, so much as to singe a hair of the heads of others. The minor is proved also, because God, appearing in a glorious human shape at any time, was not God the Father or Holy Ghost, but God the Son; for 'no man hath seen God at any time,' John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; but the Son hath revealed him, both when in him appearing in a human shape under the law, and when, under the Gospel, shewing himself in the man Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, and hypostatically united unto him: Exod. 3:2, 'And the angel of the Lord,' that is, Christ, the angel of the covenant, 'appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed;' ver. 3, 'And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.' The Hebrew word Seneh which is here used signifies a dry bush, a bramble bush, whence the mount and wilderness is called Sinai, of the store of brambles that grew there, or of this bush or vision. Now for a bush, a dry bush, a bramble bush, to be all on fire and yet not consumed, this must be a wonder of wonders; but all this is from the good will 'of him that dwelt in the bush.' Out of these two verses we may briefly observe these few things:—

[1.] First, The low, and weak, and brittle estate of the church, represented by a bush, a dry bush, a bramble bush. What more brittle, weak, base, low, and despicable than a dry bush, a bramble bush? What is such a bush good for but the fire, or to stop a gap, or some such inferior use? A bush is a black, deformed, and uncomely thing. Corruption and affliction, sin and suffering, renders the saints very uncomely. The church is compared not to a strong, sturdy oak,

but to a weak, brittle bush; and elsewhere to a vine, a dove, a lamb, a sheep, &c., all frail, weak creatures. It is good for all saints to have low and mean thoughts of themselves, for here they are resembled to a dry bush, a bramble bush. But,

[2.] Secondly, A dry bush, a bramble bush, pricks, wounds, and vexes them that handle it roughly. This bush is in Hebrew called Seneh, as I have hinted before, which the Hebrews describe to be a shrub full of pricks, and without fruit, and so thick that a bird cannot enter without the ruffling and pulling off her feathers. Let the proud enemies of the church look to themselves, for this bramble bush will vex, prick, wound, tear, and put them to the worst, when they have done their worst. In all the ages of the world this bramble bush, the church, hath been a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, and a burdensome stone; so that all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it, Zech. 12:2, 3. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Consider the cruelties of the church's enemies is signified and represented by a fire. The bush burns with fire. In this resemblance is shadowed out the oppressed, afflicted, and persecuted estate of the Israelites in the Egyptian furnace; and by fire here is meant the most painful, terrifying, and tormenting afflictions and miseries that should attend them. Great afflictions and persecutions are in Scripture commonly set out by fire, as the fiery trial, the fire of affliction, 1 Pet. 4:12; Lam. 2:3, 4; Hab. 2:13. Fire is very painful and tormenting, in which respects hell torments are compared to fire; so are great afflictions, miseries, and sufferings; they are very painful and tormenting; they put persons into sore pain and travail. Next to the pangs of conscience, and the pains of hell, there are none to these pains and pangs that are bred and fed by sore afflictions, by terrible trials. It has been the lot and portion of God's dearest children, to be exercised with very great and grievous afflictions, and that in order to the discovery of sin, to the embittering of sin, to the preventing of sin, and to the purging away of sin, and in order to the trial of grace, the discovery of grace, the

exercise of grace, and the increase of grace; and in order to the weaning of them from this world, and to the completing their conformity to Christ, the captain of their salvation, 'who was made perfect through sufferings,' Heb. 2:10; and to ripen them for heaven, and to work in them more bowels of pity and compassion to those that are in misery, and that sigh and groan under their Egyptian taskmasters.

[4.] Fourthly, Consider the eminence of their preservation, though in the fire, yet unconsumed. The church of God was hot, yea, all in flames, and yet not consumed. Let the fire be never so hot, so fierce, so furious, so spreading, the church shall have a being, and live and bear up in the midst of the flames. If the church like the sea lose in one place, it gets ground in another. When the worst of men, and devils, and informers have done their worst, the Lord will have a name among his people on earth. The church, with the lamp in the story, laughs at all those winds, that would blow it out. Well may we stand amazed and wonder, that so flaming and terrible a fire, falling upon so contemptible a bush, and so dry and despicable a shrub, should not presently turn it into ashes; for why, is the fire too weak? Oh no! Is the bush so strong, as to defend and secure itself against devouring flames? Oh no! Or is the bush not apt to burn and consume by so fierce a fire? Oh no. It is not from the impotency of the fire, nor from the strength or constitution of the bush; for a dry bramble bush, in the matter of it is as combustible as any chaff, and as easily destroyed as any stubble; but because the natural force thereof was restrained by the glorious power of God: for if God concur not with the nature of things, they cannot work nor shew their kind. There are two inseparable qualities of fire: (1.) To give light. (2.) To burn; and yet divine power divides and separates these two: for this fire giveth light, but burneth not. Oh, what a mighty, what an astonishing preservation is here! The afflictions and sufferings of the church are not a consuming fire, but a trying fire, as the fire in a furnace consumes the dross, but tries the gold, and puts a new lustre, beauty, and glory upon it. Hesiod speaks of thirty thousand demigods, that were keepers of men; but what are so many

thousand gods to that one God that neither slumbers nor sleeps, but day and night keeps his people as his jewels, as the apple of his eye, that keeps them in his pavilion, as a prince his favourite? There is a dialogue between a heathen and a Jew; after the Jews returned from captivity—all nations round about them being enemies unto them—the heathen asked the Jew, how he and his countrymen could hope for any safety, because, saith he, every one of you is as a silly sheep compassed about with fifty wolves. Ay, but, saith the Jew, we are kept by such a shepherd, as can kill all these wolves when he pleases, and by that means preserve his sheep. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Consider how this eminent preservation of his people from dangers in the midst of dangers is effected and brought about, and that is by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great angel of the covenant; for Moses saith expressly of this vision, that 'The Lord appeared unto Moses, and God calleth unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses,' &c., ver. 4. This calling of Moses by his name, and the doubling of his name, in such a familiar and loving manner, was a sign of God's singular favour to Moses. Choice favourites God frequently called by name, as you may see in those instances of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, &c., and so our Lord Jesus Christ called Peter by his name, and Nathanael by his name, and Mary by her name, &c. The same presence of the Son of God, that preserved the three children, or rather champions; in that furious furnace of Nebuchadnezzar from burning or singeing, preserved the bush, though not from burning, yet from consuming, by restraining the natural force of the fire, and strengthening the bush against it. The bush, the church in the fire, came forth of the hottest furnace that ever was kindled, not blacker nor worser, but brighter and better, and more glorious than the sun in his strength; and all this from the presence of the angel of the covenant that dwelt in the bush. Divine presence can preserve a flaming bush from being consumed: Witness our preservation to this day, though we have been as a burning bush. 'God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved, God shall help her, and that right early,' Ps. 46:5. Heb., 'When the morning appeareth,' that is, in the nick of time, when help

shall be most seasonable and best welcome. The presence of the Lord in the midst of his church, will secure her from being greatly moved in the midst of all those great dreadful confusions that are abroad in the world. Hence the church is called, Jehovah shammah, 'The Lord is there', Ezek. 48:35. His presence in heaven, makes it heaven, and his presence in the church, makes it happy and safe. Nothing shall disturb or harm them that have the presence of God in the midst of them. The church is built upon a rock, she is invincible, Mat. 16:18. Jer. 1:8, 'Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord.' Ver. 17, 'Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee; be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.' Ver. 18, 'For behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar and brazen wall against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.' Ver. 19, 'And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.' God's presence with his messengers is a guard, and a safeguard, all-sufficient against all opposition whatsoever. Earthly princes and sovereigns are not wont to go with those whom they send on embassy, but God always goes along with those whom he sends, and will, by his powerful presence, protect and defend them against opposers, at all times and in all places, when all others fail and forsake us. Christ's presence is security sufficient, for 'if he be with us, who can be against us?' They must first prevail against him before they can prevail against them that withstand and oppose those whom he standeth by to back and protect. How comes this to pass, that Jeremiah, a man, a man alone, should bear up so stoutly, and stand so strong against kings, princes, priests, and people? It is from the signal presence of God with him. 'I am with thee.' And what can all the great ones of the world, and all the wicked ones of the world, do against one messenger of the Lord, that is armed with his glorious power? The ambassadors of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, must not be terrified with the multitude of opposers, nor with the grandeur or greatness of opposers; but set the presence of the Lord against them all, and say as that noble soldier, Pædarelus, in

Erasmus, did to them that told him of that numerous and mighty army which came against him, Tanto plus gloriæ, referemus, quoniam eo plures superabimus, The number of opposers makes the Christian conquests the more illustrious. The more the Pharisees of old, and their successors of late time, have opposed the truth, the more it hath prevailed; and it is observable that the reformation in Germany was much furthered by the papists' opposition, yea, when two kings, amongst many others, wrote against Luther, viz., Henry the Eighth of England, and Ludovicus of Hungary; this kingly title being entered into the controversy, making men more curious to examine the matter, stirred up a general inclination towards Luther's opinion. So Jer. 15:20, 'And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord.' When the messengers of the Lord go on constantly and courageously in the faithful discharge of their duties, not relenting, or yielding, or complying with their greatest opposers, then they shall have such a signal presence of the Lord with them, as shall sufficiently protect them against all their enemies' might and malice, wrath and rage: ver. 21, 'And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible or violent ones.' Though thou shouldst fall into the hand of the wicked, id est, power, and into the hand of the terrible and violent ones, yet they shall not hurt thee, nor harm thee; they shall not have their wills upon thee. When thou art in their hands, I will lay a law of restraint upon their hearts, that they shall not mischief thee, nor triumph over thee; I will be sure to secure thee, and rescue thee from dangers in the midst of dangers. A gracious messenger of the Lord in the midst of all oppositions, as Chrysostom said of Peter, is a man made all of fire walking in stubble, he overcomes and consumes all opposition; all difficulties are but whetstones to his fortitude. The moon will run her course though the dogs bark at it; so does the traveller, and so will the faithful messengers of the Lord hold on in their way and work, let men and devils bark and do their worst.

Moulin, speaking of the French Protestants, said, 'When papists hurt us for reading the Scriptures, we burn with zeal to be reading of them.' He is a fool, we say, that will be laughed out of his coat, but he is a fool in folio that will be laughed out of his skin, out of his profession, out of his religion, out of his principles, out of the ways of God, nay, out of his soul, out of his salvation, because he can't endure to be opposed, derided, or laughed at by lewd and wicked men. The divine presence will make a man set light by such paper-shot.

A gracious spirit is raised by opposition. The more opposition it meets with in a way of duty, the more resolute he is for it. So far is he from being afraid of the threatenings of men, of the frowns of men, or of losing this man's favour, or of incurring such a man's displeasure, that his spirit riseth far more for it. It is with such a man as it is with the fire in winter. The fire burns the hotter because of the coldness of the air; so it is with all the messengers of the Lord, who are inflamed in the way of their duty. Come to David, and tell him, Oh, there is a Goliath, and he is come out with a spear like a weaver's beam, and there is one that bears his target goes before him! Where is he? saith David; I will fight with him, saith he, [1 Sam. 17:4–11, compared with ver. 26, 27.] Difficulties and dangers do but whet and raise his spirit; he is not afraid of any uncircumcised Philistine. Ah, my friends, this is a true noble spirit! Holy greatness of mind lies in this, when a man's spirit is borne up upon the greatness of his God, and the goodness of his cause; and if that will not bear me out, saith such a soul, let me sink in it, I am content to perish. That is a good word, more worth than a world in a faithful minister's eye: Ezek. 3:8, 'Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads;' ver. 9, 'As an adamant, harder than a flint, have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.' The adamant is the hardest of stones, it is lapis servabilis, because it keeps itself by its hardness from all injuries; no weather, no violence of hammer or fire will break it or conquer it. God engages himself to give the prophet such undaunted boldness, and invincible courage and constancy, as neither shame nor fear should prevail against.

Divine presence, divine assistance, does always accompany a divine call. Such whom God sends he seconds, such whom he calls he encourages against all difficulties and discouragements; such as are called by Christ, and sent by Christ, shall never want the strengthening, comforting, corroborating, animating, and preserving presence of Christ. It is this divine presence that makes them stand it out, and shew themselves like men—like men of courage, like men of God, and that secures them from dangers in the midst of dangers. In the greatest storms the adamant shrinks not, it fears not, it changeth not its hue, no, not in the least. Divine presence will keep gracious men from shrinking, fearing, and changing their way, their work, their Lord, and Master, in the worst of storms that can beat upon them. In all winds and weather the adamant is still the same, and so will all the faithful messengers of the Lord be, whatever wind may blow upon them. The signal presence of God with them will keep them from fearing, fainting, flying, and preserve them from dangers in the midst of dangers. But,

(8.) Eighthly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by frustrating and disappointing the plots, designs, counsels, and contrivances of their powerful, subtle, secret, and malicious adversaries, who would fain be multiplying of their troubles, sorrows, sufferings, and miseries upon them: Neh. 4:8, 'And conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.' Ver. 11, 'And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst amongst them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.' Ver. 15, 'And it came to pass, when our enemies knew that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsels to nought,' &c. The craft of the church's enemies is never but accompanied with cruelty, and their cruelty is seldom without craft. The devil lends them his seven heads to plot, and his seven horns to push; but in the things wherein they deal proudly, God is above them, and by his presence with his people he brings all their plots, counsels, and enterprises to nought. The gunpowder traitors betrayed themselves,

and all came to light, though they had digged as low as hell to hide their counsels from the Lord. The enemies of the Jews, in Nehemiah's time, made great brags at first what they would do; but when they saw their plots discovered, and their purposes defeated, they are presently crestfallen, and have no mind nor courage to advance at all; so that to these plotters may be fitly applied that which Guicciardini saith of Charles the Eighth, king of France, in his expedition against Naples, 'That he came into the field like thunder and lightning, but went out like a snuff; more than a man at first, and less than a woman at last.' In all the ages of the world, the heads, the wits, the hands, the hearts, and the tongues of the wicked have been engaged against the just; they have been still a-plotting and devising mischief against the favourites of heaven, as if rebels could meddle with none but the children of a king, and yet God's signal presence with his people, in point of affection and protection, has blasted all their designs, and frustrated all their counsels. As the rage of wicked men against the saints have been endless, so it has been fruitless, because God has been in the midst of them. Haman plots against the lives, liberties, and estates of the Jews, Esth. 3:8, seq., but his plot was timely discovered and seasonably prevented, and the grand plotter and informer detected, debased, condemned, and executed: Esth. 7:10, 'So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.' The kings of Persia had absolute and unquestionable power to do whatsoever they listed. Quicquid libuit, licuit: all their subjects, except their queens, were no better than slaves,—'whom they would they slew, and whom they would they kept alive; whom they would they set up, and whom they would they put down,' Dan. 5:19; Esth. 7:9. Haman is here without order of law, more than the king's command, adjudged to be hanged. The truth is, it was a clear case, and the malefactor was self-condemned. 'Hang him, therefore,' saith the king; a short and a just sentence, and soon executed. Ah, how soon is Haman fallen from the palace to the gallows, from the highest stage of honour to the lowest stair of disgrace; from feasting with the king to be made a feast for crows, and so lies wrapped up in the sheet of perpetual infamy. 'So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.' It is a

good observation of Josephus upon Esth. 7:10: 'I cannot,' saith he, 'but admire the Lord's wisdom, and acknowledge his justice, in that he not only punished him for his malice to the church, but, by turning his own mischief upon himself, hath made him an example to all posterity; hanging him up in gibbets that others may take warning.' Let all plotters and informers beware of making a match with mischief, they may have enough of it in the end. Haman was a main stickler for the devil, who paid him his wages at last, with a witness, or, if you will, with a halter. Let all the enemies of the saints tremble at such ends, and be careful to avoid them by flying such like foul and flagitious practices. The bloody plot being thus laid by Haman, the king's minion, behold the footsteps of God's favourable, signal, and eminent presence for his people and with his people in their deadly dangers, and that in raising up in them a very great spirit of faith, prayer, and mourning, and by raising an undaunted courage and resolution in Esther: 'And so I will go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish,' Esth. 4:16. This she speaks not rashly or desperately, as prodigal of her life, but as one willing to sacrifice the same for the honour of God, his cause and people, saying, as that martyr, 'Can I die but once for Christ?' Esther had rather die than shrink from her duty. She thought it better to do worthily and perish for a kingdom, than unworthily and perish with a kingdom. Here was a mighty preference of God in raising Esther's heroical courage and resolution above all those visible dangers that did attend her attempt of going in to the king against the known law of the land. And the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre, chap. 5:2. He did not kick her out of his presence, as some Cambyses would have done; neither did he command her to the block, as Henry the Eighth did his Anne Boleyn, upon a mere misprision of disloyalty; neither yet did he cashier her, as he had Vashti for a less offence, but by holding out his sceptre, shews his gracious respects unto her. This was the Lord's own work, and a great demonstration of his signal presence with her, in giving her favour in the eyes of the great king. 'So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre' with her hand, saith the Chaldee, with her mouth, saith the Vulgar translation. This she did either in token of submission, or as a sign of reverence and

subjection, or for the avoiding of danger; for, as Josephus saith, 'He that touched the king's sceptre was out of the reach of evil,' or, according to the custom of the times, God's favourable presence is transparent, in the king's extended favour to her. 'On that night could not the king sleep,' Heb., 'the king's sleep fled away,' Esth. 6:1; and like a shadow it fled away so much the faster, as it was more followed. Crowns have their cares, thistles in their arms, and thorns in their sides. Lo! he that commanded one hundred and twenty-seven provinces cannot command one hour's sleep. The king's head might perhaps be troubled with thinking what great request it should be that Esther had to make, that was so hardly drawn from her; but herein appeared the signal presence of God in keeping the king awake; for Mordecai might have been hanged before Esther had known anything of it—Haman being come early the next morning, ver. 4, to beg this of the king—had not God kept him from sleep, and directed him to read in that place of the Chronicles where Mordecai's service was recorded, and so made way to his advancement and Haman's ruin. God's favourable presence shined upon his people in keeping the king from sleep, for excellent ends, and in putting small thoughts into his heart for great purposes. God will appear for his poor people, ἐν τῷ καιρῷ, in the nick and opportunity of time, when there is but a step between them and death; and further, the power, providence, presence, and goodness of God was made evident, in the behalf of his people, in directing the reader to that very place where Mordecai's singular service, in discovering the barbarous and murderous plot that was laid against the king's life and crown, was recorded, Esth. 6:2. That Mordecai should have no present reward, but that it should be deferred till a fitter opportunity, when God might be more glorified in the signal preservation of his people, and in the famous overthrow of their enemies, was from that mighty hand of God, that was stretched out for the good of his people. In this great story we may, as in a mirror, see how the Lord, by his wisdom, providence, presence, and grace, brings about and overrules the wills of men, the affairs of men, the counsels of men, the designs of men, the words and speeches of men, to the fulfilling of his own will and decree, and the promoting of his own honour and glory, and the good

of his people, when vain men think least of doing his will, or serving his providence. Here you may see the wisdom, prudence, and courage of Esther, striking whilst the iron was hot, charging the bloody decree upon Haman to his face, and that before the king, that things might the better stick and work, and painting him out in his own proper colours. 'The adversary,' Heb., 'the man adversary,' the Lycanthropos, the man of might that distresseth us. 'And enemy,' that is, the cruel enemy, the bloody enemy, the utter enemy, the worst enemy, that sworn swordman of Satan, from whom Haman hath drawn his ancient enmity, Gen. 3:15. 'Is this wicked Haman,' that is, as wicked a wretch as goes on two legs, a man of blood, a man made up of mischief and malice, a sink of wickedness, a very mystery of iniquity, a breathing devil. Tiberius was rightly characterised, by his tutor Theodoras Gadareus, dirt knead² with blood. Haman was such another, if not worse. And now Queen Esther is plain and round with him, and calls a spade a spade. Though others styled him noble, great, serene, magnificent, &c., Esther gives him his own with a witness. 'The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman.' But what a mighty courage had Esther to speak at this rate before the king, and of his grand favourite, and before his face. Surely all this was from the signal presence of God with her soul. This was a great work of faith, and a singular fruit of prayer. 'And now Haman stood up to make request for his life.' Oh, what a strange turn of things is here all upon a sudden! He that a little before was bowed unto by all men, is now upon his knees before a woman; he that was, the very day before, a professed enemy of the Jews, is now suppliant to a Jewess; he that a few weeks before had contrived the death and ruin of the Jews, is now begging hard for his own life; he that had provided a gallows for Mordecai, fears nothing more now than that himself should be hanged on it. Yesterday, oh the caps, knees, and bows that Haman had, and now the same man covers his face, in token of his irrecoverable ruin, Esth. 7:8. The Turks cast a black gown upon such as they sit at supper with the great Turk, and presently strangle them. Many of their viziers or greatest favourites die in this sort, which makes them use this proverb, 'He that is greatest in office, is but a statue of glass.' Plutarch wittily compareth great men to

counters, which now stand for a thousand pounds, and anon for a farthing. This was Haman's case. And so Sejanus, the same senators who accompanied him to the senate, conducted him to prison; they which sacrificed to him as to their god, which kneeled down to adore him, scoffed at him, seeing him dragged from the temple to the gaol, from supreme honour to extreme ignominy. When once the emperor frowned upon him, they shewed themselves most passionate against him, saying that if Cæsar had clemency, he ought to reserve it for men, and not to use it toward monsters. This is courtier's custom, to adore the rising sun, and when great favourites fall into disgrace, all about princes will be ready to pluck them up by the roots, if the season be fair to clear the court or land of such noisome weeds. The king's indignation being up, the courtiers point at the gallows fifty cubits high, that Haman had set up for Mordecai. All are now for Mordecai, there is not a courtier that has one good word for Haman. Ah, what a rare hand of God was there in all these things, for the good of his people, and the utter overthrow of their grand enemy! To sum all up in a little room, the breaking of the king's sleep, was the breaking of one of the most bloody designs that ever was laid against the people of God. Well, what though the king could not sleep, could he not lie still in his bed? No, he must have a book, and that book must be the Book of Chronicles, and that book must be opened where accidentally—not by turning to that place purposely—yet surely by God's providence directing him that read, to that very story concerning Mordecai, where was registered his faithfulness, in discovering and disappointing of a murder intended against the king; whereupon God sets this act of faithfulness so close upon the king's heart, that he could not rest till Mordecai was nobly rewarded for it, and this reward must be Haman's ruin; his advancement, Haman's abatement; and this was the rise of Haman's disappointment. In this famous instance you may run and read the favourable, signal, and eminent presence of the Lord, in the miraculous preservation of his church from a total ruin and destruction, and in the disappointing the plots, designs, and counsels of their greatest enemies, and in taking of them in the very snares that they had laid for others; suitable to that of the psalmist, 'He made a pit and digged it, and is

fallen into the ditch which he made; his mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing upon his own pate,' Ps. 7:16, 17. Henry the Third of France was stabbed in the same chamber where he had helped to contrive the French massacre; and his brother, Charles the Ninth, had blood given him to drink, for he was worthy. There is no end of stories of this nature. So Ps. 9:15, 'The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid, is their own foot taken.' The wicked are compared to hunters for their cruelty, and to fowlers for their craft; but see their success, they are sunk down in their own pit, caught in their own net. Thus it befell Pharaoh, Jabin, and Sisera, Sennacherib, Antiochus Epiphanes, Maxentius the tyrant, who fell into the Tiber, from his own false bridge laid for Constantine; the Spanish armada, and our powder-plotters: ver. 16, 'The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgajon, Selah.' Goliath was killed with his own sword. Christ's justice hath two acclamatory notes, 'Higgajon, Selah;' the like is not found in all the Scripture, as worthy of present admiration, and of deep and perpetual meditation. I have been the longer a-glancing at this famous story of Esther, because of its seasonableness and suitableness to the days and times wherein we live.

A further proof of this eighth particular, that is under our present consideration, you have in Isa. 8:9, 'Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces'—Heb., 'And be broken in pieces, And be broken in pieces: And be broken in pieces.' It is thrice repeated, to work it the deeper into the minds and hearts of those, that should either hear or read it; and to give the stronger assurance of the certainty of their being inevitably broken in pieces, who were adversaries and conspirators against the people of God. This speech is directed to the kings of Assyria, and other nations that combined with him against the people of God; but especially against the city of Jerusalem. It is a holy irony, or laughing to scorn the associating enemies of the church. Well saith the prophet, Proceed as unanimously, as politicly, and as powerfully in your combinations,

consultations, and preparations as you can, yet be assured that all your associations shall be dissolved, and your counsels frustrated, and your attempts returned back upon yourselves to your own ruin and confusion: ver. 10, 'Take counsel together,'—[Hebrew, 'Consult a consultation,' to wit, about invading Judah, and surprising Jerusalem,]—'and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us:' Isa. 7:5, 6; Ps. 33:3. Consult, conclude, determine, resolve upon what you please, you shall never be able, by all your power and policy, to prevail against the people of God; for his favourable, signal, and eminent presence is constantly with them, to assist, counsel, and protect them against all oppositions and assaults. God bringeth to nought the counsel of the nations, Ps. 33:10. Neither the devil nor his imps, nor any of their counsels, or enchantments, shall ever be able to stand before the presence of the Lord with his people. Charles the Fifth and the French king had, upon counsel, taken, covenanted, and agreed utterly to extirpate the Lutheran faction out of all their dominions; but God found them other employment, and, by his signal presence with his people, he gave them a happy halcyon. Let men and devils conspire, let them plot, consult, and determine, all shall be in vain, because there is no counsel against the Lord, there is no possibility of carrying of it against the presence of the Lord with his people. His signal presence will be their greatest safety and security in the midst of all plots, designs, dangers, &c. The signal presence of God with his people mars and frustrates all the plots, counsels, and curious contrivances of the world's wizards, as might be shewed in those instances of Balaam, Pharaoh, Saul, Herod, with many others. But I must hasten, and therefore,

(9.) Ninthly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by his sympathising with them in all their troubles, trials, distresses, dangers, as you may clearly see by consulting the choice scriptures in the margin. So Isa. 63:9, 'In all their afflictions 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.' Christ is here in the Hebrew called 'the angel of his face,' either because he doth exactly resemble God his Father, or because he appeareth before the face or in the presence of God for us. This angel took to heart their afflictions, he was himself grieved for them and with them. This angel secured and safeguarded them all the way through the wilderness, from Egypt to Canaan. This angel did not only lead them, but he also lifted them up and took them in his arms, as parents or nurses are wont to do with such children that are young and weakly and in danger. And this angel carried them, as the eagle doth her young ones, that are not fully fledged, or that are unable yet to fly, on her wings. Oh the pity, the clemency, the sympathy, and admirable compassion of Christ to his people in their suffering state! Zech. 2:8, 'He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.' The eye is the tenderest piece of the tenderest part. The eye is kept most diligently, and strongly guarded by nature with five tunics. A man can better bear a thump on the back, the biting of his finger, the cutting of his hand, the pricking of his leg, or a blow upon his arm, than a touch on the eye. Oh that persecutors would be quiet, and let God's people alone, and take heed how they meddle with God's eyes. There is no touching of them, to wrong or injure them, but you wrong and injure the Holy One of Israel, who will certainly revenge himself upon you. They that strike at God's eyes, do through them strike at God himself, which he will never put up. It is a dangerous thing to molest and trouble, to afflict or annoy the people of God; for God himself is very sensible of it, and accordingly he will certainly requite it. Acts 9:4, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' They that persecute the servants of Christ, they persecute Christ himself, who liveth in them, and is mystically united to them. Look, as there is by virtue of the natural union a mutual sympathy betwixt the head and the members, the husband and the wife, so it is here betwixt Christ and his saints, for he is a most sympathising, compassionate, tender-hearted Saviour, Heb. 4:15, and 5:2; Col. 1:24; Heb. 13:13; Isa. 53:4. Those that shoot at the saints, hit Christ; their sufferings are held his, and their reproaches are counted his. He that bore the saints' griefs when he was on earth, really and properly, he bears them still now he is in

heaven; in a way of sympathy. Christ in his glorified state hath a very tender sense of all the evil that is done to his children, his members, his spouse, and looks upon it as done to himself. A great lord said to another great lord of the council, in king Henry the Eighth's days, concerning Cranmer, 'Let him alone, for the king will not suffer his finger to ache.' so say I to the persecutors of the day, Let the people of God alone, for if you do but make their finger ache, God will make your heads and hearts ache for it before he has done with you. But,

(10.) Tenthly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by pouring out upon them a greater spirit of prayer and supplication in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, than formerly they have had. Isa. 26:16, 'Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.' 'They poured out their still prayer.' The Hebrew word *Lachus* signifieth properly a soft or low kind of muttering which can hardly be heard. The prophet hereby would intimate to us, that in their great troubles and deepest distresses they sighed or groaned unto God, and prayed in a still and silent manner. Saints never visit God more with their prayers, than when he visits them most with his rod. Saints never pray with that seriousness, that spiritualness, that heavenliness, that humbleness, that brokenness, that fervency, that frequency, as they do when they are under the mighty hand of God; and all this is from that signal presence of God, that it is with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, &c. When it was a day of great trouble, of great distress, of great danger to the people of God in Germany, God poured out a very great spirit of prayer upon Luther; at length he comes out of his closet triumphantly, saying to his fellow-labourers and friends, 'Vicimus, vicimus, We have overcome, we have overcome;' at which time it is observed that there came out a proclamation from Charles the Fifth that none should be further molested for the profession of the gospel. In days of troubles and distress Luther was so warm, zealous, and powerful in prayer, that made one of his best friends say, *Iste vir potuit, quod voluit*, That

man could have of God what he pleased. Being once very warm in prayer, he let fall this transcendent rapture of a daring faith, *Fiat mea voluntas*, Let my will be done; and then falls off sweetly, *Mea voluntas, Domine, quia tua*, My will, Lord, because thy will. It is reported in the life of Luther, that when he prayed it was *tantâ reverentiâ ut si Deo, et tantâ fiduciâ ut si amico*, It was with so much reverence as if he were praying to God, and with so much boldness as if he had been speaking to his friend. I have read of a fountain that at noonday is cold, and at midnight it grows warm; so many Christians are cold in praying, in hearing, &c., in the day of prosperity, but yet are warm and lively in praying and wrestling with God in the day of adversity. Manasseh got more by prayer in his iron chains than ever he got by his golden crown. Afflictions are like the prick at the nightingale's breast that awakens her, and that puts her upon her sweet and delightful singing. A sincere Christian never prays so sweetly as when under the rod. One reports of Joachim, the father of the Virgin Mary, that he would often say, *Cibus et potus mihi erit oratio*, Prayer is my meat and drink. When a Christian is in trouble, then prayer is his meat and drink. Oh, what a spirit of prayer was upon Jonah when he was in the whale's belly; and upon Daniel when he was among the lions; and upon David in his wilderness-state; and upon the thief when he was on the cross; and upon Jehoshaphat, when Moab and Ammon and others came against him to battle; and upon Hezekiah, when Sennacherib had invaded Judah; and upon Jacob, when his brother Esau came to meet him with four hundred bloody cut-throats at his heels! As there be two kinds of antidotes against poison—viz., hot and cold; so there are two kinds of antidotes against all the troubles of this life—viz., fervent prayer and holy patience, the one hot, the other cold; the one quenching, the other quickening. When a Christian under great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, prays more for the sanctification of affliction than the removal of affliction; when he prays more to get off his sins than to get off his chains; when he prays more to get good by the rod than to get free from the rod; when he prays more that his afflictions may be a refining fire than a consuming fire, and that his heart may be low and his graces high, and that all his troubles may

wean him more from this world, and ripen him the more for the glory of that upper world,—it is a great demonstration of the signal presence of God with him in all his troubles and deep distresses. But,

(11.) Eleventhly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by drawing the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself, by all the afflictions, troubles, distresses, and dangers that do attend, them in this world: Ps. 119:67, 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.' God brought David nearer to himself by Weeping-Cross, [Chrysostom.] Affliction is a fire to purge out our dross, and to make virtue shine. It is a potion to carry away ill humours, better than all the benedicta medicamenta, as physicians call them. Master Ascham was a good schoolmaster to Queen Elizabeth, but affliction was a better, &c. By afflictions God humbles the hearts of his people, and betters the hearts of his people, and draws the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself: ver. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.' The Lacedemonians of old grew rich by war, and were bettered by it, when all other kingdoms were undone by it. The saints gain by their crosses, troubles, and distresses. Their graces are more raised, their experiences are more multiplied, and their comforts are more augmented, and their communion with God is more heightened, Rom. 5:3, 4; 2 Cor. 1:3–5; Hosea 2:14. The waves did but lift Noah's ark nearer to heaven, and the higher the waters grew the more the ark was lifted up to heaven. The troubles and distresses that the saints meet with do but raise them in their fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, Ps. 73:13, 14, 28. When Tiribazus, a noble Persian, was arrested, at first he drew out his sword to defend himself; but when they charged him in the king's name, and informed him that they came from the king to carry him to the king, he yielded willingly. So when afflictions arrest a noble Christian, he may murmur and struggle at the first; but when he considers it is sent from God, to bring him to the sight of God, the King of glory, he willingly and readily submits to the rod, and kisses the rod. All the stones that came thick about Stephen's ears did but knock him the

closer to Christ the corner-stone, Acts 7:55, 60. Tiburtius saw paradise when he walked upon burning coals. If there be any way to heaven on horseback, it is by the cross, said Bradford. Hosea 2:6, 'Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.' By afflictions, difficulties, and distresses God hedges up his people's way. Well, what then? Mark, ver. 7, 'I will go and return to my first husband;' that is, to God: I have run away from him by my sins, and now I will return to him again by repentance. The grand design of God in all the afflictions that befall his people, is to bring them nearer and closer to himself. The church could have no rest at home, nor no comfort abroad, till by affliction she was brought into the presence and company of her first husband: Hosea 6:1, 'Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.' The great design of God in playing the lion's part with his people, Hosea 5:14, is to bring them nearer and closer to himself. And, behold, how sweetly this blessed design of God did take: 'Come and let us return unto the Lord,' &c. The power of God, the presence of God, and the grace of God, is most gloriously manifested by bringing the hearts of his people nearer and closer to himself by all the troubles, distresses, and dangers that do attend them. In the winter season all the sap of the tree runs down to the root, and when a man is sick all the blood goes to the heart; so in the winter of affliction, when the soul is running out more and more to God, and a-getting closer and nearer to God, it is a most sure evidence of the signal presence of God with that soul. But,

(12.) Twelfthly and lastly, The Lord doth manifest his favourable, signal, and eminent presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, by rendering them invincible and unconquerable under all their troubles, distresses, and dangers: Rev. 12:11, 'And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death:' Rev. 14:1-4; 2 Chron. 32:7, 8, 21, 22. By virtue of Christ's blood the saints are made victorious both over Satan and all his instruments; they set little by their lives in

respect of Christ and his truth; yea, they despised them in comparison of God's glory and the great things of the gospel. They made so little account of them that they exposed them to all hazards and dangers, for the cause of Christ. In the days of that bloody persecutor, Diocletian, the Christians shewed as glorious power in the faith of martyrdom as in the faith of miracles. The valour of the patients, and the savageness of the persecutors, striving together, till both exceeding nature and belief, bred wonder and astonishment in beholders and readers. It was a good saying of Cyprian, speaking of the saints and martyrs in those days, *Occidi poterant sed vinci non poterant*: They may kill them, but they cannot overcome them. Rev. 17:14, 'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.' The presence of the Lamb has and will make the saints victorious in all the ages of the world. Modestus, lieutenant to Julian the emperor, said to Julian, While they suffer they deride us, saith he; and the torments are more fearful to them that stand by than to the tormented. There is no end in instances of this nature. There is nothing more clear in Scripture and in history than this, that the signal presence of the Lord with his people, in all their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, hath made them invincible and unconquerable. But now others, that have been destitute of this favourable, signal, and eminent presence of the Lord, in times of great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, how have they fled when none have pursued them! How faint-hearted, how greatly daunted, and how sadly discouraged have they been! How have they turned their backs, and quitted the field, and run from their colours, without striking one stroke! Many in Cyprian's time were overcome before the encounter, for they revolted to idolatry before any persecution once assailed them. In the Palatinate, when there was a warm persecution, scarce one professor of twenty stood out, but fell to popery as fast as leaves fall from the trees in autumn. And so in the persecution under Decius many professors that were rich and great in the world, they soon shrunk from Christ, and turned their backs upon his ways. It is God's favourable, signal, and

eminent presence with his people that makes them stand to it in an evil day: Rom. 8:31, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' that is, none; but this is a more forcible denying, 'Who can?' dost thou Paul ask, 'Who can?' I will tell thee. The devil can, and tyrants can, and informers can, and persecutors can, and the whole world can; but *ridendus est furor inanis*: They are as nothing, and can do nothing against us. Wicked men may set themselves against the saints, but they shall not prevail against the saints. What if all the world should strive to hinder the sun from rising or shining, or the wind from blowing, or the rain from falling; or, like those pigmies which went with their arrows and bows to repress the flowing of the sea. Ludibrious acts, and mere follies! All that wicked men can do against the people of God will be but as throwing stones against the wind. 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' Methinks these are words of great resolution; as if he should say, We have many enemies, and powerful enemies, and daring enemies, and malicious enemies, and designing enemies, and enraged enemies, yet let the proudest of them shew their faces, and lift up their banners, I fear them not, I regard them not: 'Who can?' who dare be against us? Let me give a little light into this precious scripture, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' That is, none.

[1.] First, None can be so against us as to hurt us or harm us; therefore Aquinas well expounds that *Quis contra nos? i.e., Quis efficaciter?* and others, *Quis læsivè et prevalenter?* Who can be against us, so as to hurt us? Dan. 3:25, 27, and 6:22. Acts 18:9, 'Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace;' ver. 10, 'For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee, to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city.' God had many souls in this city to convert and to bring in to Christ, and therefore he animates and encourages Paul to preach boldly, and to go on in his work undauntedly. Ay, but, Lord, there be many in the city, that will set themselves against me. Ay, but I am with thee. Ay, but, Lord, there be many in the city that will hate me. Ay, but there is no man that shall set on thee to hurt thee. They may kill me, said Socrates of his enemies, but they cannot hurt me. It was

the speech of Anaxarchus, a heathen, when as he by the tyrant was commanded to be put in a mortar, and be beaten to pieces with an iron pestle, he cries out to the persecutors, You do but beat the vessel of Anaxarchus; you do not beat me, nor hurt me; you do but beat the case, the husk, the vessel that contains another thing. His body was to him but as a case, a husk; he counted his soul himself, which his persecutors could not reach nor hurt. Though there were many in the city of Corinth that would be ready furiously to set on Paul, yet there should not be a man that should be able to hurt Paul. God would be his lifeguard to protect him, and he would make void all the mischievous designs and endeavours of his adversaries against him. When in a city the Lord hath those that are ordained to salvation, he will bless the labours of his faithful servants with happy success; so that faithful ministers may not, yea, must not, for fear of the invincible malice of some, neglect the salvation of others. All the arrows that men of might and malice should shoot at Paul in the city of Corinth, should never reach him, they should never hurt him, nor harm him: 1 Pet. 3:13, 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?' They may oppose you, but they cannot harm you; they may hate you, but they cannot harm you; they may plot and devise mischief against you, but they cannot harm you; they may persecute you, but they cannot harm you. I know Cæsar told Metellus that he could as easily take away his life as bid it be done; but these were only bravadoes, for that is a royalty which belongs to God only, 'to whom belong the issues of death,' Ps. 68:20, or the goings out from death; that is, deliverances from death and deadly dangers. It is an allusion to one that keepeth a passage or a door; that is, God hath all the ways which lead out from death in his own keeping. Christ hath the keys off death, the sole dominion and disposal of it, Rev. 1:18; 2 Pet. 2:9. The Lord knows how to deliver his people from the most desperate and deadly dangers; he can deliver them out of the mouth of the lion, he can pull them out of the jaws of death, and so secure them from all harm or hurt. None can be so against the people of God as to harm, their souls, as to hurt their happiness. But,

'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer,

[2.] Secondly, None can be so against us as to prevail over us. The gates of hell may fight against us, but the gates of hell cannot prevail against us. Christ is the captain of your salvation, God hath made him general of the field, and therefore you may be sure that he will stand by you and bring you off with honour, Mat. 16:18; Heb. 2:10; Jer. 1:19, and 20:11. You need never fear having the day, who have Christ your captain for your second. Though your persecutors are as so many roaring lions, yet Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah, will make you victorious over them all, Rev. 5:5. In all storms and tempests the church will stand fast, because it stands upon a rock, Ps. 129:2. God is on Zion's side, and the enemies of Zion must first prevail against Zion's God before they can prevail over Zion herself. Zion's God will be a wall of fire about her, and therefore Zion's enemies shall never prevail over her, Zech. 2:5; Deut. 33:26–29. Were Zion's shelter stones, these might be battered; were it walls of lead, these might be melted; were it a defence of waters, these might be dried up; were it garrisons of mighty men, these might be scattered; were it engines of war, these might be defeated; were it trenches, these might be stopped; were it bulwarks, these might be overthrown; but Zion is guarded with a wall of fire round about her, and therefore all her opposers can never prevail over her. The enemies of Zion are weak enemies, they are infatuated enemies, they are conquered enemies, they are limited enemies, they are chained enemies, they are cursed enemies, and they are naked enemies, and therefore they shall never be prevalent enemies over Zion, 2 Chron. 32:7, 8; Rom. 8:37; Gen. 3:12; Num. 14:9. Pharaoh followed the Israelites, but he and his mighty men were drowned, and Israel delivered, for God was with them, Exod. 14. Saul hunted David as a partridge in the mountains, 1 Sam. 26:20, but Saul perisheth, and David was crowned, for God was with him. Haman hated Mordecai and plotted against Mordecai, but Haman is hanged and Mordecai advanced, for God was with him, Esth. 6:7. The presidents and princes inform against Daniel and plot against Daniel, but they are by the lions torn and devoured, and Daniel is delivered and exalted,

for God was with him, Dan. 6. Herod kills James with the sword and imprisons Peter, but Herod is devoured by worms, and Peter is delivered out of prison by an angel, for God was with him, Acts 12. Let atheists, papists, and persecutors cease from plotting against Zion, from persecuting of Zion, for it is utterly impossible to prevail against Zion. Let all Zion's adversaries remember once for all that if any policy, counsel, lying, cursing, strength, or cruelty could have prevailed against Zion, Zion had been rooted out of the world long ago. If Balaam was at our enemies' elbows he would tell them roundly and plainly, that it is 'in vain to curse those whom God blesseth,' Num. 23:8. 'It is hard to kick against the pricks,' Acts 9:5. It is high madness for men to run their naked bodies against a sword's point. Let Zion's enemies remember that God, who takes pleasure in Zion, sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants are as grasshoppers; yea, all the nations as a drop of a bucket, and less than the dust of the balance, Isa. 40:12, 15, 17, and therefore he can easily revenge all the wrongs and injuries that is done to Zion by those that would fain prevail over her, and triumph in her ruin. But,

[3.] Thirdly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None can be so against us as to be able to separate us from the love of God and the love of Christ: Rom. 8:35, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distresses, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' Ver. 36, 'As it is written, For thy sake are we killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Ver. 37, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' Ver. 38, 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,'—ver. 39,—'nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.' It is not the pleasures of life nor the pains of death, it is not evils felt nor evils feared, it is not the height of prosperity nor the depth of adversity, it is not bonds nor banishment, it is. not power nor policy, honour nor baseness, it is not violent persecutions nor multiplied tribulations, it

is not the scorns of men, nor reproaches of men, nor revilings of men, nor designs of men, nor anything else, that can separate us from the love of the Father or the love of the Son. In the 35th ver. is a position that no crosses nor creatures can deprive us of the love of God, which is set down in a double interrogation, that he might add the more force and life to it and ravish the readers: 'Who shall separate us?' That is, none can. But he speaks with contempt; 'Who shall? shall tribulation?' as if he should say, I scorn it. As Goliath defied David, saying, 'Dost thou come to me with a staff?' so Paul with a better spirit defies all crosses, sufferings, trials, &c., as things not able to deprive sincere Christians of Christ's love; 'shall tribulation,' &c. He had before spoken of persons, now here he speaks of things, because Satan and his sworn slaves think by such things to separate between God and his people. Chrysostom observes Paul's wisdom in three things. (1.) That he saith not, Shall the love of riches, pleasures, honours, &c., which have a mighty force in them to bewitch us; but 'shall tribulation, distress,' &c. (2.) That he begins with the lighter, and so riseth to greater troubles, placing them in this order, not casually, but by singular art. (3.) That though these which he here rehearse consist of a certain number, yet every one as a general hath special troops under it: as when he saith tribulation, he saith imprisonments, bonds, slanders, banishments, &c. 'Shall tribulation, distress, persecution,' &c.? No. They are 'blessed which endure these things,' Mat. 5:10, 11. Shall famine? He which feeds on Christ shall never perish for hunger. Shall nakedness? Christ's righteousness is my clothing; I shall willingly follow him even naked; who when he was clothed with infinite glory as with a garment was content to be born naked and to be stripped on the cross for my sake. Shall peril? I know the hardest. Shall the sword? Christ is to me in life and death advantage. But,

[4.] Fourthly, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' I answer, None can be against us so, as to bring us to their bow, their beck, their will, their humour, their lusts: 1 Kings 19:18, 'Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him;' that is, I have

many thousands that have not worshipped Baal. Here a set number is put for an indefinite number; he means a very great number. Idolaters used not only to bow and kneel before their idols, but also to kiss them, according to that Hosea 13:2, 'Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.' Cicero saith that the chin of the image of Hercules was much worn with the kisses of them that adored him. Now God had several thousands of true Israelites indeed that had not in the least kind polluted themselves with the idolatry of Baal. The denial of bowing the knee and kissing with the mouth shews that God's faithful servants were so far from setting their hearts upon Baal, as that they would not make the least show of any affection or subjection to him. These good souls had too great spirits to be conformable to the idolatry of the times. Jeroboam with his eight hundred thousand chosen men, his popish priests, and his golden calves, could not bring Judah to his bow, 2 Chron. 13:3, 20. Nebuchadnezzar, nor his princely informers, nor his fiery furnace, could never bring the three children to his bow; the three champions would be Nonconformists, though court, city, and country were violent for conformity, Dan. 3. Neither Darius, his presidents, nor princes, could ever bring Daniel to their bow, Dan. 6; Daniel would keep off from idolatry, and keep close to his God, and close to his duty, let all his enemies do their worst. The rulers and elders of Israel charged the apostles, and threatened the apostles, and beat the apostles, and commanded the apostles, that they should, not speak in the name of Jesus; but they could never bring them to their bow, Acts 3, 4, 5. For 'they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, and daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ,' Acts 5:41, 42. Pharaoh by all his oppressions could never bring Israel to his bow; nor Saul by all his persecutions could never bring David to his bow; nor Haman by all his plots and designs could never bring Mordecai to his bow; and Paul will rather die upon the spot than be brought to his enemies' bow, Acts 20:21–24, and 21:13. The ten persecuting emperors could never bring the primitive Christians to their bow; nor the bloody, fierce, and fiery papists could never bring the martyrs to their bow,

as you may see throughout the books of martyrs. Among the many hundred instances that are there, I shall only refresh your memory with this one: There were endeavours to bring Hawkes to their bow, but all in vain. At last some of his Christian friends desired him, for their encouragement and confirmation, to give some token when he was in the flames; a strange time one would think to attend upon signs by friends, whether the pains were tolerable or no. He was bound to the stake, fire put to the wood, it burns, it flames, it consumes his flesh, his eyes start out of his head, his fingers are consumed with the fire; and when every one thought him dead, expecting the fall of his body: lo, suddenly he lifts up his stumps, and thrice as a famous conqueror he claps them over his head. In this he was more than conqueror.

In former times the sense of the love of God made the martyrs esteem tyrants as gnats and fleas, and torments as fleabittings. Tertullian, speaking of his times, saith, That to be accused was the wish of Christians, and punishment for Christ they counted felicity. A certain woman, running in all haste with her child in her arms, being asked the cause, Oh, saith she, I hear a great sort of Christians are appointed to be martyred, and I am afraid lest I and my little one come too late. When the Emperor Valens banished Basil, and the tribune threatened his death, I would, said Basil, I had anything of worth, I would bestow it on him that should cut Basil's windpipe. And when he had that night given him to deliberate, he answered, That he would be the same man to-morrow, and wished that the tribune should not be changed. Chrysostom, being in banishment by the means of Eudoxia the empress, wrote to a bishop called Cyriacus, and, upon occasion, tells of his resolution before he was banished: I thought with myself, saith he, that if she will banish me, the earth is the Lord's; if she will saw me asunder, I remembered the prophet Isaiah; if drown me, Jonas came to my mind; if stone me, I thought of Stephen; if behead me, of John Baptist; if take away my goods, 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb.' By all which you may clearly see, that let the wicked do their worst, they can never bring the saints to their bow. But,

[5.] Fifthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder the operation of all things for our good. When men and devils have done their worst, all the great troubles, I deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, that do attend the saints, shall work for their good: Rom. 8:28, 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose.' In this verse there are two things observable: First, A proposition, or a glorious privilege: 'All things work together for good.' This word, συνεργει εἰς, 'work together,' is a physical expression. Several poisonful ingredients put together, being tempered by the skilful apothecary, make a sovereign medicine, and work together for the good of the patient. They work together, not invicem, between themselves, but together with God; not of their own nature, for so they do not co-operate, but contra-operate, but being sanctified by God. And therefore one takes the verb passively, are 'wrought;' for, indeed, take away God, and afflictions work for our hurt; but all God's providences, being divinely tempered and sanctified, do work together for the best to the people of God. When the worst of men have done their worst against the saints, all things shall sweetly concur, yea, conspire for their good. Second, The proof, which is double. (1.) From the experience of all saints, 'We know;' it is not a matter pendulous or doubtful. The apostle doth not say, 'We think,' but 'We know.' Nor he doth not say, 'We hope,' but 'We know.' Nor he doth not say, 'We guess,' 'we conjecture,' but 'We know.' Nor he doth not say, 'We desire that all things may work together for good, but 'We know all things work together for good.' Nor he doth not say, 'We pray' that all things may work together for good, but 'We know all things work together for good.' The wicked know not this secret, as the Philistines understood not Samson's riddles, Judg. 14:12–14; but we know that all the world shall not hinder the cross from working for our good. (2.) From a description of them that love God, they are 'called according to God's purpose;' that is, God hath purposed the salvation of his people, he hath chosen them to salvation, and called them to it; and therefore it must needs be that all these afflictions that befall his people must work together for their internal and eternal good, otherwise he

should do that which should cross his own purpose, which wise men will not do; and oh, how much less will the most wise God act counter-cross to his own purpose! So Jer. 24:5, 'Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.' To be carried captive to Babylon was doubtless a very sore and matchless affliction: Dan. 9:12, 'And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil; for under the whole heaven hath not been done, as hath been done upon Jerusalem.' This may be the abridgment of Jeremiah's Lamentations: Lam. 1:12, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger;' chap. 4:16, 'For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.' Sodom sustained not any siege from foreign forces, they were not vexed and plagued with the armies of the Chaldeans; there was no hand of man in the destruction of Sodom, but a hand of heaven only. Sodom was not kept long in pains and misery as and my people have been, but was suddenly overwhelmed, and in an instant despatched; all which shews that their miseries and sufferings were incomparable and matchless; and that they were so indeed will evidently appear, if you please but seriously to consider either the antecedents of it or the consequents of it. The antecedents of it: what went before their captivity—viz., blood, and slaughter, and dreadful devastations. Or if you consider the consequents of it: as, (1.) The enslaving of their persons under a fierce and most cruel enemy; (2.) The loss of their estates; (3.) The leaving of their country and the land of their nativity; (4.) A deprivation of the ordinances and worship of God; (5.) The scorns and reproaches, the exultations and triumphs of their adversaries, that pleased and delighted themselves in their captivity and misery. These were the woeful consequences of that captivity, and yet all the power and malice of men in the world could not hinder these amazing and astonishing

trials from working together for the spiritual and everlasting good of his captive people. That God will do his people good by the most terrible dispensations that they are under, you may see more and more evident by comparing the scriptures in the margin together.² As the apothecary of poison makes treacle to drive out poison, so can God make the poison of afflictions, which in themselves are the curse of the law, to drive out the poison of sin. All the world can never hinder the affliction, troubles, and evils that befall the people of God, from working for their good; for God does and will by these means, (1.) Discover sin; (2.) Prevent sin; (3.) Imbitter sin; (4.) Mortify sin. And God will by afflictions, troubles, &c., (1.) Revive, quicken, and recover his children's decayed graces; (2.) Exercise his children's graces; (3.) Increase his children's graces; (4.) Make a further trial and discovery of his children's graces. Let the enemies of Sion storm and rage, plot and combine, &c., yet they shall never be able to hinder the greatest troubles, the deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, from working for the internal and eternal good of all the sincere lovers of God. I have read a story of one Pereus, who, running at another with a sword to kill him, by accident the sword only run into his imposthume and broke that; and so he was instrumental to save him whom he designed to have killed: and so all the afflictions and troubles that the righteous meet with, they do but serve to cure them of the imposthume of pride, or of the imposthume of earthly-mindedness, or of the imposthume of self-love, or of the imposthume of hypocrisy. Look upon the revolution of the heavens, how every planet moves in its proper orb. Their motions are not alike, but various, nay, opposite each unto the other. Hence those different conjunctions, oppositions, and aspects of the planets, yet by the wheeling round of the primum mobile, they are brought about to one determinate point. The people of God have many enemies in the world, whose course and scope, whose aims and ends and actions are not the same, yea diverse, nay adverse, one thwarting and crossing the other, yet the overruling providence so sways all subordinate and inferior instruments and enemies, that in the midst of their mutual jars they conspire in a sacred harmony, as if they were entered into a holy league, or some sacred combination for the good of his chosen.

Wherever our enemies be in respect of their places, whosoever they be in regard of their persons, and however they are disjoined in regard of their affections, yet all their projects and practices shall tend and end in the good of those that love God. But,

[6] Sixthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder our communion and fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit: 1 John 1:3, 'That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' Man's summum bonum stands in his communion with God, as Scripture and experience evidences. A man whose soul is conversant with God, shall find more pleasure in a desert, in a den, in a dungeon, in a fiery furnace, yea, and in the valley of the shadow of death, than in the palace of a prince. There is a sweet and intimate communion which believers have with God; hence they are said to 'walk with God,' Gen. 5:24, and 6:9; and to 'talk with God,' as Moses frequently did; and to 'dwell in God,' 1 John 4:15; and to 'sup with God,' Rev. 3:20; and to 'lodge with God,' Cant. 7:11. The nearness of this fellowship which we have with the Father, is represented by a gradation of allusions in Scripture, all which do excellently illustrate this truth. There is some kind of participation that a servant hath with his master; yet greater is that which one friend hath with another; but yet greater is that which a son hath with the father; but greatest of all is that which the bride hath with the bridegroom. Now in all these relations we stand to the Father; we are his servants and he is our Lord, Exod. 12:7; we are his friends, John 15:14, 15; James 2:23; and he is our friend, Cant. 5:1; an able friend, a sure friend, a faithful friend, a close friend, a constant friend. Plutarch's reasoning is good, τὰ τῶν φιλῶν πάντα κοινὰ, friends have all things in common. But God is our friend: ergo we cannot want; a most rare speech from a poor heathen! He is our Father, Isa. 63:16, and 64:8; and we are his children, Isa. 63:8. He is our bridegroom, and we are his bride, Isa. 61:10; Hosea 2:19, 20; Isa. 62:5. And therefore it is no pride nor presumption for believers to say, 'Our fellowship is with the Father.' Our fellowship with Jesus Christ is set forth by the

parable of the wedding-feast, and by the entertainment of the prodigal son, and by such relations or various similitudes, as carry communion in their bosoms, as of the head and the members, root and branches, foundation and building, husband and wife, Mat. 22:1–3; Luke 15. The head hath communion with the body by sense, influence, motion. The root with the branches, by leaf, sap, and juice. The foundation with the building, by support and strength. The husband with the wife, by love and consent. Thus it is betwixt Christ and the believers: 1 Cor. 1:9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye are called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.' All believers have fellowship with Christ, whether they be strong or weak, rich or poor, high or low, ripe and well grown, or new-born babes, and very tender, Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 2:2; John 17:20–23. The head hath conjunction with all the members, and an influence into all the members, even the little toes, as well as into the strongest arms; and the root, in the virtue of it, extends to the weakest branches, as well as to the strongest limbs of the tree. Communion is as large as union. All believers are united to Christ, and all believers have communion with Christ. Though one star exceeds another in magnitude, yet all are alike seated in the heavenly orb; and though one member be larger in the body than another, yet every one hath an equal conjunction with the head: and as believers have fellowship with the Father and the Son, so they have fellowship with the Spirit also. Every believer's communion extends to all the persons in the Trinity: 2 Cor. 13:14, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.' Now no men, no devils, no wrath, no rage, no malice, no enmity, no afflictions, no oppositions, no persecutions, no troubles, no trials, no bonds, no banishment, can interrupt or hinder a believer's communion with the three persons in Trinity. But,

[7.] Seventhly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder our private trade to heaven. All the world can never hinder a sincere Christian from driving a secret trade with heaven, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. A Christian can as well hear without ears, and live without

food, and fight without hands, and walk without feet, as he is able to live without secret prayer. Secret prayer is the life of our lives, the soul, the sweet, the heaven of all our enjoyments. Of all the duties of religion, secret prayer is the most soul-sweetening, soul-strengthening, soul-nourishing, soul-fattening, soul-refreshing, soul-satisfying, and soul-encouraging duty. In all the ages of the world, the saints have kept the trade. In spite of all opposers and persecutors, in prisons, in dungeons, in dens, in bonds, in banishments, on racks, and in the very flames, the saints have still kept up this secret trade; as you may see at large in my treatise on closet prayer, called 'The Privy Key of Heaven,' to which I refer you.² But,

[8.] Eighthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to deprive us of the sweet testimony of our renewed consciences: 2 Cor. 1:12, 'For our rejoicing,' or boasting, '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-ward.' They were in great and pressing troubles in Asia, ver. 8, and yet they boasted in the testimony of their consciences; they were under a sentence of death in themselves, ver. 9, and yet gloried in the testimony of their consciences. Joy of conscience is the greatest joy, as trouble of conscience is the greatest trouble; when conscience bears its testimony with us, and for us, how full of joy is the soul, even in the midst of the deepest sorrows and greatest sufferings! *Conscientia pura semper segura*, a good conscience hath sure confidence, and he that hath it, sits Noah-like—

— — — *mediis* tranquility in undis —

quiet in the greatest combustions; freed, if not from the common destruction, yet from the common distraction. A good conscience is an impregnable fort. It fears no colours; it will enable a man to stand against the fiercest batteries of men and devils. A good conscience will fill a man with courage and comfort in the midst of all his

troubles and distresses. Paul had enough to say for himself when standing before the council; he could say, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day,' Acts 23:1, 2. And though as soon as he had said so, Ananias commanded to smite him on the mouth, yet he bears up bravely, because his conscience did not smite him, but acquit him. That man can never want music, whose conscience speaks in consort, and is harmonious with himself. A good conscience is a paradise in a wilderness, it is riches in poverty, and health in sickness, and strength in weakness, and liberty in bonds, and life in death, Isa. 38:3. A good conscience will enable a man to triumph over innumerable evils, yea, over death itself. Death to such a person is not the king of terrors, but the king of desires, Phil. 1:23. A good conscience will be a Christian's best friend in the worst times; it will be a sword to defend him, a staff to support him, a pillar of fire to lead him, a Joseph to nourish him, a Dorcas to clothe him, a Canaan to refresh him, and a feast to, delight him: 'He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast,' Prov. 15:15. Now there is nothing that can make a man divinely merry below a good conscience. A good conscience, saith one, is thalamus Dei, palatium Christi, habitaculum Spiritus Sancti, paradisus deliciarum, The bed of God, the palace of Christ, the habitation of the Holy Ghost, the paradise of delights, and wherein every tree yieldeth a feast. *Tranquillitas conscientiae, et securitas innocentiae, quaecunque mundus bona judicat, excellunt,* The tranquillity of conscience, and the security of innocence, excel all the things which the world counteth good. He that hath a good conscience enjoys a continual serenity, and sits continually at that blessed feast, whereat the blessed angels are cooks and butlers, as Luther hath it, and the three persons in Trinity glad guests. All other feasts to this of a good conscience are stark hunger. The feast of a good conscience is a full feast, a noble feast, a lasting feast; not for a day, as that of Nabal's; nor for seven days, as that of Samson's; nor of nine score days, as that of Ahasuerus; but a durable, continual feast, without intermission of solace, or interruption of society. The best way in this world for a man to turn his whole life into a merry festival, is to get and keep a good conscience. The heathen philosopher could say, ò

ἀγαθὸς αἰεὶ ἑορτάζει, a good man keeps holiday all the year about. It was the testimony of a good conscience that made the apostles rejoice when they were beaten and abused by the council. It was the testimony of a good conscience that made Paul and Silas to sing in the prison, Acts 5:40–42, and 16:25, 26. It was the testimony of a good conscience that made Moses prefer Christ's cross before Egypt's crown, and Christ's reproaches before Egypt's treasures. It was the testimony of a good conscience that made those worthies in that 11th of the Hebrews more willing to die than to live, to die than to dine, Heb. 11:35. It was the testimony of a good conscience that made the martyrs to kiss the stake, to hug their executioners, to clap their hands in the flames, and to tread upon burning coals as upon beds of roses. Now it is not in the power or policy of men or devils to deprive a Christian of the testimony of his conscience; and as long as that bird in the bosom sings, no troubles, no trials, no oppositions, no persecutions, no dangers, no death can make a Christian miserable. The testimony of a good conscience will make a man triumph over the worst of men, and the worst of sufferings. But,

[9.] Ninthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder the help, assistance, and succour of God at a dead lift. Heb. 13:5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness,'—or 'without the love of silver,' as the Greek word signifies—'and be content with such things as you have.' *Contenti præsentibus*, so Beza, 'Be content with present things.' The Hebrews had been plundered of all they had; though they had nothing they must be content, Heb. 10:34. If men cannot bring their means to their minds, let them bring their minds to their means; a little will serve our turn till we get to heaven, till we come to our Father's house: 'For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' There are five negatives in the Greek; I read not the like throughout the New Testament. In that this promise is set down negatively, 'I will never leave thee,' this makes the promise to be of a larger extent; for it includes all times, all places, all estates, all dangers, all in needs, all distresses whatsoever; as if he had more largely said, thou shalt never stand in need of any of my help and protection, but thou

shalt be sure to find it. Affirmative promises are not of that extent as negative promises are; for if a man should promise to assist, help, succour, or counsel me, if he do it now and then, or upon some special occasions, he has kept his promise; but negatively for a man to say, I will not fail thee, I will never leave thee, though he should help, assist, succour, or stand by me, a hundred, yea, a thousand times, and yet fail me but once, that negative promise is not punctually kept, it is not perfectly kept. It is further considerable that there is a great emphasis in doubling and trebling a negative particle in Greek. Doubling and trebling negatives in Greek makes them much the stronger. The doubling of the negative particle doth in this place carry the greater emphasis, because, in setting down the same thing, it is not only twice doubled, but in the latter place it is trebled; so as there are in all five negatives, as I have already hinted. These two phrases, 'Never leave nor forsake,' are so general as they include all the wants, all dangers, all distresses, all necessities, all calamities, all miseries, that can befall us in this world.² These two phrases, God's not leaving, God's not forsaking, imply all needful succours. It is more than if he had said, I will supply all thy wants, I will heal all thy diseases, I will secure thee against all sorts of dangers, I will ease thee of all thy pains, I will free thee of all thy oppressors, I will break all thy bonds, I will bring thee out of prison, I will vanquish all thine enemies, I will knock off all thy chains, and I will make thee triumph over all thy sufferings; for these generals comprise all manner of particulars under them: Heb. 13:6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' In this verse there is an inference made upon the former promise of God's not leaving nor forsaking his; the conjunction, 'so that,' implieth an inference, and such an inference in this place as teacheth us to make a good use of the forenamed promise. The use here set down is double: the first is confidence in God, 'The Lord is my helper;' secondly, courage against man, 'I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' Assurance of God's presence to help at a dead lift should raise us up above all base and slavish fears of the power of men, of the spoilings of men, of the designs of men, &c. God being with us, and for us, and on our side, we may boldly, safely, and

confidently, rest upon it, that he will freely, readily, graciously, afford all needful help, assistance, and succour, when we are in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. The Greek word βοηθος, 'helper,' according to the notation of it, signifies one that is ready to run at the cry of another. This notation implies a willing readiness, and a ready willingness in God, to help and succour his people when they are at a dead lift. You know the tender father, the indulgent mother, the careful nurse, they presently run when any of them hears the child cry, or sees the child in any danger or distress; so when God sees his poor children in any danger or distress, when he hears them complain and cry out of their sufferings, their bonds, their burdens, their oppressions, their dangers, &c., he presently runs to their relief and succour, Exod. 2:23–25, and 3:7–10. Ps. 33:20, 'Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield:' Ps. 49:17, 'Thou art my deliverer: God is the Lord of hosts, with him alone is strength and power to deliver Israel out of all his troubles.' He may do it, he can do it, he will do it, he is wise in heart and mighty in strength; besides him there is no Saviour, no deliverer; he is a shield to the righteous, strength to the weak, a refuge to the oppressed; he is Instar omnium, all in all. Who is like him in all the world to help his people at a dead lift? when friends cannot help, when power cannot help, when policy cannot help, when riches cannot help, when princes cannot help, when parliaments cannot help, yet then God can and will help his people when all human help fails. 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power,' or hand, 'is gone, and there is none shut up, or left,' Deut. 32:36. When God's people are at the very brink of ruin, then God will come in seasonably to their help; their extremity shall be his opportunity, to succour his people, and to judge their enemies. No men, no devils, no power, no policy, can hinder God from helping, aiding, assisting, and succouring of his people when they are at a dead lift. But,

[10.] Tenthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder the springs of joy and comfort from rising and flowing in their souls: Ps. 71:20, 'Thou which hast shewed me great

and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth;' ver. 21, 'Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.' The psalmist was in those desperate dangers, that he seemed to be as a man that was dead and buried, and yet he had faith enough to believe that God would surround him with cordials, and supply him with comforts from all sides. There is no true comfort to be drawn out of the standing pools of outward sufficiencies, but out of the living fountains of the all-sufficiencies of the Lord Almighty. 'Thou shalt comfort me on every side.' Ps. 94:19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me,' or of my careful, troubled, perplexed thoughts, as the word properly signifies, 'thy comforts delight my soul.' As the psalmist always found God a present help, so he always found him a present comfort in the day of troubles. God never did, nor never will want a cordial to revive and keep up the spirits of his people from fainting and sinking in an evil day. When the psalmist was under many griefs, cares, fears, and perplexities of spirit, God came in with those comforts that did delight his soul, and cheer up his spirits, Ps. 119:49, 50. The word of the Lord is never more a word of comfort, nor the Spirit of the Lord is never more a Spirit of comfort, than when the saints are in their deepest distresses and sorest perplexities: John 14:16, 'And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;' ver. 26, 'But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.' Hudson, the martyr, being at the stake, he went from under his chain, and having prayed earnestly, he was so comforted and refreshed by the Holy Spirit that he suffered valiantly and cheerfully. The Holy Ghost is called again and again the comforter, because his office is to work consolation in the hearts of God's people in all their troubles and distresses. Spiritual comfort is therefore called 'joy in the Holy Ghost,' because the Holy Ghost doth create it in the soul, Rom. 14:17. When a man suffers for righteousness' sake, God comes with his cordials in the very nick of time, 1 Pet. 4:13. When a man's suffering is upon the account of Christ, God seldom fails to send the comforter for the refreshing and relieving of his spirit. When a man is under bodily confinement for the cause of Christ, God will never fail to be a

spring of life, a well of salvation, and breast of consolation to him, Isa. 12:3, and 66:11. When a Christian is brought to 'a piece of bread,' then is the season for God to feed him with heavenly manna. I have told you of Mr Glover, who found no comfort in the time of his imprisonment, but when he was going to the stake, he cried out to his friend, 'He is come, he is come,' meaning the comforter. Hab. 3:17, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls;' ver. 18, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' In these words you have these two parts: (1.) A sad supposition, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom,' &c.; (2.) A noble and comfortable resolution, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Let me first hint a little at the sad supposition, 'Although the fig-tree should not blossom,' &c.

[1.] First, Though there should be a famine in that land, that of all lands was the most plentiful and fruitful land, yet Habakkuk would 'rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.' The land of Canaan, of all lands, was the fruitfullest. It was as the garden of God. It was a land that 'flowed with milk and honey,' a land of vineyards, the best of all lands, as Moses describes it; a land that brought forth to Isaac no less than a hundredfold. It was so rich a land that it was the granary of other neighbouring cities and countries. It had not only plenty for itself, but bounty for others. Yet now, when God shall turn a paradise into a wilderness, Habakkuk will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation, Deut. 8:7–9, and 32:13, 14; Gen. 26:12; 1 Kings 5:11; Acts 12:20. But,

[2.] Secondly, When the anger and wrath of God shall cause a dearth in those fruits that naturally are most yielding and pleasant, yet then Habakkuk would rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation. The fig-tree, of all trees, is most fruitful, bringing forth of its own accord, with the least care and culture, fructifying in the most barren and stony places, bearing twice a year, soonest ripening, and rarely failing. So the vine, that is a fruitful plant, is made the emblem

of plenty and fruitfulness. Now when there shall be a dearth upon these pleasant fruits, yet then Habakkuk will 'rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.' But,

[3.] Thirdly, Another print of divine displeasure in the scarcity threatened is, that it is a national famine, a general famine, an overspreading famine. Usually, if one part of the land suffers scarcity, other parts abound with plenty; but when God calls for a famine, he turns a whole land into a desert, into a barren wilderness. 'Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth,' Ps. 107:33, 34; Nah. 1:4. These were the richest soil of all the country, yet these were parched up and fruitless by his displeasure, and yet for all this Habakkuk will 'rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.' But,

[4.] Fourthly, Another print of divine displeasure is this, that the Lord makes it a universal scarcity upon all kind of foods and supports of life. Here is the 'staff of bread' broken, and 'the herds and flocks fail,' and the refreshing of the wine-press, 'the seed and the vine, and the fig-tree and the olive-tree,' all become fruitless. Such a desolation is more than ordinary. Usually, when one commodity fails, another abounds. If corn be dear, cattle will be cheap. That weather oftentimes that hinders one kind of grain, helps another; but here God blasts all the helps of nature. Therefore God compares his judgments to a fire that burns all before it: Joel 2:3, 'The land is as the garden of Eden before it; and behind it a desolate wilderness,' and this the Lord points at as a wonder: Joel 1:2, 'Hear this, ye old men'—who can talk of dear years—'hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? that which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the caterpillers eaten.' When God begins in a way of judgment, he makes an end, he makes the decays of nature excessive and violent; and yet Habakkuk will 'rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.' In his resolution you have the first particle, 'although,' ver. 17. Now this particle is an act of forecast; these miseries may befall us; and in the 18th verse you have the particle 'yet,' and that is an act of preparation against these miseries. That

particle 'although' forecasts the misery, and that particle 'yet' forelays the remedy. He foresees sorrows in the first, and he provides against them in the second, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.'

So Paul comes with a benedictus in his mouth—and surely it was in his heart before it was in his mouth: 2 Cor. 1:3, 'Blessed be God, even the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort:' ver. 4, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God:' ver. 5, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ.' The apostle begins here with thanksgiving, according to his accustomed manner in all his epistles; but contrary to his custom doth he apply this thanksgiving wholly to himself. The reason was, saith Beza, because the Corinthians did begin to despise him for his afflictions—it being the common course of the world to despise the people of God when they are under sufferings; therefore he answered confidently for himself, that though he had been much afflicted, yet he had been much comforted; and rejoiced the more in his comforts, because God had comforted him for that very cause, that he might be able and willing to comfort others. God is the God of all sorts and degrees of comfort, who hath all comforts at his disposal. This phrase, 'The God of all comforts,' intimates to us; (1.) That no comfort can be found anywhere else; he hath the sole gift of comfort. (2.) Not only some, but all comfort; no imaginable comfort is wanting in him, nor to be found out of him. Look, as the airlights not without the sun, and as fuel heats not without fire, so neither can anything soundly comfort us without God. (3.) All degrees of comfort are to be found in him, in our greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. The lower the ebb, the higher the tide; the deeper the distress, the greater the comforts. Though the apostle was greatly afflicted, yet his comforts did exceed his afflictions: 2 Cor. 7:6, 'Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.' When the Corinthians were in a very low condition, when they were even spent with grief and

swallowed up in sorrows, when they were destitute of all relief and comfort, then the God of all comforts did comfort them. No tribulations, no persecutions, no grievances, no prison doors, no bolts, no bars, can keep out the consolations of God from flowing in upon his people. God loves to comfort his people when all their outward comforts fail them. God's comforts are not only sweet, but seasonable; he never comes too soon, nor never stays too long. If one drop of the joy of the Holy Ghost should fall into hell, it would swallow up all the torments of hell, saith Austin. 'The joy of the Holy Ghost' will certainly swallow up all the troubles and sufferings that we meet with in a way of righteousness. None have been more divinely cheerful and merry than the saints have been under their greatest sufferings, 1 Pet. 4:12–14. John Noyes took up a faggot at the fire and kissed it, saying, 'Blessed be the time that ever I was born to come to this preferment.' When they fastened Alice Driver to the stake to be burnt, 'Never did neckerchief,' said she, with a cheerful countenance, 'become me so well as this chain.' Mr Bradford put off his cap and thanked God when the keeper's wife brought him word that he was to be burnt on the morrow. Mr Taylor fetched a frisk when he was come near the place where he was to suffer. Henry and John, two Augustine monks, being the first that were burnt in Germany, and Mr Rogers, the first that was burnt in Queen Mary's days, did all sing in the flames. Thus you see that it is not the greatest troubles, nor the deepest distresses, nor the most deadly dangers, that can hinder the joy of the Lord from overflowing the soul. But,

[11.] Eleventhly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to deprive us of our graces, which next to Christ are our choicest jewels. 1 John 3:9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.' That is, doth not give himself over to a voluntary serving of sin; he does not make a trade of sin; he sins not totally, finally, maliciously, habitually, studiously, resolutely, wilfully, delightfully, deadly, ἀμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, 'He does not make it his work to sin,' he cannot follow his lusts, as a workman follows his trade, 'for his seed remaineth in him.' 'The seed of God,' the seed of grace, is an abiding seed. Grace in itself is certain and unchangeable, though the feeling

thereof be uncertain. Grace hath an abiding excellency in it; grace hath eternity stamped upon it. It is durable riches. Other riches 'make themselves wings, and fly from us,' Prov. 8:18, and 27:24; but grace will keep us company till we get to heaven. Our last step in holiness will be into happiness. Grace is a blossom of eternity. It is an anointing that abides, 1 John 2:27; John 4:14, and 7:38. That is, the principle of grace infused into you, which was typified by the unctions or anointings in the ceremonial law, which was signified by the precious ointment poured upon the head of Aaron, that ran down to the skirts of his garments—this principle will prove durable and lasting. Grace is 'a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.' Grace is a river of living water. Now this river can never be dried up, because the Spirit of God is the constant spring that feeds it and maintains it. Grace is not a stream or a pond that may run dry, but a well, yea, a springing well of inexhaustible fulness, sweetness, virtue, and refreshment. Grace will still be springing up and flowing out in all the carriages and deportments of a Christian. Grace will be flowing out in all a Christian's duties and services, in his outward calling and employments, in his trials and sufferings. Grace will break out at a Christian's eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet. Where grace is a well of water, a river of living water, there that Christian will see for Christ, and hear for Christ, and talk for Christ, and do for Christ, and walk with Christ. Grace is a well, a river, that will be springing up to everlasting life. Grace and glory differ, non specie sed gradu, in degree, not in kind. Grace differs very little from glory. The one is the seed, the other the flower. Grace is glory militant, and glory is grace triumphant. Grace is a beginning of glory. It may be compared to the golden chain in Homer, whose top was fastened to the chair of Jupiter. Grace and glory are individual, and inseparable. The psalmist joins them together, 'The Lord will give grace and glory,' Ps. 84:11. Grace is a living spring that never faileth, a seed that never dieth, a jewel which never consumeth, a sun that never setteth. All other gifts of whatsoever kind, worth, or excellency, are but like a cloud soon dispelled, a vessel of clay soon broken, a sandy foundation soon sunk. Grace is more excellent than gold. Gold draws the heart from God, grace draws the heart to God; gold doth but

enrich the mortal part, the ignoble part, but grace enriches the angelical part, the noble part; gold perishes, but grace perseveres, 1 Peter 1:7. If grace were not permanent, it could not be excellent; if grace were not durable, it could not be pleasurable; if grace were not lasting, yea everlasting, it could not be a Christian's comfort in life, his support in death, and his glorious crown in the great day of account. Grace in itself is permanent, incorruptible; it fadeth not away; it is a birth that shall never die; it is a plant of renown that shall never wither, but grow up more and more till grace be turned into glory: upon which account one of the ancients [Jerome] had rather have St Paul's coat with his heavenly graces, than the purple of kings with their kingdoms. No troubles, no distresses, no dangers can deprive us of our graces, can rob us of our spiritual treasure. But,

[12.] Twelfthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to deprive us of our inward peace, rest, and quiet. Though, it thunder, and lighten, and rain, and blow abroad, yet a man may be at peace and rest and quiet at home. A man may have much trouble in the world, and yet rest and quiet in his own spirit: John 14:27, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you,' [as bonum hœreditarium;] 'let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,' No men nor devils, no troubles nor distresses, can deprive a Christian of that inward and blessed peace that Christ hath purchased and paid so dear for. Peace with God, and peace of conscience, are rare jewels, that none can strip us of. The world may wish you peace, but it is only Christ can give you peace, Rom. 5:1, and 2 Cor. 1:12. The world's peace is commonly a dear-bought peace; but Christ's peace is a cheap peace, a free peace. 'My peace I give unto you.' The world's peace is commonly a sinful peace, but Christ's peace is a holy peace; the world's peace is a cursed peace, but Christ's peace is a blessed peace; the world's peace is but an earthly peace, but Christ's peace is a heavenly peace, Rom. 14:17; Heb. 12:14, and Ps. 29:11. Some Christians thought that others could not come to heaven if they did not eat such meats as they; but Paul tells them that the kingdom of God consists not in meat or drink, but 'in righteousness, and peace,

and joy of the Holy Ghost.' The world's peace is but an imaginary peace, but Christ's peace is a real peace. The world's peace is but a superficial peace, but Christ's peace is a solid and substantial peace. The world's peace is but a transient peace, but Christ's peace is a permanent peace. The world's peace is but a temporary peace, but Christ's peace is an eternal peace. It is a peace that all the world can't give to a Christian, and it is a peace that all the world can't take from a Christian, 1 Thes. 5:3; 1 Pet. 3:11; James 3:18; Isa. 9:6, 7; Ps. 37; Isa. 26:3, and 27:5. When the tyrant threatened one of the ancients that he would 'take away his house,' he answered, 'Yet thou canst not take away my peace.' 'I will break up thy school;' 'yet shall I keep whole my peace.' 'I will confiscate all thy goods;' 'yet there is no premunire against my peace.' 'I will banish thee thy country:' 'yet I shall carry my peace with me.' All above a believer is at peace; the controversy betwixt God and him is ended. Christ takes up the quarrel betwixt God and a believer. 'We have peace with God,' Rom. 5:1. All within a believer is at peace. A peaceable God makes all at peace. When our peace is made in the court of heaven, which is upon the first act of believing, then follows peace in the court of conscience, 'peace which passeth all understanding,' Phil. 4:7. And all below a believer is at peace with him. He has peace with all the creatures. When we are friends with God, then all the creatures are our friends. 'The stones of the field shall be at league with thee, the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee,' &c., Job 5:23. The peace that Christ gives is the inheritance of saints only. It was all the legacy which the prince of peace left to his subjects, and this legacy none can take from them. Persecutors may take away my goods, but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my estate, but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my liberty, but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my good name, but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my relations, but they cannot take away my peace; they may take away my life, but they cannot take away my peace. I grant that the best have no perfection of peace, because they have no perfection of grace. If there were a perfection of grace, then there might be a perfection of peace; but the perfection of both is reserved for another

world; and it must be granted that though sometimes a believer may want the sense of peace, the sweet of peace, yet the grounds of his peace are still fixed, certain, and constant; they are 'like mount Zion, that cannot be removed.' Now the grounds of a Christian's peace are these—viz., interest in Christ, reconciliation with God, justification, remission of sin, adoption, the covenant of grace and peace, &c. Now these are always sure and everlasting, though the sense of peace may ebb and flow, rise and fall, in a believer's breast, especially when he is a-combating with strong corruptions, or high temptations, or under sad desertions, or when unbelief has got the throne, or when their hearts are quarrelsome—for commonly a quarrelsome heart is a troublesome heart, or when they have blotted their evidences for heaven, or when they are fallen from their first love, or when they have contracted eminent guilt upon their souls, or when they are declined in their communion with God, &c. Now in these cases, though a believer may lose the sense of peace, yet the grounds of his peace remain firm and sure; and though he may lose the sense of his peace, yet in all these sad and dark conditions his soul is day and night in the pursuit of peace, and he will never leave the chase till he has recovered his peace, knowing that God will first or last speak peace to his soul; yea, though he has lost the sense of peace, yet he has that abiding seed of grace in his soul that will in time recover his peace, Ps. 85:8. Do your enemies threaten to take away this or that from you, you may throw up your caps at them, and bid them do their worst, for they can never take that peace from you that Christ has given as a legacy to you, 1 John 3:9. When there are never so great storms within or without, yet then a believer may find peace in the prince of peace, Isa. 9:6. When his imperfections are many, a perfect Saviour can keep him in perfect peace in the midst of them all, Isa. 26:3, 4. Though his sacrifices are imperfect, yet Christ a perfect priest can speak peace to his soul, Heb. 7. Peace is that never-fading garland which Christ will so set and settle upon the heads of the upright, that none shall be able to take it off. A Christian can never lose his inward peace, either totally or finally. It is true by sin, Satan, and the world, a Christian's peace may be somewhat interrupted, but it can never be finally lost. The greatest storms in

this world that beat upon a believer will in time blow over, and the Sun of righteousness, the prince of peace, will shine as gloriously upon him as ever. Under this word שלום, Shalom, the Jews comprehend all peace, prosperity, and happy success. When the worst of men have done their worst against the people of God, yet the issue shall be peace, prosperity, and happy success. 'My peace I give unto you;' that is, that 'peace with God and peace with conscience that I have purchased with my blood, I give unto you.' And what power or policy is there that can deprive us of this legacy? surely none. The peace that Christ gives is bottomed upon his blood, upon his righteousness, upon his satisfaction, upon his intercession, and upon a covenant of peace, and therefore it must needs be a lasting peace, an abiding peace. But,

[13.] Thirteenthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder us from being hid, secured, guarded, and protected by God in an evil day, or in a day of greatest trouble, distress, or danger: Jer. 39:11, 'Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying,' ver. 12, 'Take him, and look well to him,'—Heb., 'set thine eyes upon him,'—'and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.' Here you shall see the admirable power, wisdom, and goodness of God inclining the heart of this great monarch and conqueror to provide for the prophet's safety and security. He that was a dreadful scourge to punish the wicked, is made by God the deliverer and preserver of the prophet. In the 12th verse you have the king's royal commission to the captain of his guard to be as kind to him, as tender of him, and to carry it as courteously to him even as the prophet himself should desire: 'Look well to him, do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.' Let him have all the content, all the satisfaction, and all the accommodation that himself shall require. Jer. 15:11, 'The Lord said, Verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction,'—Heb., 'If I do not cause,' &c. A defective speech in the nature of an oath, as if God had said, 'Let me not be deemed a God of my word, let me not be accounted true, let

none reckon me faithful in my promise, if I don't turn his sufferings into his advantage, and save him from danger in the midst of danger.' If in the time of the enemies' invasion I be not 'a wall of fire about him,' Zech. 2:5, if in the time of public calamity I don't secure him, never trust me for a God more. If he don't find more favour at the hand of his enemies than he hath formerly found among his own people, never own me for a God more. Ver. 20, 'I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord;' ver. 21. 'And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible,' Jer. 40:1–5, 26:23, 24, and 45:4. God engages himself to protect him against all the might and malice of his most terrible enemies; and though he should fall into their hands, yet he would deliver him out of their hands. Ps. 33:3, 'They have consulted against thy hidden ones.' The saints are (1.) hid in God's decree, (2.) hid in Christ's wounds, (3.) hid in the chambers of divine providence, (4.) hid in common dangers, as Noah was hid in his ark, and as Lot was hid in Zoar, and as Daniel was hid in the lions' den, and as the three children were hid in the fiery furnace, and as Jonah was hid in the whale's belly, Isa. 26:20; (5.) hid 'with Christ in God,' Col. 3:3. In times of greatest trouble the saints are hid under the hollow of God's hand, under the shadow of God's wing, Ps. 91:1, 4. Ps. 27:5, 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.' The Hebrew Succoh is written with a little samech, to shew, say some, that a little pavilion or cottage where God is shall be sufficient to safeguard the saints in the day of adversity. 'He shall hide me in his hut, as a shepherd doth his sheep in a stormy day.' 'In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.' I shall be as safe as if I were shut up in his holy ark, tabernacle, or temple,—whither they use to flee for shelter to the horns of the altar, yea, as if a man were hid in the most holy place, where none might enter but only the high-priest once a year, which is therefore called 'God's secret place.' A shepherd should not be more careful to shelter his sheep in a tent or tabernacle from the heat of the sun, nor a king should not be more ready to protect a favourite in his pavilion, whence none durst venture to take him, than God would be careful and ready to shroud and shelter his people from the rage, madness, and malice of their enemies, Ezek.

7:22. How did God hide his church in Egypt? the bush was still burning, and yet was not consumed, Exod. 3:2, 3; and how did he hide seven thousand in Elijah's time, that had not bowed their knees to Baal? 1 Kings 19:18. Though 'the woman,' the church, 'be driven to flee into the wilderness, yet there she is hid, and there she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days,' Rev. 12:6. Let our enemies do their worst, they shall not hinder us of divine protection. No power nor policy can hinder our being preserved and secured by God in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers that can attend us. But,

[14.] Fourteenthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to deprive us of our union with Christ, as to dissolve that blessed union that is between Christ and our souls, John 15:1–5. When men and devils have done their worst, our marriage-union with Christ holds good. This union is indissoluble. This union between Christ and believers is not capable of any separation. They are so one, that all the violence of the world, nor all the power of darkness, can never be able to make them two again. Hence the apostle's triumphant challenge, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Rom. 8:35. If the question did not imply a strong negation, the apostle himself doth give us a negation in words at length, 'Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us,' &c., ver. 38, 39. Here you have a long catalogue, consisting of a large induction of various particulars; but none of all these can dissolve the union between Christ and believers. None can untie that knot that is tied by the Spirit on Christ's part, and by faith on ours. Christ and believers are so firmly joined together, that all the powers on earth, and all the united strength of hell, shall never be able to put them asunder, or to separate them one from another. Look, as no distance of place can hinder this union, so no force or violence from devils or men shall ever be able to dissolve this union; and herein lies the peculiar transcendent blessedness of this union above all other unions. They

all may cease, be broken, and come to nothing; every one of them is soluble: the head may be separated from the members, and the members from the head; the husband must be separated from the wife, and the wife from the husband; the parents must be separated, from the children, and the children from the parents, and bosom friends must be separated one from another. The foundation and the house may be separated, and the branches may be cut off from the vine—yea, the soul and body may be disunited by death, but the mystical union stands fast for ever. Christ and a gracious soul can never be separated; God hath joined them together, and no mortal shall ever be able to put them asunder, Mat. 19:6. There is not only a continuation of it all our life, but also in death itself. Our very bodies sleeping in the dust are even then in union with Christ. There are two abiding things in the saints, their unction and their union. Their unction abides, 'But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you,' 1 John 2:27; and their union abides, for it follows, 'and ye shall abide in him.' Christ earnestly prays that we might be one, as he and his Father are one, John 17:20–23; not essentially, nor personally, but spiritually, so as no other creature is united to Christ. There can be no divorce between Christ and the believing soul. Christ hates putting away, Mal. 2:16. Sin may for a time seemingly separate between Christ and the believer, but it can never finally separate between Christ and the believer. Look, as it is impossible for the leaven that is in the dough to be separated from the dough after it is once mixed, for it turneth the nature of the dough into itself; so it is impossible for the saints ever to be separated from Christ: for Christ is in the saints as nearly and as really as the leaven is in the dough. Christ and believers are so incorporated as if Christ and they were one lump, Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27; 1 John 3:21; John 17:23. Our nature is now joined to God by the indissoluble tie of the hypostatical union in the second person; and we in our persons are joined to God by the mystical indissoluble bond of the Spirit, the third person. Our union with the Lord Jesus is so near, so close, and so glorious, that it makes us one spirit with him. In this blessed union the saints are not only joined to the graces and benefits which flow from Christ, but to the person of Christ, to

Christ himself, 1 Cor. 6:17. All the powers on earth, and all the powers in hell, can never separate Christ from the believer, nor the believer from Christ. When all other unions are dissolved, this union holds good, John 1:16; Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 3:21–23.

I readily grant that the sense and apprehension of this union may in this life be much interrupted, and many times greatly darkened, but the substance of the union still remains. And I readily grant that a believer may be much assaulted and tempted to doubt of his union with Christ, and to question his union with Christ, and yet nevertheless a believer's union with Christ continues and abides for ever. And I readily grant that the influences of it for some time may be suspended, but yet the union itself is not—nay, cannot be dissolved. As it was in the hypostatical union; for a time there was a suspending of the comforting influences of the divine nature in the human, insomuch that our Saviour cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. 27:46; yet for all this the union between the two natures was not in the least abolished. So here in the mystical union the sensible effects, comforts, and benefits of our union with Christ may sometimes be kept in and not appear, but yet the union itself abides, and shall abide firm and inviolable for ever; it is an inseparable and insuperable union. Look, as no power on earth is sufficient to overpower the Spirit of Christ, which on Christ's part makes the union, so no power on earth shall be able to conquer faith, which on our part also makes the union, John 10:27–31; 1 John 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:5; Luke 22:31, 32. Satan and the world may make attempts upon this union, but they will never be able to break this union, to dissolve this union; yea, though death be the bane of all natural unions, yet death can never be the bane of this mystical union. Though death puts a period to all other unions, yet death can never put a period to this union. When the believer is in his grave his union with Christ holds good. But,

[15.] Fifteenthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to deprive us of our crowns. There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell that can deprive a Christian,

First, Of his crown of righteousness: 2 Tim. 4:8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' It is a metaphor, say several, [Estius, Scultetus, &c.,] from the custom in war, who used to crown the conquerors with honour, &c. It is a similitude taken from fighters or combatants, who for a prize received a crown when they had contended lawfully. The reward of eternal life here is called 'a crown of righteousness,' (1.) Because it is purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ. By his perfect and complete righteousness and obedience, dear Jesus hath merited this for us, and so in Christ it is due to us by way of merit, though in respect of us it is of mere grace, of rich grace, of sovereign grace, of infinite grace, of glorious grace. (2.) Because he is righteous that hath promised this crown. Though every promise that God makes is of free and rich grace, yet when once they are made, the truth and justice of God obligeth him to keep touch with his people; for as he cannot deny himself, so he cannot do anything unworthy of himself, Rev. 2:10, and 3:21; 1 John 2:25; 2 Thes. 1:5-7, 10. Men say and unsay, they promise one thing and mean another. Men many times eat their words as soon as they have spoken them; but thus God can never, thus God will never, do. God can never repent of his promises; he can never waver, he can never go back from his word: 'God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Num. 23:19. All the promises that refer to this life and a better are sure, firm, faithful, unchangeable, immutable. All the promises are the word of a God, and given upon the honour of a God, that they shall be made good. O my friends, the all-sufficiency of God, the omniscience of God, the omnipotency of God, the loving-kindness and faithfulness of God, yea, and the oath of God, may fully, yea, abundantly, satisfy us, and secure us, that God will certainly make good all his precious promises to us. We commonly say, when an honest man passeth his word for a little money, Oh, it is as sure as if it were in our purse; but God's word of promise is abundantly more sure, for as his nature is eternal, so his word of promise is

unchangeable. The promises are a firm foundation to build our hopes and happiness upon; they are an anchor both sure and steadfast, Hab. 2:3; Jer. 32:41; Ps. 89:34. Memorable is that saying of David, Ps. 138:2, 'For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' which words are to be understood, as David Kimchi saith, hysteron proteron, that thou hast by thy word, that is, by performing thy word and promises, magnified thy name above all things. (3.) Because it is a just and righteous thing with God to crown them with glory at last, who have been crowned with shame, reproach, and dishonour for his name and interest in this world; so that eternal life is a crown of righteousness, ex parte Dei, God hath promised it to such as overcome; and, ex parte rei, it is just with God to give unto his suffering servants rest and peace. (4.) Because it is given only to righteous men. All that wear this crown come to it in a way of righteousness. A righteous crown cannot be had but in the use of righteous means. The Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman princes commonly gained their crowns by fraud, flattery, policy, blood, &c.; so that their crowns were bloody crowns, and not righteous crowns. (5.) And lastly, the apostle calls it 'a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give him,' the more fitly to follow the metaphor taken from runners and wrestlers for prizes at their solemn exercises or games in Greece, in which there were certain judges appointed to observe those that proved masters, and gave just sentence on the conqueror's side, if he strove lawfully, and fairly won the prize. Now this crown is 'laid up;' the Greek word ἀπόκειται imports two things: (1.) A designation of that which is laid up to some peculiar person; (2.) A reservation and safe keeping of it, to the use of those it is designed to. Earthly crowns have been often pulled off from princes' heads, but this crown of righteousness is so safely laid up, that none can reach it, none can touch it, none can pull it from a believer's head. Xerxes crowned his steersman in the morning, and beheaded him in the evening of the same day. And Andronicus the Greek emperor crowned his admiral in the morning, and then took off his head in the afternoon. Roffensis had a cardinal's hat sent him, but his head was cut off before it came to him. 'Doth the crown,' saith Solomon, 'endure to every generation?'

Prov. 27:24. It is a question which implieth a strong negation: oh, no! there is nothing more uncertain than earthly crowns. Henry the Sixth was honoured with the crowns of two kingdoms, France and England; the first was lost by the faction of his nobles, the other was twice pulled from his head. Princes' crowns are withering things. Earthly crowns may be soon put on, and as soon be pulled off. Most princes' crowns do but hang on one side of their heads. All the powers on earth, and all the devils in hell, can never reach this crown of righteousness. Though wicked men have long reaches, yet they can never reach a believer's crown, which is his joy and comfort in the midst of all his sorrows and sufferings. Thus Basil speaketh of some martyrs that were cast out all night naked in a bitter cold frosty season, and were to be burned the next day, how they comforted themselves in this manner: 'The winter is sharp, but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold, but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all.' The philosopher could say to the tyrant's face: You may kill me, but you cannot hurt me; you may take away my head, but you cannot take away my crown. O Christians! let this be your joy and triumph, that the crown of righteousness is laid up safe for you; no tyrant's arm is long enough to reach that crown. But,

Secondly, There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell that can deprive a Christian of his crown of life: James 1:12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' 'The crown of life,' that is eternal life, whereby after the fight and conquest he shall be glorified as with a crown; as there was a crown to him that overcame in their exercises among the Grecians, [Piscator.] Blessedness is the general reward, the crown of life is the particular reward. In these words, as Chrysostom observes, there is a great emphasis, they are both emphatical; for life is the best of all natural things, and a crown is the best of all civil things. Here is the best and the best. Words are too weak to express what a rare blessing a crown of life is. The crown of life is in the other world, saith Gregory. This life is the life of conflict; that, of crowns and wreaths. But you will say, What doth this crown of life signify? I answer,

(1.) First, The crown of life signifies solid and substantial honour and, glory; as a crown is a solid and substantial thing. Heaven admits of no honour and glory but what is solid and substantial. The crown of life is a massy crown, a ponderous crown, to shew that the glory above is a massy glory, substantial glory. That you may see it is massy and substantial, observe what a word the apostle useth: 'The weight of glory,' 'the exceeding eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. 4:17. Such a weight as infinitely over-poiseth all afflictions. The apostle alludeth to the Hebrew and Chaldee words which signify both weight and glory. The Arabic version renders it, 'Worketh for us a weight of glory in the most eminent and largest degree and measure.'³ The Syriac reads it, 'Infinitam gloriam,' An infinite glory. Haymo reads it, 'Magnitudinem gloriæ, supra omnem modum et mensuram,' A greatness of glory, beyond all bounds and measure. Beza reads it, 'Excellenter excellens' Exceedingly excellent. Yet none of these reach the height of the apostle's rhetoric, neither is any translation able to express it, Glory is so great a weight that if the saints were not upheld by the infinite power and strength of God, it were impossible they should be able to bear it. To gold and precious things the weight addeth to the value; as the more massy and weighty a crown is, the more it is worth. The glory of heaven is not only eternal glory, but it is a weight of glory; yea, such a weight as exceeds all expressions, all comparisons. The honour and glory of this world is but like the cracking of thorns under a pot; it is but like a blaze, a shadow, a dream, a vapour; it is but like a fading flower, or the picture of a prince drawn upon the ice, with his purple robes and his glorious crown, &c., which melts away as soon as the sun riseth; the consideration of which made one prince say of his crown: 'O crown! more noble than happy!' A crown is the choicest and chiefest of all human rewards. Amongst all terrene gifts none more honourable and glorious than a crown. This is the height of human excellencies, and for the attainment of which many have made most sad, desperate, and dangerous adventures; but, alas! what are all earthly crowns, for honour and dignity, to the crown of life? No more than shadows to substances, pebbles to pearls, or dross to gold. But,

(2.) Secondly, The crown of life signifies the greatest honour and glory. There is nothing higher in the estimation and in the admiration of men than a crown; it is the highest appendant of majesty. A crown is the emblem of majesty, and so it notes that imperial and kingly dignity to which believers are advanced by Christ, Ps. 8:7. There is nothing that men esteem of above a crown, or admire than a crown, or are ambitious of than a crown, Eph. 1:3. The crown is the top of royalty. All earthly crowns have crosses hanging upon them; all earthly crowns are stuffed with thorns: which made a great prince [Xerxes] say, 'You look upon my crown and my purple robes, but did you but know how they are lined with thorns, you would not stoop to take them up.' Queen Elizabeth is said to swim to her crown through a sea of sorrow: and so many of the princes of this world have swam to their crowns through a sea of sin, a sea of trouble, a sea of sorrow, and a sea of blood. The crown of life is an honourable crown, and that is the reason why the heavenly glory is expressed by a crown, Rev. 3:21. The saints are heirs, not only of Christ's cross, but also of his crown; that is, of his honour and glory. The honour and glory of all earthly crowns are greatly darkened and obscured by the cares and troubles, the temptations and dangers that are inseparably annexed to them; but no cares, no troubles, attend the crown of life, the crown of glory. Eternal life is a coronation day. But,

(3.) Thirdly, The crown of life signifies the reward of victory. A crown is the honour of those that strive; crowns were always the rewards of conquerors: Rev. 2:10, 'Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' A crown without cares, corrivals, envy, end; a crown not of gold, silver, pearls, laurels, or such like fading, perishing, corruptible things, but a crown of life, an ever-living crown, an everlasting crown, a never-fading crown. It is an allusion to a custom that was amongst the Grecians, for such as got the mastery in their games of wrestling, or running, or the like, were crowned with a garland in token of victory. It is not he that fights, but he that conquers, that carries the crown. The crown of life is for that man, and that man is for the crown of life, who holds on

conquering and to conquer, as Christ his head has done before him. The heathens in their Olympics had their cups, and garments, and crowns that were the rewards of the conquerors; yea, if a horse did but run a race and won, he had a cup or a crown; and thereupon Theocritus saith, 'See what poor things the world glories in, that brute beasts are taken with; their conquerors are crowned, and so are their horses'. But what were all their cups, garments, and crowns of ivy and laurel, &c., to this crown of life that is promised to the overcoming Christian? You must first be conquering Christians before you shall be crowned Christians. Why do you require that in one place, saith one of the ancients, [Ambrose,] which is due in another? why would you preposterously have the crown before you overcome? Whilst we are in our warring state fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil, a crown does not become us. I have read how that upon a triumph all the Emperor Severus his soldiers, for the greater pomp, were to put on crowns of bays, but there was one Christian among them that wore it on his arm, and being asked the reason of it he boldly answered, *Non decet Christianum in hac vita coronari*, It becomes not a Christian to wear his crown in this life. That crown that is made out of the tree of life is a wreath of laurel that never withers, a crown that never fades, a crown that will sit fast on no head but the conqueror's. But,

(4.) Fourthly, The crown of life signifies a lasting crown, a living crown. To say the crown of life, is to say a living crown; and living crowns are only to be found in heaven, Prov. 27:24; Ezek. 21:25–27. The word crown notes the perpetuity of glory. A crown is round, and hath neither beginning nor ending; and therefore the glory of the saints in heaven is called an immortal, an immarcessible, incorruptible, and never-fading crown, 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 9:24. The crown of life signifies the lasting honour and glory of the saints in heaven. I have read of an emperor that had three crowns, one on his sword, another on his head, and then cries out, *Tertiam in cœlis*, 'The third is in heaven, and my hope,' saith he, 'shall be in the everlasting crown.' The life to come is only the true life, the happy life, the safe life, the honourable life, the lasting, yea, the everlasting life, and

therefore the crown is reserved for that life. King William the Conqueror was crowned three times every year all his reign, at three several places—viz., Gloucester, Winchester, and Westminster—but death hath long since put a period to his crown. The crowns of the greatest monarchs in the world, though they last long, yet are corruptible, subject to wearing, cracking, stealing: they will be taken from them, or they from their crowns, suddenly. Witness that pile of crowns, as the historian speaks, [Hakewill,] that was piled up, as it were, at Alexander's gates, when he sat down and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. All scripture and histories do abundantly tell us that there is nothing more fading than princes' crowns. But,

(5.) Fifthly, The crown of life notes a well-entitled crown; a crown that comes by a true and noble title. A Christian has the best title imaginable to the crown of life. (1.) He has a title by Christ's blood; (2.) By the new birth; (3.) By free and precious promises; (4.) By donation; (5.) By marriage union and communion with Christ, who is heir-apparent to all the glory of heaven; (6.) By a sure and everlasting covenant. King Henry the Seventh of England pretended a sixfold title to the crown; (1.) By conquest; (2.) By the election of the soldiers in the field; (3.) By parliament; (4.) By birth; (5) By donation; (6.) By marriage. But what was his pretended title to that real and full title that a believer has to the crown of life? But,

(6.) Sixthly, and lastly, The crown of life notes the perfection of the glory of the saints in heaven. As the crown compasseth the head on every side, so in heaven there is an aggregation of all internal and eternal good. One of the ancients, speaking concerning what we can say of the glory of heaven, saith, 'It is but a little drop of the sea, and a little spark of the great furnace; for those good things of eternal life are so many that they exceed number, so great that they exceed measure, so precious that they are above all estimation.' *Nec Christus nec cœlum patitur hyperbolem*, Neither Christ nor heaven can be hyperbolised. *Nescio quid erit, quod ista vita non erit*. And, saith one of the fathers, 'What will that life be, or rather, what will not that life

be, since all good either is not at all, or is in such a life? Light which place cannot comprehend, voices and music which time cannot ravish away, odours which are never dissipated, a feast which is never consumed, a blessing which eternity bestoweth, but eternity shall never see at an end!' Do you ask me what heaven is? saith one: when I meet you there I will tell you. The world to come, say the Rabbins, is the world where all is well. I have read of one that would willingly swim through a sea of brimstone to get to heaven; for there, and only there, is perfection of happiness. What are the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir, and the treasures of both Indies, to the glory of another world? Augustine tells us that one day, when he was about to write something upon the eighth verse of the thirty-sixth Psalm, 'Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures;' and being almost swallowed up with the contemplation of heavenly joys, one called unto him very loud by his name; and, inquiring who it was, he answered, I am Jerome, with whom in my lifetime thou hadst so much conference concerning doubts in Scripture, and am now best experienced to resolve thee of any doubts concerning the joys of heaven; but only let me first ask thee this question, Art thou able to put the whole earth, and all the waters of the sea, into a little pot? Canst thou measure the waters in thy fist, and mete out heaven with thy span? or weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? If not, no more is it possible that thy understanding should comprehend the least of the joys of heaven; and certainly the least of the joys of heaven are unconceivable and inexpressible. But,

Thirdly, There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell, that can deprive a believer of an incorruptible crown: Ps. 21:3; 1 Cor. 9:25, 'And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things; now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.' He alludes to the Olympic exercises; now running and wrestling were two of the Olympic games. Now in these Olympic games the reward was only a corruptible crown, a crown made up of laurels, or olive-branches, or oaken-leaves, or of flowers and herbs, or at the highest of silver and gold, which soon faded; but we run for

an incorruptible crown of glory. A man, saith Chrysostom, would dwell in this contemplation of heaven, and be loath to come out of it. Nay, saith Augustine, a man might age himself in it, and sooner grow old than weary: 1 Pet. 1:4, 'To an inheritance incorruptible and undented, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.' Here are superexcellent properties of the heavenly inheritance.

(1.) First, It is κληρονομίαν ἀφθαρτον, an 'incorruptible inheritance.' All earthly inheritances are liable to corruption; they are true gardens of Adonis, where we can gather nothing but trivial flowers, surrounded with many briars, thorns, and thistles. Oh, the hands, the hearts, the thoughts, the lives that have been corrupted by earthly inheritances! Oh, the impure love, the carnal confidence, the vain boastings, the sensual joys, that have been the products of earthly inheritances. If a man's estates lies in money, that may rust, or the thieves may break through and steal it; if in cattle, they may die, or fall into the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans; if in houses, they may be burnt. Witness the late dreadful fire that turned London into a ruinous heap. If in lands, a foreign enemy may invade them and conquer them.² All earthly inheritances are no better than the cities which Solomon gave to Hiram, which he called Cabul, that is to say, displeasing or dirty, 1 Kings 9:13. Earthly inheritances they do but dirt, daub, and dust the children of men; it is only the heavenly inheritance that is incorruptible.

(2.) Secondly, It is κληρονομία ἀμίαντος, an 'inheritance undefiled.' There are few earthly inheritances, but some defilement or other sticks close to them. Many times they are got by fraud, oppression, violence, injustice, &c., and as they are often wickedly got, so they are as often wickedly kept. They that will but go to Westminster Hall may every term understand enough of these things. The heavenly inheritance is the only undefiled inheritance. There is no sin, no sinner, no devil, to defile or pollute the heavenly inheritance, the incorruptible crown. The Greek word, ἀμίαντος, signifies a precious stone, which though it be never so much soiled, yet it cannot be blemished nor defiled, yea the oftener you cast it into the fire and

take it out, the more clear, bright, and shining it is. The apostle may probably allude to this stone: and it is as if he should say, 'The incorruptible crown that you shall receive shall be studded with the stone amiantos, which cannot be defiled. No unclean thing shall enter into heaven to defile this crown, this inheritance, Rev. 21:27. The serpent got into the earthly paradise, and defiled Adam's crown, yea he robbed him of his crown, but the subtle serpent can never enter into the heavenly paradise. But,

(3.) Thirdly, It is κληρονομίαν ἀμάραντον, an 'inheritance that fadeth not away:' a metaphor taken from flowers. The beauty of flowers, and the sweetness of flowers, withers in a moment, and is quickly gone, and then they are good for nothing but to be cast upon the dunghill; so it is with all earthly inheritances, they soon lose their glory and fragrancy. Where is the glory of the Chaldean, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms? Dan. 7:3–8. Sic transit gloria mundi hath been long since written upon them all; yea, all the glory of the world is like the flower of the field that soon fadeth away, Isa. 40:6; 1 Pet. 1:24. How many great men and great kingdoms have for a time shined in great glory, even like so many suns in the firmament, but are now vanished away like so many blazing comets! How hath the moon of great men's honours been eclipsed at the full, and the sun of their pomp gone down at noon! How soon is the courtier's glory eclipsed if his prince do but frown upon him! and how soon does the prince become a peasant if God does but frown upon him! The Greek word amarantos, say some, is the proper name of a flower which is still fresh and green after it hath hung up in the house a long time. It is as if the apostle had said, 'Your incorruptible crown shall be garnished or adorned with the precious flower amarantos, which is always fresh and green and flourishing. And indeed this is the excellency of the heavenly inheritance, that it fadeth not away, that it is a flower that never withereth. All the glory of that upper world is like God himself, lasting, yea, everlasting. This never-fading crown is like the flower we call Semper vivens, it keeps always fresh and splendent. The glory of believers shall never fade nor wither, it shall never grow old nor rusty. Thrice happy are those souls that have a share in this

incorruptible crown. When Alexander heard the philosopher's discourse of another world in which he had no part, he wept, to speak with the apostle, as 'one without hope,' 1 Thes. 4:13. None on earth have such cause to weep, as those that have no interest in that inheritance that fadeth not away. But,

(4.) Fourthly and lastly, There is no power nor policy on earth or in hell that can deprive a sincere Christian of a crown of glory. 1 Pet. 5:4, 'And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away,'—as the garlands did wherewith the conquerors at games, races, and combats were crowned, which were made of herbs, leaves, and flowers. A crown imports perpetuity, plenty, dignity. It is the height of human ambition. The Greek word amarantinon cometh from amarantus, which is a flower that fadeth not, of which garlands were made in former times, and wherewith they crowned the images of the heathen gods. A believer's crown, his inheritance, his glory, his happiness, his blessedness shall be as fresh and flourishing after he hath been many millions of years in heaven as it was at his first entrance into it. Earthly crowns are like tennis-balls, which are bandied up and down from one to another, and in time wear out. When time shall be no more, when earthly crowns and kingdoms shall be no more, yea, when the world shall be no more, a Christian's crown of glory shall be fresh, flourishing, and continuing. All the devils in hell shall never wrangle a believer out of his heavenly inheritance, nor deprive him of his crown of glory. The least thing in heaven is better than the greatest things in this world. All things on earth are fading, but the crown of glory never fadeth away. Thus you see why heaven and the glory above is expressed by a crown. Sometimes it is called a crown of righteousness, to note the grounds and rise of it; sometimes it is called a crown of life, because it is only to be enjoyed in everlasting life; sometimes it is called an incorruptible crown, to note the duration and continuance of it; and sometimes it is called a crown of glory, to note the honour, splendour, and eternity of it. Now let devils, let oppressors, let

persecutors do their worst, they shall never be able to deprive the saints of their blessed and glorious crowns. But,

[16.] Sixteenthly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to make void our covenant-relation, or our covenant-interest; as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. The covenant of grace is bottomed upon God's free love, upon God's everlasting love, upon God's special and peculiar love, upon God's unchangeable love, so that God can as soon cease to be, as he can cease to love those whom he has taken into covenant with himself, or cease to keep covenant with them. Those whom free grace hath brought into covenant shall continue in covenant for ever and ever. Once in covenant and for ever in covenant. The covenant of grace is bottomed upon God's immutable counsel and purpose. 'The foundation of God standeth sure,' Heb. 6:17; 2 Tim. 2:19, that is, the degree and purpose of God's election stands firm and sure. Now the purpose of God's election is compared to a foundation, because it is that upon which all our happiness and blessedness is built and bottomed, and because as a foundation it abides firm and sure, John 10:28–32; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 1. The covenant of grace is bottomed upon God's glorious power, upon God's infinite power, upon God's supreme power, upon God's invincible power, upon God's independent power, upon God's incomparable power, and till you can find a power that can overmatch this divine power, the saints' covenant-relation holds good. The covenant of grace is bottomed upon the oath of God; 'To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he sware to our fathers,' Luke 1:72, 73. Now to think that God will break his oath, or be perjured, is an intolerable blasphemy. The covenant of grace is bottomed upon the precious blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is called 'The blood of the everlasting covenant.' 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,' Mat 26:28; Heb. 9:15, and 13:20. Now by these hints it is most evident that the saints' covenant-relation, their covenant-interest, holds good at all times, in all cases, and in all conditions. It

is not the indwelling power of sin, nor spiritual desertions, nor violent temptations, nor heavy afflictions, nor divine delays, that can dissolve our covenant-relation. Though sin may work, and Satan may tempt, and fears may be high, and God may hide his face from his people, and stop his ears at the prayers of his people, Isa. 8:17; Lam. 3:44, yet God will still maintain his interest in his people, and his people's relation to himself. 'God hath not cast away his people, whom he foreknew,' Rom. 11:2; 'I am the Lord, I change not,' Mal. 3:6; 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever,' Hosea 2:19; 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. It is not all the powers of hell, nor all the powers on earth, that can make null or void our covenant-relation, our covenant-interest. But,

(17.) Seventeenthly and lastly, 'If God be with us, who can be against us?' I answer, None, so as to hinder our growth in grace, or the thriving and flourishing estate of our precious and immortal souls. The troubles, afflictions, persecutions, and sufferings that the saints meet with in a way of holiness shall but further the increase and growth of their graces. Grace never rises to so great a height as it does in times of persecution. Suffering times are a Christian's harvest times, Ps. 60:7–9, 12. Let me instance in that grace of zeal: I remember Moulin, speaking of the French Protestants, saith, When papists hurt us, and persecute us for reading the Scripture, we burn with zeal to be reading of them, but now persecution is over, our Bibles are like old almanacks. Michal's scoffing at David did but inflame and raise his zeal; 'If this be to be vile, I will be more vile,' 2 Sam. 6:20–22. Look, as fire in the winter burns the hotter, by an antiperistasis, because of the coldness of the air, so in the winter of persecution, that divine fire, the zeal of a Christian, burns so much the hotter, and flames forth so much the more vehemently and strongly. When one desired to know what kind of man Basil was, there was presented to him in a dream, saith the historian, a pillar of fire, with this motto, Talis est Basilius, Basil is such a one, he is all on a-light-fire for God. Warm persecutions will but set Christians all on a-light-fire for God, as you may see among the apostles, primitive Christians, and the martyrs of a later date. Grace usually is in the

greatest flourish when the saints are under the greatest trials. The snuffing of the candle makes it burn the brighter. God suffers wicked men to beat and bruise his links, to make them burn the brighter; and to pound and bruise his spices to make them send forth the greater aromatical flavour. Fiery trials are like the teazle, which though it be sharp and scratching, it is to make the cloth more pure and fine. Stars shine brightest in the darkest nights, and so do the graces of the saints shine brightest in the darkest nights of affliction and tribulation. God does sometimes more carry on the growth of grace by a cross than by an ordinance; yea, the Lord will first or last turn all fiery trials into ordinances, for the helping on the growth of grace in his people's souls. Commonly the saints' spiritual growth in grace is carried on by such divine methods, and in such ways as might seem to deaden grace, and weaken it, rather than any ways to augment and increase it. We know that winter is as necessary to bring on harvest as the spring, and so fiery trials are as necessary to bring on the harvest of grace as the spring of mercy is. Though fiery trials are grievous, yet they shall make the saints more gracious. God usually, by smart sufferings, turns his people's sparks of grace into a mighty flame, their mites into millions, their drops into seas. All the devils in hell, and all the sinners on earth, cannot hinder the Lord from carrying on the growth of grace in his people's souls. When men and devils have done their worst, God will, by all sorts of ordinances, and by all sorts of providences, and all sorts of changes, make his people more and more holy, and more and more humble, and more and more meek and lowly, and more and more heavenly, wise, faithful, fruitful, sincere, courageous, &c. Though the church of Smyrna was outwardly poor, yet she was inwardly rich, rich in grace, and rich towards God, Rev. 2:9. I think he hit the mark who said, It is far better to be a poor man and a rich Christian, than to be a rich man and a poor Christian. Though the Corinthians were under great trials and sufferings, yet they did abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and diligence, and in their love to gospel ministers, 2 Cor. 8:7. The storm beat hard upon the Romans, and yet you see what a singular testimony the apostle gives of them, 'I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of

goodness, filled with all knowledge, able to admonish one another,' Rom. 15:14. The Thessalonians were under great persecutions and troubles, and yet were strong in the grace that was in Christ Jesus; they were very growing and flourishing Christians. Singular prophecies speak out the saints growth and flourishing in grace. 'The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.' 'The Spirit shall be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness shall be a fruitful field.' 'The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose: it shall blossom abundantly:' 'the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon;' 'they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.' And as singular prophecies, so choice and precious promises, speak out the saints' growth in grace. Take a taste of some of them. 'But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' 'The righteous shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.' 'They shall go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.' 'The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.' 'Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; in old age they shall be fat and flourishing,' Prov. 4:18; Job 17:9; Ps. 84:7, and 92:12–14. I have read of an old man who, being asked whether he grew in grace? answered, I believe I do, for God hath promised that in old age his children should be fat and flourishing. So Isa. 46:3, 'Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb:' ver. 4, 'And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you:' Zech. 12:8, 'And he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them:' Hosea 14:5, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon:' ver. 6, 'His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon:' ver. 7, 'They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as

the wine of Lebanon:' Mal. 4:2, 'But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as the calves of the stall:' Ps. 1:3, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper:' John 4:14, 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.' The light and glory of the church rises by degrees; (1.) Looking forth as the morning; with a little light; (2.) Fair as the moon; more light; (3.) Clear as the sun; that is, come up to a higher degree of spiritual light, life, and glory, Cant. 6:10. By all which it is most evident that all the powers of hell, nor all the powers on earth, cannot hinder the saints' growth in grace, nor the thriving and flourishing estate of their precious and immortal souls.

But you will say, What are the reasons why God will be favourably, signally, and eminently present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? I answer there are these ten great reasons for it:—

[1.] First, To awaken and convince the enemies of his people, and to render his suffering children glorious in the very eyes and consciences both of sinners and saints: Dan. 3:24, 'Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, Did we not cast three men into the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.' Ver. 25, 'He answered and said, 'Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' Now see what a majesty there is in this presence of Christ with his people in the fire, to convince Nebuchadnezzar, and to render the three champions very glorious in his eyes. Ver. 28, 'Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor

worship any God except their own God.' Ver. 29, 'Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.' Ver. 30, 'Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.' The presence of the Lord with the three children commanded favour, respect, reverence, and honour from this great monarch, Nebuchadnezzar. The presence of God with his people is very majestic; the greatest monarchs have fallen down before it; not only Nebuchadnezzar, but also Darius, falls down before the signal presence of God with Daniel when he was in the lions' den, Dan. 6:20 seq. And Herod falls down before the presence of God with John, Mark 6:20. And King Joash falls down before the presence of God with Jehoiada, 2 Kings 11:1, 2. And Saul falls down before the presence of God with David: 'Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Sam. 24:17, &c. And Alexander the emperor falls down before the presence of God in Jaddua, the high-priest. In the signal presence of God with his people in their affliction there is such a sparkling lustre, that none can behold it but must admire it, and bow before the graceful majesty of it. Such has been the signal presence of God with the martyrs in their fiery trials, that many have been convinced and converted. I have read of a citizen of Paris who was burned for Protestantism, how the presence of God did so shine in his courage and constancy, that many did curiously inquire into that religion for which he so stoutly and resolutely suffered, so that the number of sufferers was much increased thereby.² I read that Cecilia, a poor virgin, by her gracious behaviour in her martyrdom, was the means of converting four hundred to Christ. It was the observation of Mr John Lindsay, that the very smoke of Mr [Patrick] Hamilton converted as many as it blew upon. Alexandrinus cites Plato, expressing himself thus: 'Although a righteous man be tormented, although his eyes be digged out, yet he remains a blessed man.'⁴ The same Plato could say, 'That no gold or precious stone doth glister so gloriously as the prudent spirit of a good man.' And the very Hittites could say of Abraham, who had a very signal

presence of God with him, 'Thou art a prince of God among us,' Gen. 23:6; not that he was a king or had any authority over them, as the Septuagint reads, 'Thou art a king from God among us;' but he is called a prince of God, say some, [Lyra and Tostatus,] because he was as God's oracle—the Lord speaking to him by visions and dreams—unto whom they had recourse for counsel in difficult matters. Others say, he is called Prince of God, because God prospered him, and made him famous for his virtue and godliness. But the Hebrews commonly speak so of all things that are notable and excellent, because all excellency cometh from God; as the angel of God, the mount of God, the city of God, the wrestlings of God, Exod. 3:2, and 24:16; Ps. 26:4; Gen. 30:8, &c. 'Thou art a prince of God;' that is, Thou art a most excellent person. Seneca saw so much excellency that morality put upon a man, that he could say, *Ipse aspectus boni viri delectat*: The very looks of a good man delights one. And why then may not the sons of Heth call him a prince of God, from that majesty and glory that they saw shine forth in his graces, and in his gracious behaviour and conversation, and because they did observe a signal presence of God with him in all he did, it being no higher observation than what Abimelech had made before them? Gen. 21:22. Chrysostom, speaking of Babilas the martyr, saith, *Magnus atque admirabilis vir*, &c.: He was an excellent and admirable man, &c. Tertullian, writing to some of the martyrs, who had a mighty presence of God with them, saith, *Non tantus sum ut vos alloquar*, &c.; I am not good enough to speak unto you. Oh that my life and a thousand more such wretches might go for yours, &c. In Queen Mary's days, not of blessed but of abhorred memory, the people of God met—sometimes forty, sometimes a hundred, sometimes two hundred—together. The fiery persecutors of that day sent in one among them to spy out their practices and to give information of their names, that they might be brought to Smithfield shambles; but there was such a presence of God in the assembly of his people, that this informer was convinced and converted, and cried them all mercy: 1 Cor. 14:24, 'But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all;' ver. 25, 'And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest, and

so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.' It may be before they came to the assembly of the saints, they had hard thoughts of the people of God: they thought that folly was in them, or that disloyalty was in them, or that madness and rebellion was in them, or that plots and designs against the government was in them, or that the devil was in them. Oh, but now such a majestic presence of God appears in the midst of his people, that the unbeliever is convinced, and confesses 'that God is in them of a truth.' Blessed Bradford had such a signal presence of God with him in his sufferings, as begot great reverence and admiration, not only in the hearts of his friends, but in the very hearts of very many papists also. Henry the Second, king of France, being present at the martyrdom of a poor tailor, who was burnt by him for his religion; the poor man had such a signal presence of God with him in his sufferings, that his courage and boldness, his holy and gracious behaviour, did so amaze and terrify the king, that he swore, at his going away, that he never would be present at such a sight more. As the presence of God is the greatest ornament of the church triumphant, so the presence of God is the greatest ornament of the church militant. The redness of the rose, the whiteness of the lily, and all the beauties of sun, moon, and stars, are but deformities to that beauty and glory that the presence of God puts upon his people, in all their troubles and trials. There is nothing in the world that will render the saints so amiable and lovely, so eminent and excellent in the eyes of their enemies, as the signal presence of God with them in their greatest trials, Demetrius³ was so passing fair of face and countenance, that no painter was able to draw him. The presence of God with his people in their greatest trouble deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, puts so rare a beauty and glory upon them, that no painter can ever be able to draw them. But,

[2.] A second reason why God will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, is drawn from the covenant of grace, and those precious promises that God has made to be with his people. God's covenant is, that he will be with his people for ever, and that he will never turn

away from them to do them good, Jer. 32:40, 41. That is a branch of the covenant: 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5. And that is a branch of the covenant: 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,' Gen. 15:1; see Ps. 115:9–11. The shield is between the body and the thrust. So saith God, I will put in betwixt thee and harm. Though those kings whom thou hast even now vanquished, may rant high and threaten revenge, yet I will shield off all dangers that thou mayest be incident to. Though God's people be in the waters and in the fires, yet his promise is to be with them; so the psalmist, 'I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and honour him,' Isa. 43:2; Ps. 91:15, and 50:15; Job 5:19; Hosea 2:14. God will not fail to keep his people company in all their troubles. No storm, no danger, no distress, no fiery trial, can keep God and his people asunder. God is immutable in his nature, in his counsels, in his covenant, and in all his promises, Mal. 3:6. Though all creatures are subject to change, yet God is unchangeable; though angels and men, and all inferior creatures are dependent, yet God is independent. He is as the schoolmen say, *Omninò immutabilis*, altogether immutable, and therefore he will be sure to keep touch with his people. Precious promises are *Pabulum fidei, et anima fidei*, The food of faith, and the very soul of faith. They are a mine of rich treasures, a garden full of choice flowers, able to enrich a suffering Christian with all celestial contentments, and to sweeten the deepest distresses. God has deeply engaged himself, both by covenant and promises, that he will be with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers; and therefore he will not fail them: Deut. 7:9, 'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant,' &c., or 'the God of amen.' God will never suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth, Ps. 89:33. All his precepts, menaces, predictions, and promises are the issue of a most wise, holy, faithful, and righteous will, and therefore they shall certainly be made good to his people. But,

[3.] Thirdly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers,

because it makes most eminently for the advancement of his own honour and glory in the world. God never gets more honour than by helping his people when they are at a dead lift. God's signal presence with Israel at the Red Sea, makes Moses sing a song of praise, Exod. 15. A great part of the revenue of divine glory arises from the special presence of God with his people in their deepest distresses and most deadly dangers, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. It is the honour of a husband to be most present with his wife in her greatest troubles, and the honour of a father to be most present with his children in their deepest distresses, and the honour of commanders to be present with their soldiers in the heat of battle, when many fall on their right hand and on their left: Exod. 15:3, 'The Lord is a man of war,' that is, an excellent warrior, 'the Lord is his name;' according to the Septuagint, συντρίβων πολέμους, 'He breaketh battles, and subdueth war.' God, like a brave commander, stands upon his honour, and therefore he will stand by his soldiers in the greatest dangers. The word ish, here used for man, signifies an eminent man, a mighty man, a famous warrior, or, as the Chaldee paraphrast hath it, Victor bellorum, an overcomer of battles. Now eminent warriors, mighty warriors, famous warriors, they always stick closest to their soldiers in their greatest dangers, as all know that have read either Scripture or history. Now the Lord is such a man of wars, such a famous warrior, as that he will be sure to stick closest to his people in the greatest dangers. God is both in the van and in the rear, Isa. 52:12. And as there is nothing that more raises the honour, fame, and renown of great warriors in the world than their presence with their soldiers when the bullets fly thickest; so there is nothing by which God gets himself a greater name, fame, and honour in the world, than by his signal presence with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

[4.] Fourthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because then his people stands in most need of his presence. A believer needs the presence of God at all times, but never so much as

in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers; for now Satan will be stirring. He loves to fish in troubled waters. Now earthly friends and earthly comforts and earthly succours will commonly fail us; now cares and fears will be multiplied upon us; now unbelief, which is virtually all evil, will be raising doubts and cavils and objections in the soul, so that if God does not stand by us now, what can we say? what can we do? how can we bear up? how can we stand fast? What was Samson, that man of strength, when his hair was gone, but as weak as water? Judges 16:19, 20; and what is the strongest Christian when his God is gone, but as weak as weakness itself? All our doing strength, and all our suffering strength, and all our bearing strength, and all our witnessing strength, lies in the special presence of God with our souls. All our comforts, and all our supports, and all our ease, and all our refreshments, flow from the presence of God with our souls in our greatest troubles and deepest distresses; and therefore, if God should leave us in a day of trouble, what would become of us? and whither should we go? and where should we find rest? When doth a man need a brother or friend, but in a day of adversity? 'A brother is born for adversity,' Prov. 17:17. Though at other times brethren may jar and jangle and quarrel, yet in a day of adversity, in a strait, in a stress, birth and good blood and good nature will be working. Adversity breeds love and unity. Ridley and Hooper differed very much about ceremonies in the day of their liberty; but when they were both prisoners in the Tower, then they could agree well enough, and then they could be mutual comforts one to another. And when does a Christian most need the strength of God, the consolations of God, the supports of God, the teachings and quickenings of God, and the signal singular presence of God, but when they are in the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? When the people of God are in a low and afflicted condition, then the Lord knows that that is the season of seasons for him to grace them with his gracious presence, Isa. 33:9, 10. When calamities and dangers break in upon us, and when all heads and hands and hearts and counsels are set against us, now is the time for God to help us, for God to succour us, for God to stand by us. But,

[5.] Fifthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because he dearly loves them. God entirely loves his people, and therefore he will not leave his people. Persons whom we entirely love we cannot leave, especially when they are in a distressed condition. 'A friend loves at all times,' saith Solomon, and God is such a friend, Prov. 17:17. God loves not by fits and starts, as many do, but his love is like himself, sincere and steadfast. Because he loves them, he won't forsake them when they are in the greatest troubles and most terrible dangers, 1 Sam. 12:22, 'For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.' He chose you for his love, and he still loveth you for his choice, and therefore he won't forsake you. Chide you he may, but forsake you he won't; for it will not stand with the glory of God to leave a people, to forsake a people of his love. Should I cast you off whom I love, the heathen nations would say that I was mutable in my purposes, or unfaithful in my promises. Though David's parents forsook him, yet God did not forsake him, but took him up into his care and keeping, Ps. 27:10. It is the deriding question which the enemies of the saints put to them in the time of their greatest troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, *Ubi Deus?* Where is now your God? Ps. 79:10. But they may safely and groundedly return this answer when they are at lowest, *Hic Deus,* Our God is here; he is nigh unto us, he is round about us, and he is in the midst of us, Isa. 52:12. Witness that golden promise, that is more worth than a world, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. 13:5, 11. God is a God of bowels, a God of great pity, a God of tender compassion, and therefore he will not leave his people in a time of distress, Hosea 8:9; Mic. 7:19; Jer. 31:18–20. Parents' bowels do most yearn towards their children when they are sick, and weak, and most in danger. It goes to the very heart of a man to leave a friend in misery. But what are the bowels of men to the bowels of God! or the compassions of men to the compassions of God! There is an ocean of love in the hearts of parents towards their children when they are in distress, 2 Sam. 19:6; and this love makes them sit by their children,

and sit up with their children, and not stir from their children. God's love does so link his heart to his people in their deep distresses, that he cannot leave them, he cannot stir from them, Ps. 91:15: Isa. 43:4, 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.' Well, and what then? This love so endears and unites God to his people, that he cannot leave them, he cannot stir one foot from them: ver. 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.' The Lord dearly loves his people, and he highly prizes his people, and he greatly delights in his people, and therefore he will be signally present with his people, both in the fire and in the water, both in the fire of persecution, and in the waters of affliction. God loves the persons of his people, and he loves the presence of his people, and he loves the graces of his people, and he loves the services of his people, and he loves the fellowship of his people; and therefore he will never leave his people, but stand by them, and be signally present with them, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Such is God's singular love to his covenant-people, that he will neither forsake them nor forget them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. The Jews were low—yea, very low, in Babylon; their distresses were great, and their dangers many; they looked upon themselves as so many dead men, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts,' Ezek. 37:1–15. They looked upon themselves both as forsaken and forgotten by God. Behold, captive Zion lamentingly saith, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,' Isa. 49:13–18; Ps. 84:7; Isa. 1:27; Heb. 12:22. Zion is taken several ways in Scripture: (1.) For the place properly so called, where they were wont to meet to worship the Lord; but this place was long ago destroyed. (2.) For the blessed angels, 'Ye are come to mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels.' (3.) For the congregation of saints, of believers, of which it is said, 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob,' Ps. 87:2. The believing Jews being sorely oppressed and afflicted by a long captivity, Dan. 9:22; Lam. 4:6, and by many great and

matchless miseries that did befall them in their captive state, they look upon God as one that had quite forsaken them and forgotten them; but they were under a very high mistake, and very erroneous in their complaint, as appears by God's answer to Zion: ver. 15, '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.' Ver. 16, 'Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.' In these words, as in a crystal glass, you may see how pathetically, how sweetly, how graciously, how readily, how resolutely God doth engage himself that he will neither forsake Zion, nor yet forget Zion in her captive state. Now let us a little observe how this singular promise is amplified, and that, (1.) By an emphatical illustration; God's compassionate remembering of Zion far transcends the most compassionate remembrance of the tenderest mother to her dear sucking babe. Now this is laid down—

First, Interrogatively, 'Can a woman,' the most affectionate sex, 'forget a sucking child, for having compassion on the son of her womb?' Can a woman, can a mother so forget as not to compassionate a child, which she naturally inclines to pity? A sucking child that hangeth on her breast, such as mothers are wont to be most chary of, and to be most tenderly affected towards? her sucking child, which, together with the milk from the breast, draws love from her heart? her sucking child of her own womb, which her bowels do more yearn over than they do over any sucking nurse-child in the world? And this is the 'son of her womb,' which the mother usually embraceth with more warm affections than the daughter of her womb. Can a woman, yea, can a mother forget to exercise love, pity, and compassion to such a poor babe? Surely very rarely.

Second, Affirmatively, 'Yea, they may forget.' It is possible that a woman may be so unwomanly, and that a mother may be so unmotherly in some cases, and in some extremities, as to forget her sucking child, yea, as to eat the fruit of her womb, as the pitiful women did boil and eat their own children in the siege of Samaria

and Jerusalem, 2 Kings 6:24–30; Lam. 4:10. Extremity of hunger overmastered natural affections, and made the pitiful mothers require, of their children those lives which not long before they had given them, laying children not in their bosoms, but in their bowels.

Thirdly, Negatively, 'Yet will I not forget thee.' God will be more constantly, unmovably, and unchangeably mindful of Zion, and tender of Zion, and compassionate of Zion, and watchful over Zion, than any mother could be over her youngling; yea, he would be more motherly to his poor captives in Babylon than any mother could be to her sucking babe. This precious promise is amplified by a convincing argumentation, and that partly from his 'engraving of them upon the palms of his hands.' This is an allusion, say some, to those that carry about with them, engraven on some tablet, or on the stone of some ring which they wear on their finger, the mark, name, or picture of some person they entirely affect. Their portraiture, their memorial, was like a signet graven upon his hand. God will as soon blot out of mind, and forget his own hands, as his Zion; and partly from his placing their walls still in his sight. The ruined demolished walls of Jerusalem were still before him as to their commiseration, and to their reparation, God being fully resolved in the fittest season to raise and re-edify them. Look, as the workman hath his model or pattern constantly either before his eye, or in his thoughts, or in his brain, that he is for to work by, so, saith God, Zion is continually in my eye, Zion is still in my thoughts; I shall never forsake her, I shall never forget her. But,

[6.] Sixthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because of his propriety and interest in them, and his near and dear relation to them: Isa. 43:1, 'But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.' Thou art mine, for I have made thee; thou art mine, for I have chosen thee; thou art mine, for I have bought thee, I have purchased thee; thou art mine, for I have called thee; thou art mine, for I have redeemed thee;

thou art mine, for I have stamped mine image upon thee; thou art mine, for I have put my Spirit into thee, Isa. 37:7; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18; Eze. 3:23, 24, 36:26, 27. Now mark what follows: ver. 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.' God will certainly keep his own people, his own children, company, both in the fire and in the water; that is, in those various trials and troubles that they are incident to in this world, Isa. 54:5; Ps. 103:13, 14; Exod. 15:3; Mal. 4:2; Mat. 9:12; Ps. 23:1. When should a husband be with his wife, but when she is in greatest troubles? and a father with his child, but when he is in deep distresses? and a general with his army, but when they are in greatest dangers? When should the physician be most with his patient, but when he is most desperately sick? and when should the shepherd be nearest his sheep, but when they are diseased, and the wolf is at hand? Now God, you know, stands in all these relations to his people, and therefore he will not fail to be near them when troubles, distresses, and dangers are growing upon them. But,

[7.] Seventhly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because such times are commonly times of great and sore temptations. When God's hand is heaviest, then Satan will be busiest, Job 2:7, 8; Mat. 9:4; Heb. 2:18. The devil is never more violent in his temptations than when the saints are under afflictions: James 1:2, 'My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations,' that is, 'afflictions;' ver. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation,' that is, affliction; 2 Pet. 2:9, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation,' that is, out of affliction. Now affliction is called temptation, not in the vulgar sense, as temptation is put for an occasion or inducement to sin, but in its proper and native signification, as it is taken for probation and trial. Thus God is said to tempt Abraham, Gen. 22:1, that is, he did try and prove the faith, the fear, the love, the obedience of Abraham. Afflictions are called temptations, partly because as afflictions will

try what mettle we are made off, so will temptations; and partly because as afflictions are burdensome and grievous to us, so are temptations. But mainly afflictions are called temptations, because in time of affliction Satan will be sifting and winnowing of the saints. Now he will make use of all his devices, methods, depths, darts, yea, fiery darts, that he may vex, afflict, trouble, grieve, wound, torture, and torment those dear hearts that God would not have grieved and wounded; and therefore, now the Lord steps in and stands by his people, and by his favourable, signal, and refreshing presence, he bears up their heads above water, and keeps their hearts from fainting and sinking under Satan's most dangerous and desperate temptations, Luke 22:31; 2 Cor. 12:7; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; Rev. 2:24; Eph. 6:16. When a city is besieged, and the enemies have raised their batteries, and have made breaches upon their walls, and their provisions grow low, oh, then, if ever, there is need of succour and relief! So here. But,

[8.] Eighthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because he highly prizes them, and sets an honourable value and esteem upon them: Isa. 43:4, 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee,' [Heb., 'In thy room, or in thy stead,] 'and people for thy life,' that is, for thy preservation and protection. God sets such a mighty price upon his people, that to preserve them from ruin and destruction, he makes nothing of giving up to the sword and destruction, the most rich, strong, populous, and warlike nations in the world. Now the high price and value that he sets upon them, engages him to be present with them: ver. 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.' Them we highly prize, we won't leave in a day of distress; no more won't God. God prizes his people as his peculiar treasure: Exod. 19:5, as his 'portion;' Deut. 32:9, as his 'pleasant portion;' Jer. 12:10, as his 'jewels;' Mal. 3:17, as his 'glory;' Isa. 4:5, as his 'crown and royal

diadem.' Yea, he prizes the poorest, the meanest, and the weakest saint in the world above a multitude, yea, above a world of sinners. Heb. 11:37, 38, 'Of whom the world was not worthy.' Though they did not rustle in silks and velvets, but were clad 'in sheep-skins and goat-skins;' yet they had that inward excellency, as that the world was not worthy of their company: and though they did not dwell in ceiled houses, nor in stately palaces, but 'in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;' yet the vile sinful persecuting world was not worthy of their presence, or prayers, or of their prudent counsels, or pious examples, &c. God sets a higher value upon a Job, though on a dunghill, than upon an Ahab, though on his royal throne, Job 1:1, and 2:3. God values men by their inward excellencies, and not by their outward dignities and worldly glories. He sets a higher price upon a Lazarus in his tattered rags, than upon a rich Dives in his purple robes. Such persons have most of our company whom we prize most, Job 2:11–13. Job's three friends did highly value him, and therefore in his deepest distresses, they own him, they pity him, they weep over him, they accompany him, and they keep close unto him. Because God highly prizes his people, he will be signally present with them in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

[9.] Ninthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, because they won't leave him, but stick close to him, and to his interest, gospel, and glory; and will cleave fast to his word, worship, and ways, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, come what will on it, Josh. 24; Jer. 13:11; Acts 11:23. You may take away my life, said Basil, but you cannot take away my comfort; my head, but not my crown; yea, saith he, had I a thousand lives, I would lay them all down for my Saviour's sake, who hath done abundantly more for me. John Ardley professed to Bonner, when he told him of burning, and how ill he could endure it, that if he had as many lives as he had hairs on his head, he would lose them all in the fire before he would lose his Christ or part with his Christ. It was a common thing among the martyrs to make all haste to the fire, lest they should miss of that noble entertainment. Gordius the

martyr said, It is to my loss if ye bate me anything of my sufferings. The sooner I die, said another, the sooner I shall be happy. Ps. 63:1, 'O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;' ver. 8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' &c. This notes, (1.) The strength of his intention; (2.) The strength of his affection; (3.) The constancy of his pursuit; and all this in a dry and barren wilderness, and in the face of all discouragements, and in the want of all outward encouragements, Dan. 9:3; Ps. 119:20. Whatever the danger or distress be, the psalmist is peremptorily resolved to cleave close to the Lord, and to follow hard after the Lord: Ps. 44:17, 'All this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant;' ver. 18, 'Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;' ver. 19, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death;' see 2 Tim. 1:11, 12, and 2:8–10; Eph. 6:19, 20; Col. 4:3, 18. In the face of all dangers, deaths, distresses, miseries, &c., God's faithful servants will own the Lord, and cleave to his ways, and keep close to his worship and service, let persecutors do their worst: ver. 22, 'Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter,' Rom. 8:36. It is a question when, and upon what occasion, this psalm was written. Some think that it was written upon occasion of the seventy years' captivity in Babylon; but this cannot be, because that captivity was the fruit and product of their high iniquities, as the Scriptures do everywhere evidence, Dan. 9:11–14. They could not say in Babylon, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long;' but for sin's sake, for our wickedness' sake, we are killed all the day long. It is more probable that this psalm was penned upon the occasion of the horrible persecution of the church under Antiochus Epiphanes, unto which I guess Paul hath reference towards the latter end of that 11th to the Hebrews. In this 22d verse you have three things observable, (1.) The greatness of their sufferings: 'they were killed,' amplified by a similitude, 'as sheep to the slaughter.' (2.) The cause: not for their sin, but 'for thy sake.' (3.) The continuance: how long, even 'all the day long.' Their sufferings are great and long. That tyrant Antiochus made no more reckoning

of taking away of their lives, than a butcher doth of cutting the throats of the poor sheep, Dan. 11; and as butchers kill the sheep without making conscience of the effusion of their blood, even so did that tyrant Antiochus destroy the saints of the Most High, without making the least conscience of shedding innocent blood. And as butchers think well of their work, and are glad when they have butchered the poor sheep, so did this tyrant Antiochus; he thought he did God good service in butchering of the holy people, and rejoiced in that bloody service; and yet notwithstanding all the dreadful things that these blessed souls suffered, they still kept close to God, and close to his covenant, and close to his ways, and close to his worship. And Austin observes, that though the heathen sought to suppress the growth of Christianity by binding, butchering, racking, stoning, burning, &c., yet still they increased and multiplied, Exod. 1:12, and still they kept close to God and his ways. The church was at first founded in blood, and it has thriven best when it has been moistened with blood. It was at first founded in the blood of Christ, and ever since it has been moistened or watered, as it were, with the blood of the martyrs. The church of Christ in all ages hath been like the oak, which liveth by his own wounds; and the more limbs are cut off, the more new sprouts. Oh, how close to God, his ways and worship, did the saints keep in the ten persecutions! 'They have followed the Lamb whithersoever he went,' Rev. 14:4, 5. If they would have complied with the ways of the world, and the worship of the world, and the customs of the world, they might have had ease, honour, riches, preferments, &c., Heb. 11:35; but nothing could work them off from God or his ways; and therefore he will certainly stand by them, and cleave to them, and be signally present with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. But,

[10.] Tenthly, The Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, that they may be joyful and cheerful under all their troubles, and that they may glory in all their tribulations, Mat. 5:12; Luke 6:23. It is good to have a patient spirit, but it is better to have a joyful spirit in

all our sufferings, troubles, distresses, &c., that we meet with in a way of well-doing, 2 Cor. 12:10. Acts 5:40, 'And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go;' ver. 41, 'And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing' [Gr., 'rejoice and leap for joy,'] 'that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.' In the original, ὅτι κατηξιώθησαν ἀτιμασθῆναι, 'that they were honoured to be dishonoured for Christ.' They looked upon it as a high honour to be dishonoured for Christ, and as a grace to be disgraced for Christ. It was the divine presence that made Paul and Silas to sing when they were accounted trouble-towns, and when they were beaten with many stripes, and cast into prison, into the inner prison, and laid neck and heels together, as the word τό ξύλον notes, Acts 16:20, 22–24, [Beza.] The divine presence made Paul and Silas to glory in all their stripes, sores, and wounds, as old soldiers glory in their scars and wounds which they receive in battle for their prince and country, Eph. 6:17; Rom. 5:3. The divine presence might well make Paul and Silas to say of their stripes and sores, as Munster once said of his ulcers, *Hæ sunt gemmæ et pretiosa ornamenta Dei*, These are the jewels and the precious ornaments with which God adorns his dearest servants. It was the divine presence that made Ignatius say in the midst of all his sufferings, τὰ δεσμὰ περιφέρω τοὺς πνευματικοὺς μαργαρίτας, I bear my bonds as so many spiritual pearls. So 2 Cor. 7:4, 'I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulations.' Gr. ὑπερπερισσέυομαι, 'I do overabound with joy.' Ver. 5, 'For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears;' ver. 6, 'Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us.' It was the divine presence that filled the Corinthians with exceeding comfort and joy when their flesh had no rest, and when they were troubled on every side. This signal presence of God with them in all their tribulations filled their souls with such an exuberancy of joy, that no good could match it nor no evil overmatch it. It was the divine presence that made the martyrs, both ancient and modern, so comfortable and cheerful under all their

hideous sufferings. It was the divine presence that made Francisco Soyit (?) say to his adversaries, 'You deprive me of this life and promote me to a better, which is as if you should rob me of counters and furnish me with gold.' Oh, how my heart leapeth for joy, said one, that I am so near the apprehension of eternal bliss! God forgive me mine unthankfulness and unworthiness of so great glory. In all the days of my life I was never so merry as now I am in this dark dungeon. Believe me, there is no such joy in the world as the people of Christ have under the cross, said blessed Philpot, that went to heaven in flames of fire. Let God but withdraw this signal presence from his people in their sufferings, and you will quickly find their hearts to droop, their spirits to fail, and they overwhelmed in a sea of sorrows, as you see in Mr Glover the martyr, and many others. It was this divine presence that made the primitive Christians to rejoice more when they were condemned than absolved,² and to kiss the stake, and to thank the executioner, and to sing in the flames, and to desire to be with Christ. So Justin Martyr, Apol. i., Adv. Gent, Gratias agimus quod à molestis dominis liberemur, We thank you for delivering us from hard taskmasters, that we may more sweetly enjoy the bosom of Jesus Christ. The bee gathers the best honey of the bitterest herbs, and Christ made the best wine of water. Certainly the best, the purest, the strongest, and the sweetest joys spring from the signal presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Only remember this, that that joy that flows from the divine presence in times of troubles and distress, it is an inward joy, a spiritual joy, a joy that lies remote from a carnal eye. 'The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.' Prov. 14:10. The joy of the saints in sufferings is a jewel that falls not under a stranger's eye. The joy of a Christian lies deep, it cannot be expressed, it cannot be painted. Look, as no man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, nor the sweetness of a cluster of grapes, nor the fragrancy of the rose of Sharon; so no man can paint out the sweetness and spiritualness of that joy that the divine presence raises in the soul when a Christian is under the greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Holy joy is a treasure that lies deep; and it is not every man that has a golden key

to search into this treasury. Look, as a man standing on the sea-shore sees a great heap of waters, one wave riding upon the back of another, and making a dreadful noise, but all this while, though he sees the water rolling, and hears it raging and roaring, yet he sees not the wealth, the gold, the silver, the jewels, and incredible treasures that lie buried there: so wicked men they see the wants of the saints, but not their wealth; they see their poverty, but not their riches; their miseries, but not their mercies; their conflicts, but not their comforts; their sorrows, but not their joys. Oh, this blind world cannot see the joys, the comforts, the consolations that the divine presence raises in the souls of the saints when they are at worst! Holy joy and cheerfulness under great troubles and deep distresses is an honour to God, a glory to Christ, and a credit to religion; it stops the mouths of sinners, and it encourages and strengthens weak saints; and therefore the Lord will be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, &c., that they may grace their suffering condition with joy and cheerfulness. And let thus much suffice for the reasons of the point.

But before I come to the useful application, to prevent the objections, and to allay the fears and doubts and disputes that may arise in the hearts of weak Christians concerning this signal presence of God, I shall briefly lay down these following propositions:—

1. First, That Christ is many times really present when he is seemingly absent: Gen. 28:16, 'And Jacob said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.' Choice Christians may have the presence of Christ really with them when yet they may not be kindly sensible of his presence, nor yet affected with it, Ps. 139. God is present everywhere, but especially with his saints; and not only then when they are apprehensive of him, but when they perceive no evidence of his presence. Being awakened, he perceived that God had very graciously and gloriously appeared to him; and therefore he falls admiring and extolling the singular goodness and the special kindness of God towards him: as if he had said, I thought that such strange and blessed apparitions were peculiar to the family of the

faithful; I thought that God had only in this manner revealed himself in my father's house: I did not in the least think or imagine that such an apparition, such a divine revelation should happen to me in such a place; but now I find that that God, who is everywhere in respect of his general presence, he hath, by the special testimonies of his presence, manifested himself to me also in this place. So Job, 'Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not,' Job 9:11. So Jonah, chap. 2:4, 'Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.' In times of sore afflictions God's children are very prone to have hard conceits of God, and heavy conceits of themselves. Unbelief raises fears, doubts, despondency, despair, and works a Christian many times, when he is under deep distresses, to draw very sad conclusions against his own soul, 'I am cast out of thy sight.' But this was but an hour of temptation, and therefore he soon recollects and recovers himself again; 'yet I will look again toward thine holy temple.' Here now faith has got the upper hand of unbelief. In the former part of the verse you have Jonah doubting and despairing, 'I am cast out of thy sight;' but in the latter part of the verse you have Jonah conquering and triumphing, 'yet I will look again toward thine holy temple.' When sense saith a thing will never be, and when reason saith such a thing can never be, faith gets above sense and reason, and saith, ay, but it shall be. What do you tell me of a roaring, raging sea, of the belly of hell, of the weeds about my head, of the billows and waves passing over my head; for yet as low as I am, and as forlorn as I am, 'I will yet look towards God's holy temple,' I will eye God in the covenant of grace; though I am in the sea, though I am in the belly of hell, yet by faith 'I will look toward thy holy temple,'—toward which they were to pray, 1 Kings 8—and triumph over all those difficulties which formerly I looked upon as insuperable; I will pray and look, and look and pray; all which does clearly evidence a singular presence of God with him, even then when he peremptorily concludes that he was cast out of God's presence, out of his sight, out of his favour, out of his care, out of his heart. The Lord is many times really present with his people when he is not sensibly present with his people: Judges 6:12, 'And the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said unto him,

The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.' Ver. 13, 'And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord; if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles, which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.' God may be really present with his people, they may have his favourable presence with their inward man, when it goes very ill with their outward man. Certainly we must frame a new Bible ere we can find any colour out of God's afflicting us to prove that he doth not love us, or that he hath withdrawn his presence from us. Christ had never more of the real presence of his Father than when he had least of his sensible presence, of his comfortable presence: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Mat. 27:46. Here is first a compllation or invocation of God twice repeated: 'My God, my God.' Secondly, the complaint itself, or matter complained of, touching God's forsaking of him. Christ was forsaken of God in some sort, and he was very sensible of his Father's withdrawing, though it was but in part and for a time, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' This forsaking is not to be understood of his whole person, but of his human nature only, according to which and in the which he now suffered on the cross. Though the person of Christ suffered, and was forsaken, yet he was not forsaken in, or according to his whole person, but in respect of his human nature only. The godhead of Christ could not be forsaken, for then God should have forsaken himself, which is impossible. The personal union of the godhead with the manhood of Christ continued all the time of his passion and death, it was never dissolved, nor ever shall be: yea, the godhead did uphold the manhood all the time of Christ's sufferings, so that he was not forsaken when he was forsaken; he was not forsaken wholly when he was forsaken in part. The love and favour of God the Father towards Jesus Christ did not ebb and flow, rise and fall; for God never loved Jesus Christ more or better than at the time of his passion, when he was most obedient to his Father's will. 'Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for my sheep,' John 10:17. Christ had never more of the supporting presence of his Father than when he had least of his comfortable presence. When

Christ was in his grievous agony and distress of body and mind, the godhead did withdraw the comfortable presence from the manhood; and so far, and so far only, was Christ forsaken. Though the union was not dissolved, yet there was a suspension of vision for the time, so as the human nature did neither see nor feel any present comfort from God. Now so far as the godhead did withdraw its comfortable presence, so far our Saviour was forsaken, and no further; that was but in part, and therefore he was but in part forsaken. God was really present with Christ when in respect of his comfortable presence he was withdrawn from him. So here. The husband may be in the house and the wife not know it; the sun may shine and I not see it; there may be fire in the room and I not feel it; so God may be really present with his people when he is not sensibly present with his people. But,

2. The second proposition is this, That the favourable, signal, and eminent presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, is only to be extended to his covenant-people, to those that are his people by special grace: Jer. 32:38, 'And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:' ver. 40, 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me:' ver. 41, 'Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good.' There are many precious promises of the divine presence, as I have already shewed; but they are all entailed upon God's covenant-people. We are all the people of God by creation, both good and bad, sinners and saints, bond and free, rich and poor, high and low; and we are all the people of God by outward profession. All that do make an outward profession of God, and perform external worship to God, they are all the people of God in this sense. All the carnal Israelites are frequently called the people of God, as well as the spiritual seed. Thus Cain was one of God's people as well as Abel, and Esau as well as Jacob. Now such as are only the people of God by creation, or by profession, these are strangers to God, these are enemies to God, Eph. 2:12; and will he be favourably present with these? Such as are only the people of God by creation and outward profession, they are dead in trespasses and

sins; and can the living God take pleasure in being among the dead? Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13. Such are under all the threatenings of the law, and under all the curses of the law, Gal. 3:10, even to the uttermost extent of them; such are not one moment secure; the threatenings of God and the curses of the law may light upon them, when in the house, when in the field, when waking, when sleeping, when alone, when in company, when rejoicing, when lamenting, when sick, when well, when boasting, when despairing, when upon the throne, when upon a sick-bed; and will God grace these with his presence? Lev. 26; Deut. 28. Surely no. Such say to God, 'Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?' Job 21:14, 15. Such queryings as this carry greatest contempt in them, and would lay the Almighty quite below the required duty as if Almighty were but an empty title; and will God ever honour such with his favourable presence, who bid him be packing, who reject his acquaintance, and are willing to be rid of his company? Surely no. Such as are only his people by creation, and an outward profession, such are under the wrath and displeasure of God. 'God is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. 7:11; not with a paternal, but with a judicial anger, even to hatred and abhorment. 'The wicked is an abomination to him, and he hates all workers of iniquity,' Prov. 3:32, and 15:9. And therefore to these he will never vouchsafe his signal presence. Such may well expect that God will pour on them the fierceness of that wrath and indignation, that they can neither decline nor withstand. Such wrath is like the tempest and whirlwind that breaks down all before it. It is like burning fire, and devouring flames, that consumes all. This wrath will break down all the sinner's arrogancies, and strangle all his vain hopes, and mar all his sensual joys, and fill him with amazing distractions, and make him drunk with the wine of astonishment. And will God dwell with these? will he keep house with these? Surely no. By these short hints it is most evident that the special presence of God is entailed upon none out of covenant, John 14:21, 23. God loves to keep house with none but his covenant-people. He will grace none with his gracious presence, but those that are his people by special grace, 1 Cor. 1:16–18. When wicked men are

in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, God either leaves them, as he did Saul, 1 Sam. 28:15, 16, &c.; or else pursues them to an utter overthrow, as he did Pharaoh, Exod. 14; or else cuts them off by an invisible hand, as he did Sennacherib's mighty hosts, Isa. 37:36, and proud king Herod, Acts 12:23; or else he leaves them to be their own executioners, as he did Ahithophel and Judas, &c. But,

3. The third proposition is this, That a sincere Christian may enjoy the presence of the Lord in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, supporting and upholding of him when he has not the presence of God quickening, comforting, and joying of him, Ps. 119:117: Ps. 37:24, 'Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand,' יָדוֹ יִסְמְךָ, 'upholding with his hand.' This is the upholding psalm. There is not one moment wherein the Lord doth not uphold his people by the hand. The root samach signifies to sustain and bear up, as the nurse or tender mother does the little child, the weak child, the sick child. God's hand is still under his, so that they can never fall below supporting grace: Ps. 63:8, 'Thy right hand upholdeth me;' or, 'Thy right hand underprops me.' God never did, nor never will, want a hand to uphold, a hand to underprop his poor people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Though the saints have not always the comforting presence of God in their afflictions, yet they have always the supporting presence of God in their afflictions, as Christ in his bitter and bloody agony had much of the supporting presence of his Father, when he had none of the comforting presence of his Father with him: Mat. 27:46, 'My God, my God,' &c.; so, the saints in their deep distresses have many times much of the supporting presence of God. His left hand is under their heads, and his right hand doth embrace them, Cant. 2:6, when, in respect of his comforting presence, they may say with the weeping prophet, 'The comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me,' Lam. 1:16. When the love-sick spouse was ready to faint, Christ circleth her with amiable embracements; 'His left hand is under her head, and his right hand doth embrace her.' It is an allusion to their conjugal and

mensal beds, on which the guests are so bestowed, that the first laid his left hand under the head of him that was next, and put him so in his bosom, that with his other hand he might also, if he pleased, embrace him, which was a posture and sign of the greatest love, which the sick fainting spouse here glories in. Christ's two hands are testimonies and witnesses of his great power and might, who is able to preserve his people, though lame cripples, from falling, and also to lift them up again when they are fallen never so low, and likewise to support and uphold them, that they shall never finally and utterly be cast down. When the hearts of the saints are ready to faint and sink, then the Lord will employ all his power for their support, bearing them up as it were with both hands. He hath put his left hand under my head, as a pillow to rest upon, and with his right hand he hath embraced me, as a loving husband cherisheth his sick wife, and doth her all the help he can, Eph. 5:29. The best of saints would fail and faint in a day of trouble, if Christ did not put to both his hands to keep them up. In days of sorrow God's people stands in need of a whole Christ to support them and uphold them. My head sinks, O my beloved, put thy left hand, softer than pillows of roses, firmer than pillars of marble, under it; my heart faileth and dieth—oh let thy right hand embrace me. But,

4. The fourth proposition is this, That all saints have not a like measure of the presence of the Lord in their troubles and trials, in their sorrows and sufferings. Some have more, and others have less of this presence of God in an evil day. (1.) All saints have not alike work to do in an evil day. (2.) All saints have not alike temptations to withstand in an evil day. (3.) All saints have not alike testimony to give on an evil day. (4.) All saints have not alike burdens to bear in an evil day. (5.) All saints have not alike things to suffer in an evil day. There are greater and there are lesser troubles, distresses, and dangers; and there are ordinary troubles, distresses, and dangers; and there are extraordinary troubles, distresses, and dangers. Now, where the trouble, the distress, the danger, is ordinary, there an ordinary presence of God may suffice; but where the trouble, the distress, the danger, is extraordinary, there the people of God shall

have an extraordinary presence of God with them, as you may see in the three children, Daniel, the apostles, the primitive Christians, and the Book of Martyrs. Some troubles, distresses, and dangers, are but of a short continuance, as Athanasius said of his banishment, *Nubecula est, cito transibit*, It is but a little cloud, and will quickly be gone. Others are of a longer continuance, and accordingly God suits his presence. All saints have not alike outward succours, supplies, reliefs, comforts, &c., in their troubles, distresses, and dangers. Some have a shelter, a friend at hand, others have not; some have many friends, and others may cry out with him, *O my friends, I have never a friend!* some are surrounded with outward comforts, and others have not one, not one penny, not one friend, not one day's work, &c.; in a storm some have good harbours at hand, others are near the rocks, and in danger of being swallowed up in the sands. So here, and accordingly God lets out more or less of his presence among his people; some need more of his presence than others do, and accordingly God dispenseth it among his saints. But,

5. The fifth proposition is this, That none of the saints have at all times, in all afflictions, distresses, and dangers, the same measure and degree of the presence of the Lord; but in one affliction they have more, in another less, of the divine presence.' In one affliction a Christian may have more of the enlightening presence of God than in another; and in another affliction a Christian may have more of the comforting presence of God than in another. In this trouble a Christian may have more of the awakening presence of God than in another, and in that trouble a Christian may have more of the sanctifying presence of God than in another; and in this distress a Christian may have more of the supporting presence of God than in that. No one saint doth at all times, nor in all troubles, need a like measure of the divine presence. The primitive Christians and the martyrs had sometimes more and sometimes less of the divine presence with them, as their condition did require. God, who is infinitely wise, does always suit the measures and degrees of his gracious, favourable, signal presence to the necessities of his saints. This is so clear and great a truth, that there are many thousands that

can seal to it from their own experience; and therefore I need not enlarge upon it. But,

6. The sixth and the last proposition is this, That many precious Christians, in their great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, may have this favourable, signal, and eminent presence of God with them, and yet fear and doubt, yea, peremptorily conclude that they have not this presence of God with them, Ps. 77:7–10. These sad interrogatories argues much fear and diffidence; but let me evidence the truth of this proposition by an induction of particulars. Thus, first: If Christ be not signally with you, why are you in your troubles so fearful of offending of him, and so careful and studious in pleasing of him? Gen. 39:9, 10; Ps. 17:3–5; Dan. 3:16, 17, and 6:10–13. Secondly, If Christ be not signally with you, how comes it to pass that under all your troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, you are still a-justifying of God, a-clearing of God, a-speaking well of God, a-giving a good report of God? Ps. 119:75; Ezra 9:13; Neh. 9:32, 33; Dan. 9:12, 14. Thirdly, If God be not signally with you, how come you to bear up so believingly, sweetly, stoutly, cheerfully, and patiently under your troubles, deep distresses, and greatest dangers? Gen. 49:23, 24; 1 Sam. 30:6; Hab. 3:17, 18; Acts 5:40–42, 16:25, 26, and 27:22–26; Heb. 10:34. Fourthly, If Christ be not signally present with you, how comes it to pass that your thoughts, desires, hearts, thirstings and longings of soul, are so earnestly, so seriously, so frequently, and so constantly carried out after more and more of Christ, and after more and more of the presence of Christ, and after more and more communion with Christ? Ps. 139:17, 18, 63:1, 8, 27:4, and 42:1–3; Exod. 33:13–16; Cant. 1:2. Fifthly, If Christ be not signally present with you, why are you so affected and afflicted with the dishonours and indignities, wrongs and injuries, that are done to the Lord by others? Ps. 69:9, and 119:53, 136, 158; Jer. 9:1, 2; Ezek. 9:4, 6; 2 Pet. 2:7, 8, None but such that have the presence of the Lord signally with them can seriously and sincerely lament over the high dishonours that are done to the Lord by others. Sixthly, If the Lord be not signally present with you under all your troubles and deep distresses, why do

you not cast off prayer, and neglect hearing, and forsake the assembling of yourselves together, and turn your backs upon the table of the Lord, and take your leaves of closet duties? Job 15:4; Heb. 10:25. But, seventhly, If the Lord be not signally present with you under your great troubles and deep distresses, why don't you say with Pharaoh, 'Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' And with the king of Israel, 'Behold, this evil is of the Lord, and why should I wait for the Lord any longer?' Or with that noble pagan, 'If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?' Or with Saul, Why don't you run to a witch? Or with Ahab, Why don't you sell yourselves to work evil in the sight of the Lord? Or with Ahaz, Trespass most when you are distressed most? Why don't you fret, and faint, and lie in the streets as a wild bull, full of the fury of the Lord? Why don't you grope for the wall, and stumble at noonday, and roar all like bears? But, eighthly, If the Lord be not signally present with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, why do you, with Moses, prefer suffering before sinning, and Christ's reproaches before Egypt's treasures? Heb. 11:25, 26. Why do you scruple the sinning of yourselves out of your sorrows? Ps. 38:4; Gen. 39:9, 10. Why do you look upon sin as your greatest burden? Why are you so tender in the point of transgression, and so stout in resistance of the most pleasing temptation? But, ninthly, If the Lord be not signally with you in your great troubles and deep distresses, why do you set so high a price upon those that have much of the presence of God with them in their troubles and trials? Ps. 16:3, 4; Prov. 12:26; Heb. 11:38. Why do you look upon them as more excellent than their neighbours? yea, as such worthies of whom this world is noways worthy? But, tenthly and lastly, If the Lord be not signally present with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, how comes it to pass that you are somewhat bettered, somewhat amended, somewhat reformed by the rod—by the afflictions that have been, and still are, upon you? Ps. 119:67, 71; Hosea 5:14, 15, and 6:1, 2; Hosea 2:6, 7. When the heart is more awakened, humbled, and softened by the rod, when the will is more compliant with the will of God in doing or suffering, when the mind is more raised and spiritualised, when the conscience is more quick

and tender, and when the life is more strict and circumspect,—then we may safely and roundly conclude that such persons do undoubtedly enjoy the signal and singular presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, Eph. 5:15. And thus I have laid down these six propositions; which, if well weighed and improved, may many ways be of singular use to sincere Christians.

We shall now come to the application or useful improvement of this great and seasonable truth. Explication is the drawing of the bow, but application is the hitting of the mark, the white. Is it so, that when the people of the Lord are in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, that then the Lord will be favourably, signally, and eminently present with them? Then let me briefly infer these ten things.

[1.] First, That the saints are a people of Christ's special care: 2 Chron. 16:9, 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him.' The words contain, (1.) The universality of God's providence. His eyes walk the rounds, they run to and fro through the whole earth, to defend and secure the sincere in heart. Diana's temple was burnt down when she was busied at Alexander's birth, and could not be at two places together; but God is present at all times, in all places, and among all persons, and therefore his church, which is his temple, can never suffer through his absence, 1 Cor. 3:16, and 6:19. The Egyptians had an idol called Baal-Zephon, which is by interpretation, Dominus speculæ, Lord of the watch-tower, Exod. 14:2; his office was to fright such fugitive Jews as should offer to steal out of the country; but when Moses and the people of Israel passed that way, and pitched their camp there, this drowsy god was surely fast asleep, for they all marched on their way without let or molestation; whereas he that keepeth Israel 'neither slumbereth nor sleepeth;' he kept his Israel then, and he hath kept his Israel ever since: he made good his title then, and will make good his title still; he ever was, and he ever will be, watchful,

over his people for their good, Ps. 121:3–5; Isa. 27:3, 4. (2.) The efficacy of his providence, to shew himself strong. God fights with his eyes as well as his hands; he doth not only see his people's dangers, but saves them from dangers in the midst of dangers, Zech. 2:5. When the philosopher in a starry night was in danger of drowning, he cried out, Surely I shall not perish; there are so many eyes of providence over me. King Philip said he could sleep safely because his friend Antipater watched for him. Oh, how much more may the saints sleep safely, who have always a God that keeps watch and ward about them! Ps. 3:5, 6. God is so strong a tower that no cannon can pierce it, Prov. 18:10, and he is so high a tower that no ladder can scale it, and he is so deep a tower that no pioneer can undermine it; and therefore they must needs be safe and secure who lodge within a tower so impregnable, so inexpugnable. Now this is the case of all the saints. The fatherly care and providence of God is still exercised for the good of his people: Deut. 32:10, 'He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye:' ver. 11, 'As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:' ver. 12, 'So the Lord alone did lead him,' &c. The eagle carries her young ones upon her wings, and not between her talons, as other birds do, openly, safely, swiftly; and so did God his Israel, being choice and chary of them all the way, securing them also from their enemies, who could do them as little hurt as any do the eagle's young, which cannot be shot but through the body of the old one, Isa. 63:4–6, and 59:15. See at what a rate God speaks in that, Isa. 40:27, 28. Observe how God comes on with his high interrogatories, 'Hast thou not known?' What an ignorant people! 'Hast thou not heard?' What a deaf people! What! keep no intelligence with heaven? 1 Pet. 5:7, 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' I will now with you sing away care, said John Careless, martyr, in his letter to Mr Philpot, for now my soul is turned to her old rest again, and hath taken a sweet nap in Christ's lap. I have cast my care upon the Lord, which careth for me, and will be careless according to my name. It was a strange speech of Socrates, a heathen, Since God is so careful of you, saith he, what

need you be careful for anything yourselves? God's providence extendeth to all his creatures; it is like the sun, of universal influence, but in a special manner it is operative for the safety of his saints. In common dangers men take special care of their jewels, and will not God; will not God take special care of his jewels? Mal. 3:17; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5. Surely, yes. The church of God is the house of God, and will not God take care of his house? Surely that shall be well guarded, whatsoever be neglected. His house is every moment within the view of his favourable eye, and under the guard of his almighty arm; his thoughts and heart is much upon his house. God hath a peculiar and paternal care over his saints. That distich of Musculus cometh in fitly:—

Est Deus in cælis, qui providus omnia curat,

Credientes nunquam deseruisse potest.

A God there is, whose providence doth take

Care for his saints, whom he will not forsake.

'His eyes run,' implying the celerity and swiftness of God in hastening relief to his people; 'His eyes run through the whole earth,' implying the universality of help. There is not a saint in any dark corner of the world, under any straits or troubles, but God eyes him, and will take singular care of him. God will always suit his care to his people's conditions, to which his eminent appearances for them in days of distress and trouble give signal testimony. It is our work to cast care; it is God's work to take care. Let not us, then, by soul-dividing thoughts, take the Lord's work out of his hand. But,

[2.] Secondly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then here you may see the true reason why the saints are so comfortable, cheerful, and joyful in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. It is because of that signal presence of God with them. It was this signal presence of God with

the martyrs that made them rejoice in the midst of their greatest sufferings, and that made them endure great sufferings without any sensible feeling of their sufferings: as that young child in Josephus, who, when his flesh was pulled in pieces with pincers, by the command of Antiochus, said, with a smiling countenance, Tyrant, thou lovest time. Where are those smarting pains with which thou threatenedst me? make me to shrink and cry out if thou canst! And Bainham, an English martyr, when the fire was flaming about him, said, You papists talk of miracles; behold here a miracle. I feel no more pain than if I were in a bed of down; it is as sweet to me as a bed of roses.² Surely their strength was not the strength of stones, nor their flesh of brass, Job 6:12, that they should not be sensible of so great sufferings; but this was only from that signal presence of God, that made them endure grievous pains without pain, and most exquisite torments without torment, and sore sufferings without feeling of their sufferings, Heb. 11:33–39. And other choice souls there were, who, though they were sensible of their sufferings, yet by the divine presence they were filled with unspeakable courage, comfort, and alacrity. Laurence, when his body was roasted upon a burning gridiron, cried out, This side is roasted enough; turn the other. Marcus of Arethusa, a worthy minister, when his body was cut and lanced and anointed with honey, and hung up aloft in a basket to be stung to death by wasps and bees; he, looking down cheerfully upon the spectators, said, I am advanced, despising you that are below. And when we shall see poor, weak, feeble creatures like ourselves defying their tormentors and their torments, conquering in the midst of their greatest sufferings, and rejoicing and triumphing in the midst of their fiery trials; singing in prison, as Paul and Silas did; kissing the stake, as Henry Voes did; clapping their hands when they were half consumed in the flames, as John Noyes did; calling their execution-day their wedding-day, as Bishop Ridley did; we cannot but conclude that they had a singular presence of God with them, that made all their sufferings seem so easy and so light unto them. Cæsar cheered up his drooping mariners in a storm by minding them of his presence; but, alas! alas! what was Cesar's

presence to this divine, this signal presence that the saints have enjoyed in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses? But,

[3.] Thirdly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then from hence you may see the weakness, madness, sottishness, and folly of all such as make opposition against the saints; that affront, injure, and make head against those that have the presence of the great God in the midst of them, Isa. 8:9, 10, and 27:4; 1 Cor. 1:25. O sirs! the weakness of God is stronger than men. What then is the strength of God? 1 Cor. 10:22, 'Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' Ah, who knows the power of his anger! Ps. 90:11, It is such that none of the potentates of the world, who set themselves against the saints, can avert or avoid, avoid or abide. That God is a mighty God the Scriptures do abundantly evidence, and it appears also in the epithet, that is added unto El-, which is Gibbor, importing that he is a God of prevailing might. By Daniel he is called El-Elim, 'the mighty of mighties.' Now what folly and madness is it for dust and ashes, for crawling worms, to make head against a mighty God; yea, an Almighty God, who can curse them, and crush them with a word of his mouth: 2 Chron. 32:7, 'Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him;' ver. 8, 'With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles;' Gen. 49:25; Num. 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20, 21. The king of Assyria was at that time the greatest monarch in the world, and the most formidable enemy the church had, yet the divine presence was a sovereign antidote to expel all base slavish fears that might arise in any of their hearts concerning his greatness, power, or multitude. What was that great multitude that was with the king of Assyria, to that innumerable company of angels that was with Hezekiah? And what was an arm of flesh to God's supreme sovereignty, that had this proud prince in chains, and that put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips, and cut off his great army by the hand of an angel in one night, and left him to fall by the sword of his own sons? The Lord of hosts can crush the

greatest armies in the world into atoms at pleasure. When the emperor Heraclius sent ambassadors to Chosroes, king of Persia, to desire peace of him, he received this threatening answer: I will not spare you, till I have made you curse your crucified God, and adore the sun. He was afterwards, like another Sennacherib, deposed and murdered by his own siroes.² When the divine presence is armed against the great ones of the world they must certainly fall. In Dioclesian's time, under whom was the last and worst of the ten persecutions, though then Christian religion was more desperately opposed than ever, yet such was the presence of God with his people in those times, that religion prospered and prevailed more than ever; so that Dioclesian himself, observing that the more he sought to blot out the name of Christ it became the more legible, and to block up the way of Christ it became the more passable; and whatever of Christ he thought to root out, it rooted the deeper and rose the higher, thereupon he resolved to engage himself no further, but retired to a private life, [Ruffinus,] This is a good copy for the persecutors of the day to write after. O sirs! what folly and madness is it for weakness to engage against strength, the creature against the Creator, an arm of flesh against the Rock of Ages! What is the chaff to the whirlwind, stubble and straw to the devouring flames? No more are all the enemies of Zion to the great and glorious God, that is signally present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses, &c., Acts 5:38–40; Ps. 76:12, and 110:5, 6; Rev. 6:14–16. There was not one of those persecuting emperors that carried on the ten bloody persecutions against the saints, but came to miserable ends; yea, histories tell us of three and forty persecuting emperors that fell by the hand of revenging justice; first or last the presence of God with his people will undo all the persecutors in the world. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then from hence you may see the Lord's singular love and admirable kindness to his people in gracing them with his presence in their greatest troubles, Isa. 43:2, 4. That is a friend indeed that will stick close to a man in the day of his troubles, as Job's friend did stick

close to him in the day of his troubles, and as Jonathan did stick close to David in his greatest dangers, and as the primitive Christians did stick close one to another, though with the hazard of their lives, and to the amazement of their enemies, Job 2:11–13; 1 Sam. 20:30–33. 'Behold,' said they, 'how the Christians love one another,' and stand by one another. The people of God, in their greatest troubles, are a people of his special love. When they are in distress, he lays them in his very bosom, and his 'banner over them is love,' Cant. 2:4. The love of God to his people is engraven upon the most afflictive dispensation they are under. When he smartly rebukes them, even then he dearly loves them, Rev. 3:19. 'Hear ye the rod,' Mic. 6:9. Oh, the rod speaks love. Many of the saints have read much of the Lord's love, written in letters of their own blood. They have read love in prisons, and love in flames, and love in banishment, and love in the cruellest torments their enemies could invent. When a Christian's wounds are bleeding, then God comes in with a healing plaster, Mal. 4:2. When a Christian is in a storm, then the presence of the Lord makes all calm and quiet within, Mat. 8:26. The presence of the Lord with his people in their troubles and distresses speaks out the reality of his love, the cordialness of his love, the greatness of his love, and the transcendency of his love. The truth and strength of relations' love one to another doth best appear by their presence one with another, when either of them are in the iron furnace, or in bonds, or in great straits or wants, or deep distresses. The parents shew most of their love to their sick and weak children by their daily presence with them; and the husband shews most of his dear and tender love by keeping his wife company when she is in greatest straits and dangers. So here. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then this may serve to justify the saints, and to encourage the saints to write after this fair copy that Christ has set them. Oh visit them! oh stand by them! oh stick close to them in all their troubles, distresses, and dangers. Let the same mind be in you, one towards another, as is in Christ towards you all. Are there any Jobs upon the dunghill? visit

them. Are there any Pauls in chains? find them out, and be not ashamed of their chains: 2 Tim. 1:16, 'The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain;' ver. 17, 'But when he was in Rome, he sought me out diligently, and found me;' ver. 18, 'The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day; and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.' 'He oft refreshed me.' Greek, [ἀνέψυξε,] 'Poured cold water upon me;' as that angel did upon the racked limbs of Theodorus the martyr, mentioned by Socrates and Ruffinus, in the days of Julian the apostate. It is a metaphor taken from those who, being almost overcome with heat, are refreshed by cooling. 'And was not ashamed of my chain.' Learned antiquaries observe that the apostle at this time was not in prison with fetters, but in the custody of a soldier, with whom he might go abroad, having a chain on his right arm, which was tied to the soldier's left arm. Paul at this time was not in prison, much less a close prisoner; for then Onesiphorus needed not to have made any great search to find him; but was a prisoner at large, going up and down with his keeper to despatch his affairs; and therefore he speaks not of chains in the plural number, but of a chain in the singular, with which he was tied to the soldier that kept him. It noways becomes the saints to be ashamed of the bonds or chains that may be found upon the ambassadors of Christ in an evil day. The primitive Christians were not ashamed of the martyrs' chains, but owned them in their chains, and stood by them in their chains, and frequently visited them in their chains, and freely and nobly relieved them and refreshed them in their chains: and will you, will you be ashamed to visit the saints in bonds? 'Oh let not this be told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon,' 2 Sam. 1:20, that the high-flown professors and Christians of these times are ashamed to own, relieve, and stand by the saints in bonds. So Mat. 25:36, 'I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' It is very remarkable that the last definitive sentence shall pass upon men, according to those acts of favour and kindness that have been shewed to the saints in their suffering state; and that the sentence of absolution shall contain a manifestation of all their good works. In

this great day Christ sees no iniquity in his people, he objects nothing against them, and he only makes honourable mention of the good that has been done by them. O sirs, all the visits you give to sick saints, and all the visits you give to imprisoned saints, Christ takes as visits given to himself: suffering saints and you are brethren; and will you not visit your own brethren? suffering saints and Christ are brethren; and will you not visit Christ's brethren? suffering saints and you are companions; and will you not visit your own companions? suffering saints and you are travelling heaven-wards; and will you not visit your fellow-travellers? suffering saints and you are fellow-citizens; and will you not visit your fellow-citizens? suffering saints and you are fellow-soldiers; and will you not visit your fellow-soldiers? suffering saints and you are fellow-heirs; and will you not visit your fellow-heirs? Oh, never be ashamed of those that Christ is not ashamed of! Oh, never fail to visit those whom Christ daily visits in their suffering state! Oh, never turn your backs upon those to whom Christ hath given the right hand of fellowship! Oh, be not shy of them, nor strange to them whom Christ lays daily in his bosom! Oh, be not unkind to them with whom one day you must live for ever! But,

[6.] Sixthly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then never give way to base slavish fears, Ps. 51:12, 13, and 46:1–3; Mat. 10:28, &c. There are as many fear nots in Scripture as there are fears. Take a taste of some of them:—Heb. 13:5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' Ver. 6, 'So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' This text is taken out of Ps. 118:6, 'The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Some read it by way of interrogation, 'What can man do unto me?' There is some difference in the apostle's quoting the text betwixt the Hebrew and the Greek. The Hebrew thus reads it, 'The Lord is with me,' or for me; or as our English hath translated it, 'The Lord is on my side.' The Greek thus, 'The Lord is my helper.' But the sense being the same with the Hebrew, the apostle would not alter that translation. The alteration which is in

the Greek serves for an exposition of the mind and meaning of the psalmist; for God being with us, or for us, or on our side, presupposeth that he is our helper. So as there is no contradiction betwixt the psalmist and the apostle, but a clear interpretation of the psalmist's mind; and a choice instruction thence ariseth—viz., that God's signal presence with us, for us, or on our side, may abundantly satisfy us, and assure us that he will afford all needful help and succour to us. The consideration of which should abundantly arm us against all base slavish fears. God is not present with his saints in their troubles and distresses as a stranger, but as a father; and therefore he cannot but take such special care of them, as to help them, as to succour them, and as to secure them from dangers in the midst of dangers, and therefore why should they be afraid? Isa. 43:2. The Greek word βοηθός, that is translated helper in that Heb. 13:6, according to the notation of it, signifieth one that is ready to run at the cry of another. Now this notation implieth a willing readiness and a ready willingness in God to afford all succour and relief to his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Herein God shews himself like a tender father, mother, or nurse, who presently runs when any of them hear the child cry, or see danger near: Isa. 8:10, 'God is with us.' Ver. 12, 'Fear ye not their fear, nor be afraid.' The divine presence should arm us against all base slavish fears of men's power, policy, wrath, or rage. Kings and princes, compared with God, or with the signal presence of God, are but as so many grasshoppers, skipping and leaping up and down the field; and does it become Christians that enjoy this divine presence to be afraid of grasshoppers? Isa. 40:22: Isa. 41:10, 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' God expects that his signal presence with us should arm us against all base fear and dismayedness: Ps. 23:4, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.' The divine presence raised David above all his fears: Ps. 27:1, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?' Who is the enemy that I should be afraid of? where is the enemy that

I should be afraid of? by what name or title is the enemy dignified or distinguished that I should be afraid of? I look before me and behind me, I look round about me and I look at a distance from me, and I cannot see the man, the devil, the informer that I should fear or be afraid of, for God is with me. Where God is, said king Herod in a speech to his army, there neither wants multitude nor fortitude. We may safely, readily, and cheerfully set the divine presence against all our enemies in the world. When Antigonus his admiral told him that the enemies number far exceeded his: But how many do ye set me against? said the king. Look about you and see who is with you. Ah, Christians, Christians, look about you, look about you, and see who is signally present with you, and then be afraid if you can. But,

[7.] Seventhly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then certainly there is no such great evil in troubles, distresses, sufferings, &c., as many conceive, fear, dream, think, judge. Many men look upon troubles, afflictions, sufferings, in a multiplying glass, and then they cry out, There is a lion in the way, a lion in the streets, Prov. 22:13, and 26:13. But, sirs, the lion is not always so fierce as he is painted, nor afflictions are not always so grievous as men apprehend. There are many who have been very fearful of prisons, and have looked upon a prison as a hell on this side hell, who when they have been there for righteousness' sake, and the gospel's sake, have found prisons to be palaces, and the imaginary hell to be a little heaven unto them. Many fear afflictions, and flee from afflictions as from toads and serpents, as from enemies and devils; and yet certainly there is no such great evil in affliction as they apprehend, for the Lord is signally present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Now what evil can there be in that condition wherein a man enjoys the divine presence, that makes every bitter sweet, and every burden light, and that turns winter nights into summer days, &c.? yea, many times the saints enjoy more of the singular presence of God in their afflictions, in their day of adversity, than ever they did in the day of prosperity, or in the day of their worldly glory. What bride is afraid to meet her bridegroom in a

dark entry, or in a dirty lane, or in a narrow passage, or in a solitary wood; and why then should a Christian be afraid of this or that afflicted condition, who is sure to meet his blessed bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, in every state, in every condition, who is sure to enjoy the presence of Christ with him in every turn or change that may pass upon him? How many martyrs have ventured into the very flames to meet with Christ, Heb. 11:34, and that have many other ways made a sacrifice of their dearest lives, and all to meet with Christ! Oh the cruel mockings, the scourgings, the bonds, the imprisonments, the stoning, the sawing asunder that many of the Lord's worthies have ventured upon, and all to meet with the presence of the Lord; and why then should any of you be afraid to enter into an afflicted condition, where you shall be sure to meet the singular presence of the Lord, that will certainly turn your afflicted condition into a comfortable condition to you? Rev. 12:11, and Heb. 11:36–38. The great design of the Lord in afflicting his people is to meet with them, and to draw them into a nearer communion with himself. It is that they may see more of him than ever, and taste more of him than ever, and enjoy more of him than ever; in order to which he subdues their corruptions by afflictions, and strengthens their graces, and heightens their holiness by all their troubles and trials, Isa. 1:25, 27:8, 9; Heb. 12:10, 11; Hosea 2:14. Whenever he leads his spouse into a wilderness, it is that he may speak friendly and comfortably to her, or that he may speak to her heart, as the Hebrew runs. The great design of the Lord in bringing her into a wilderness was that he might make such discoveries of himself, of his love, and of his sovereign grace, as might cheer up her heart, yea, as might even make her heart leap and dance within her. Or, as some sense it, 'I will take her alone for the purpose, even into a solitary wilderness, where I may more freely impart my mind to her,' that she having her whole desire she may come up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved, Cant. 8:5, and so be brought into the bride-house with all solemnity. By all which it is most evident that there is no such evil in a wilderness estate, in an afflicted condition, as many imagine. But,

[8.] Eighthly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then what a high encouragement should this be to poor sinners to study Christ, to acquaint themselves with Christ, to embrace Christ, to choose Christ, to close with Christ, to submit to Christ, and to make a resignation of themselves to Christ, and to secure their interest in Christ, that so they may enjoy his signal presence in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, John 1:12; Ps. 112:2, 3, and 2:12; 2 Cor. 8:5. Oh, how many mercies are wrapt up in this mercy of enjoying the singular presence of the Lord in all the troubles and trials of this life! Ps. 23:4. It is a mercy to have the presence of a friend, it is a greater to have the presence of a near and dear relation with us in a day of distress, in a day of darkness; but what a mercy is it then to have the presence of the Lord with one in a dark day! That is excellent counsel that the wisest prince that ever swayed a sceptre gives in that Eccles. 11:8, 'Remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.' When light shall be turned into darkness, pleasure into pain, delights into wearisomeness, calms into storms, summer days into winter nights, and the lightsome days of life into the dark days of old age and death; oh, now the singular presence of the Lord with a man in these days of darkness will be a mercy more worth than ten thousand worlds! To have a wise, a loving, a powerful, a faithful friend to own us in the dark, to stand by us in the dark, to uphold us in the dark, to refresh us in the dark, to encourage us in the dark, &c., is a very choice and singular mercy, Ps. 71:20, 21. Oh then, what is it to have the presence of the Lord with us in all those dark days that are to pass over our heads! What David said of the sword of Goliath in another case, 'There is none like that,' 1 Sam. 21:8, 9, that I may say of the divine presence with a man in the dark, 'There is none like that.' The psalmist hit the mark, the white, when he said, 'My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' When his 'flesh,' that is his outward man, and when his 'heart,' his courage, that is his inward man, failed him, then God was 'the strength of his heart,' or 'the rock of his heart,' as the Hebrew runs. At the very last gasp God came in with his sovereign cordial, and revived him and recovered

him, and brought new life and strength into him. When a saint is at worst, when he is at lowest, when he is even overwhelmed with troubles and sorrows, and when the days of darkness so multiply upon him that he seems past all hope of recovery, then the divine presence does most gloriously manifest itself and display itself in supporting, strengthening, comforting, and encouraging of him. In the Rev. 4:6, you read that the world is like a sea of glass, 'I saw before the throne a sea of glass.' The world is transitory, very frail and brittle as glass, and it is unstable, tumultuous, and troublesome as the sea. Here the world is shadowed out to us by a sea of glass; and how can we stand on this sea, how can we live on this sea, how can we walk on this sea, if Christ don't take us by the hand, and lead us and support us and secure us? O sirs, we cannot uphold ourselves on this sea of glass, nor others cannot uphold us on this sea of glass; it is none but dear Jesus, it is no presence but his singular presence that can make us to stand or go on this sea of glass. And if this world be a sea of glass, oh what infinite cause have we to secure our interest in Christ, who alone can pilot us safe over this troublesome, dangerous, and tempestuous sea! Oh that I could prevail with poor sinners to take Christ into the ship of their souls, that so he may pilot them safe into the heavenly harbour, the heavenly Canaan. No pilot in heaven or earth can land you on the shore of a happy eternity, from off this sea of glass, but Jesus. When on this sea of glass the winds blow high, storms arise, and the bold waves beat into the ship, oh then the sinner cries, 'A kingdom for a Christ,' a world for a pilot to save us from eternal drowning! Oh that before eternal storms and tempests do beat upon poor sinners, they would be prevailed with to close with Christ, to accept of Christ, and to enter into a marriage-covenant, a marriage-union with Christ; that so they may enjoy his singular presence with them whilst they are on this sea of glass, Ps. 11:6, and 9:17; Hosea 2:19, 20; 2 Cor. 11:2. There is no presence so greatly desirable, so absolutely necessary, and so exceeding sweet and comfortable, as the presence of Christ; and therefore, before all and above all, secure this presence of Christ by matching with the person of Christ, and then you will be safe and happy on a sea of glass. But,

[9.] Ninthly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then let me infer that unbelief, infidelity, and despondency of spirit in an evil day, does very ill become the people of God. Is the Lord present with you in your greatest troubles, and will you flag in your faith, and be crestfallen in your courage, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall? Isa. 25:4; what is this but to tell all the world that there is more power in your troubles to sink and daunt you, than there is in the presence of the Lord to support and encourage you? When a Christian is upon the very banks of the Red Sea, yet then the divine presence should encourage him 'to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord,' Exod. 14:13. It would be good for timorous Christians in an evil day to dwell much upon the prophet's commission: Isa. 35:3, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not.' Ah, but how shall weak hands be strong, and a timorous heart cease to fear and faint? Why, 'Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you;' he is on his way, he will be suddenly with you, yea, he is already in the midst of you, and he will save you. If you cast but your eye upon precious promises, if you cast but your eye upon the new covenant, which is God's great storehouse, there you will find all supports, all supplies, all helps, and all comforts, laid up, and laid in for you; and therefore never despond, never faint, never be discouraged in an evil day, in a dark time. As Joseph had his storehouses to give a full supply to the Egyptians in time of famine, so dear Jesus, of whom Joseph was but a type, has his storehouses of mercy, of goodness, of power, of plenty, of bounty, out of which in the worst of times he is able to give his people a full supply according to all their needs; and therefore be not discouraged, do not despond in a day of trouble. O my friends, how often has the Lord hid you in the secret of his presence from the pride of men, and kept you secretly in his pavilion from the strife of tongues! Ps. 27:5, and 31:20. And therefore 'be strong, and lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,' Heb. 12:12. When David was in a very great distress, he does not despond nor give way to unbelief, but

encourages himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. 30:6. The Hebrew word is derived from Chazack, which notes a laying hold on God with all his strength, as men do when they are in danger of drowning, who will suffer anything rather than let go their hold. When David was almost under water, when he was in danger of drowning, then, by a hand of faith, he lays hold on the Rock of Ages, and encourages himself in the Lord his God. What heavenly gallantry of spirit did good Nehemiah shew from that divine presence that was with him in that great day of trouble and distress, when 'the remnant of the captivity were in great affliction and reproach: and the wall of Jerusalem broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire!' Neh. 1:3. You know Shemaiah advises him to take sanctuary in the temple, because the enemy had designed to fall upon him by night and slay him, and cause the work to cease; but Nehemiah, having a signal presence of God with him, gives this heroic and resolute answer, 'Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life?' Neh. 6:10, 11. I will not go in. Should I flee into the temple like a malefactor to take sanctuary there, how would God be dishonoured, religion reproached, the people discouraged, the weak scandalised, and the wicked emboldened to insult and triumph over me! saying, Is this the man that is called by God, and qualified by God, for this work and service? Is this the man that is countenanced and encouraged by the king to build the walls, and gates, and city of Jerusalem? Neh. 2:5–10. Is this the man that is the chief magistrate and governor of the city? Is this the man that is sent and set for the defence of the people, and that should encourage them in their work? Oh what a mouth of blasphemy would be opened, should I make a base retreat into the temple to save my life! This is a work that I will rather die than do. I have found the face of God, the presence of God, in bowing the heart of king Artaxerxes, to contribute his royal aid, and commission me to the work; and in the bending of the hearts of the elders of the Jews to own my authority, and to rise up as one man to build; and therefore I will rather die upon the spot than go into the temple to save my life. O my friends, it becomes not those that have the presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most

deadly dangers, to sink so low in their faith and confidence, as to cry out with the prophet's servant, 'Alas, master! what shall we do?' or, with the disciples when in a storm, 'We perish;' or, with the whole house of Israel, 'Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts;' or, with weeping Jeremiah, 'My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord;' or, with Zion, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me,' 2 Kings 6:15; Mat. 8:25; Ezek. 37:11; Lam. 3:18; Isa. 49:14. Oh, it is for a lamentation when God's dearest children shall bewray their infidelity by a fainting, sinking, discouraged spirit in an evil day. But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, Will the Lord be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? Then let the people of the Lord be very thankful for his presence with them in their greatest troubles, &c., Exod. 33:13–16; 2 Tim. 4:22; Ps. 16:11. O sirs! this divine presence is a great mercy. It is a peculiar mercy, it is a distinguishing mercy, it is a big-bellied mercy, it is a mercy that hath many mercies in the womb of it. It is a mercy-greatening mercy; it greatens all the mercies we do enjoy. It is a mercy-sweetening mercy; it sweetens health, strength, riches, honours, trade, relations, liberty, &c. It is a soul-mercy, a mercy that reaches the soul, that cheers the soul, that lifts up the soul, that quiets the soul, that satisfies the soul, and that will go to heaven with the soul, Eph. 1:3. And will you not be thankful for such a mercy? Will you be thankful for temporal mercies, and will you not be thankful for spiritual mercies? Will you be thankful for left-handed mercies, and will you not be thankful for right-handed mercies? Will you be thankful for the mercies of the footstool, and will you not be thankful for the mercies of the throne? Will you be thankful for the mercies of this lower world, and will you not be thankful for the mercies of the upper world? Ps. 103:1–4. To enjoy the presence of God when we most need it, is a mercy that deserves perpetual praises. Oh, it is infinite mercy not to be left alone in a day of trouble. It is very uncomfortable to be left alone: 'Woe to him that is alone,' Eccles. 4:10, 11. If a man fall, and be left alone, who shall help him up? If a man be in danger and alone, how miserable is his case! But

this is the support and comfort of a Christian in all his difficulties, that he is never left alone; but his God is with him when he is at the lowest ebb, Heb. 13:5; Ps. 37:24, 31:3, 73:24; Exod. 33:2, 14–16. For God to afford us the presence of our friends in a day of trouble is a very great mercy; but what is it, then, to enjoy the presence of God in a day of trouble? What is the presence of a friend, a favourite, in a day of distress, to the presence of a prince? yea, what is the presence of an angel to the presence of God in an evil day? To enjoy the presence of God in an afflicted condition is a more transcendent mercy than to enjoy the presence of twelve legions of angels in an afflicted condition. The divine presence is the greatest good in the world. It is life eternal; it is the bosom of God, the gate of glory, the beginning of heaven, the suburbs of happiness; and therefore be much in blessing of God, in admiring of God, for his presence with you in a dark and trying day. There is no gall, no wormwood, no affliction, no judgment to that of God's departing from a people, Lam. 3:19, 20: Jer. 6:8, 'Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.' When God departs, nothing followeth but desolation upon desolation; desolation of persons, desolation of peace, of prosperity, of trade, and of all that is near and dear unto us: Hosea 9:12, 'Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left; yea, woe also to them when I depart from them.' All terrible threatenings are summed up in this, 'Woe unto them when I depart from them.' Surely even woe to them; he put a sureness upon this 'woe to them when I depart from them.' As if the Holy Ghost should say, What, do I threaten this or the other evil? the great evil of all, the rise of all evils, is God's forsaking of them. Hell itself is nothing else but a separation from God's presence, with the ill consequents thereof. And were hell as full of tears as the sea is full of water, yet all would not be sufficient to bewail the loss of that beatifical vision. How miserable was Cain when cast off by God! Gen. 4; and Saul, when the Lord departed from him! It was a most dreadful speech of Saul, 'I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me,' 1 Sam. 28:15, 16. When God left the Israelites, though for a little while,

the Holy Ghost saith they were naked, Exod. 32:25. How naked? Non veste, sed gratia et præsidio Dei, Not for want of raiment, or weapons of war, but for want of God's presence and protection. When God departs from a people, that people lies naked; that is, they lie open for all storms, tempests, and dangers. Now if it be the greatest evil in the world to be shut out from the gracious presence of Christ, then it must be the greatest mercy in this world to enjoy the gracious presence of God in our great troubles and desperate dangers. And therefore let all sincere Christians be much in thankfulness to the Lord, and in blessing and praising the Lord, for his signal presence with them in their low and afflicted estate. Oh, the light, the life, the love, the holiness, the peace, the grace, the comforts, the supports that always attends the gracious presence of the Lord with his people in their deep distresses, &c. Therefore let the high praises of God for ever be in their mouths, who enjoy this signal presence of God. The 46th Psalm is called by some Luther's psalm; that is a psalm that Luther was wont to call to his friends to sing when any danger, trouble, or distress was near. When the clouds began to gather, Come, saith Luther, let us sing the 46th Psalm, and then let our enemies do their worst. Observe the confidence and triumph of the church in the face of the greatest dangers: ver. 1, 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble:' ver. 2, 'Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;' ver. 3, 'Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.' Ver. 6, 'Though the heathen rage, and the kingdoms were moved,' to remove and root out the church with great force and fury. Now mark, by the change of the earth and removing of the mountains, are often meant the greatest alterations and concussions of states and polities, Hag. 2:22, 23; Jer. 51:25; Rev. 6:14. Now, saith the psalmist, all these dreadful turns, changes, shakings, and concussions of states and kingdoms shall never trouble us, nor daunt us; they shall never make us fret, faint, or fear. Why, what is the ground? 'The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge,' ver. 7; and so, ver. 11, the same words are repeated again. 'God is not gone, God is not withdrawn, God is not departed from us.'

Oh no! 'The Lord of hosts is with us, the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge, the God of Jacob is our refuge;' and therefore we are divinely fearless and divinely careless. Though hell and earth should combine against us, yet we will bear up, and be bold to believe that all shall go well with us; for God is in the midst of us, 'The Lord of hosts is with us,' even the Lord, who commandeth far other hosts and armies than the enemy hath any. 'The God of Jacob is our refuge;' Heb., 'Our high tower.' God is a tower, so high, so strong, so inaccessible, so invincible, that all our enemies, yea, all the powers of darkness, can never hurt, reach, storm, or take; and therefore we that are sheltered in this high tower may well cast the gauntlet to our proudest, strongest, and subtlest enemies. And let thus much suffice for the inferences.

The next use is a use of exhortation, to exhort all the people of God so to order and demean themselves as to keep the divine presence, as to keep the signal, the singular presence of God, with them in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Now that this may stick in power upon your souls, consider seriously of these following motives:—

[1.] First, The signal presence of God with his people puts the greatest honour, dignity, and glory upon a people imaginable; vide Isa. 43:2, 4; Jer. 13:11; Ezek. 48:35. There are many titles of honour amongst men; but this, above all, is the truly honourable title, that we have God so near unto us: Deut. 4:7, 'What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is to us?' Whilst he vouchsafed his presence amongst them, how honourable, how renowned were they all the world over! But when he departed from them they became the scorn and contempt of all nations. It may be said of some men, they have large estates, but not the presence of God with them; they are highly honoured and dignified in the world, but no presence of God with them; they have great trades and vast riches, but no presence of God with them; they are nobly related, but no presence of God with them; they have singular parts and natural accomplishments, but no presence of God

with them. The want of the divine presence gives a dash, casts a blot upon all their grandeurs and worldly glory, and, like coprice, turns all their wine, be it never so rich, into ink and blackness. What a deal of honour and glory did the presence of God cast upon Joseph in prison, Gen. 39:19, 20; and upon Daniel in the den; and upon the three children in the fiery furnace; and upon David, when a persecuting Saul could cry out, 'Thou art more righteous than I,' 1 Sam. 24:17; and upon John, when a bloody Herod feared him and observed him, Mark 6:20; and upon Paul, when a tyrannical Felix trembled before him, Acts 24:25; as if Paul had been the judge, and Felix the prisoner at the bar. Some write of the crystal, that what stone soever it toucheth, it puts a lustre and loveliness upon it. The presence of God puts the greatest lustre, beauty, glory, and loveliness that can be put upon a person. Now because the witness of an adversary is a double testimony, let Balaam—who, as some write of a toad, had a pearl in his head, though his heart was naught, very naught, stark naught—give in his evidence. 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel,' Num. 24:5. He speaks both by way of interrogation and admiration: their tents are so comely, and their tabernacles so lovely, that their grand enemy was affected and ravished with them. But whence is it that Israel is so formidable and terrible in his eye? How comes this about, that he who came to fight against them thinks them beyond all compare; nay, doth himself admire their postures and order, their great glory and brave gallantry? Why, all is from the presence of their Lord-General with them: 'The Lord their God is with them; the shout of a king is amongst them,' Num. 23:21. It is the highest honour, renown, and dignity of a people to have God in the midst of them, to have God near unto them. Thus Moses sets out the honour and dignity of the Jews: Deut. 26:18, 'The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people:' ver. 19, 'To make thee high, above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour.' When God reckons up the dignities of his people, this is the main, the top, of all: Ps. 87:5, 'And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her.' If you would keep your honour and dignity, keep the presence of God in the midst of

you. When God is departed from Israel, then you may write Ichabod upon Israel; 'The glory is departed from Israel,' 1 Sam. 4:21, 22. But,

[2.] Secondly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves as you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that nothing can make up the want of this signal presence of God. It is not the presence of friends, of relations, of ministers, of ordinances, of outward comforts, that can make up the want of this presence. It is not candlelight, or torchlight, or starlight, nor moonlight, that can make up the light of the sun. When the sun is set in a cloud, all the world cannot make it day; and when the presence of God is withdrawn, nothing can make up that dismal loss. 'Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled,' Ps. 30:6, 7, that is, thou didst suspend the actual influence and communication of thy grace and favour. The Chaldee calleth it 'Shechinah, the divine presence:' and I was all-amort. It was not his crown, his kingdom, his riches, his dignities, his royal attendance, &c., that could make up the loss of the face of God; neither is it the presence of an angel that can make up the want of the presence of God: Exod. 33:2, 'And I will send an angel before thee' God here promiseth Moses that he would send an angel before them, but withal adds that he would not go up himself in the midst of them: ay, but such a guide, such a guardian, such a nurse, such a companion, such a captain-general would not satisfy Moses, Exod. 33:3. Ver. 14, 'And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.' Ver. 15, 'And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' Nothing would satisfy Moses below the presence of God, because he knew that they were as good never move a foot farther, as to go on without God's favourable presence. God engages himself that he will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite out of the land. Oh, but 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence.' I will bring the necks of all thy proud, stout, strong, and subtle enemies under thy feet. Oh, but 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' Ay, but, Deut. 32:13–16, 'I will bring thee to a land flowing with milk and honey: I will make thee to

ride on the high places of the earth, and I will make thee to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; and thou shalt drink the pure blood of the grape.' Oh, but 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' I will bring thee to the paradise of the world, to a place of pleasure and delight, to Canaan, a type of heaven! Oh, but 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' O Lord, if I might have my wish, my desire, my choice, I had infinitely rather to live in a barren, howling wilderness with thy presence, than in Canaan without it! It is a mercy to have an angel to guard us, it is a mercy to have our enemies sprawling under our feet, it is a mercy to be brought into a pleasant land: oh, but 'if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.' Lord, nothing will please us, nothing will profit us, nothing will secure us, nothing will satisfy us, without thy presence; and therefore 'if thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.' I have read of the Tyrians, that they bound their gods with chains, that they might not in their greatest need pass over to the enemy; and among the rest they chained and nailed their god Apollo to a post, that they might be sure to keep their idol, because they thought their safety was in it. I am sure our safety, our comfort, our all, lies in the signal presence of God with us; and therefore let us by faith and prayer chain God to us; if we let him go, a thousand worlds cannot make up his absence. I suppose you have heard of the palladium of the heathens in Troy; they imagined that so long as that idol was kept safe, they were unconquerable; all the strength and power of Greece were never able to prevail against them. Wherefore the Grecians sought by all the means they could to get it from them. O my friends, so long as you keep the presence of God with you, I am sure you are unconquerable! but if God withdraw his presence, the weakest enemy will be too hard for you, yea, wounded men will prevail over you: Jer. 37:10, 'For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up and burn this city with fire.' The bush, which was a type of the church, consumed not while it burned with fire, because God was in the midst of it. Oh, do but keep God in the midst of you, and nothing shall hurt you, nothing shall burn you I but if God depart, nothing

can secure you, nor nothing can make up his withdrawing from you. But,

[3.] Thirdly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in the greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that if you do not labour to demean, order, and carry yourselves so as that you may enjoy the favourable, signal, and eminent presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, you have high reason to question whether ever you have really enjoyed this favourable, this signal presence of God with you or no; for there are always four things to be found in him that has really tasted, and in good earnest experienced, the sweet, the life, the power, the virtue, that is in the favourable signal presence of God— (1.) Such a person sets the highest price and value imaginable upon it, he prizes it above all the honours, riches, dignities, delights, comforts, and contents of this world, Ps. 4:6, 7; yea, he prizes it above life itself: Ps. 63:3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' The Hebrew is plural, Chajim, lives. The loving-kindness of God, the presence of God in a wilderness, is better than lives, than many lives, than all lives with the appurtenances. There is a greater excellency in the favour of God, in the presence of God, than in all lives put together. There have been many persons that have been weary of their lives, but there never was any man that has been weary of the favour of God, of the presence of God, 1 Kings 19:4; Job 7:15; Jonah 4:8; Prov. 28:14. (2.) Such a person keeps up in his soul a humble fear of losing of it. The divine presence is a jewel more worth than all the world, and he that has experienced the sweetness of it had rather lose all he hath in this world than lose it. I have read of a religious woman, that having born nine children, professed that she had rather endure all the pains of those nine travails at once, than endure the misery of the loss of God's presence. (3.) Such a person keeps up in his soul a diligent care to maintain this presence; his head, his heart is still a-contriving how he may keep his God with him: Jer. 14:9, 'Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are

called by thy name; leave us not.' This person had rather that his dearest friends should leave him, that his nearest relations should leave him, yea, that all the world should leave him, than that his God should leave him. The daily, yea, the hourly language of the soul is, Lord, leave me not; though all the world should leave me, yet don't thou leave me! (4.) Such a person will do all he can that all under his care and charge may partake of this signal presence of God; he will do his utmost that children, yoke-fellow, kindred, servants, may taste the sweetness of the divine presence, John 1:40 to the end, and 4:28–43; Acts 10:24–36. When Samson had found honey in the carcase of the lion, he did not only eat himself, but he gave of the honey to his father and mother, and they did eat also, Judg. 14:8, 9. Of all sweets the presence of God is the greatest sweet; and whenever a poor soul comes to taste of this heavenly honey, he will do his best that all others, especially those that are near and dear to him, may taste of the same honey. But,

[4.] Fourthly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider the excellent properties or qualities of this favourable, this signal presence of God with his people. This I can but hint at, because I must hasten all I can to a close. (1.) It is the best presence, Ps. 63:3. It is better than the presence of friends, of relations, of saints, of angels, &c. (2.) It is the greatest presence, it is the presence of the great King, it is the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords, it is the presence not only of a mighty but of an almighty God, 1 Kings 8:27; Rev. 17:14, and 19:16; Num. 24:4, 16; Ruth 1:20, 22. (3.) It is the happiest presence. It is a presence that makes a man really happy, presently happy, totally happy, eminently happy, and eternally happy, Ps. 144:15; 1 Kings 10:8; Deut. 33:29; Prov. 3:18. He can never be truly happy that wants this presence; he can never be truly miserable that enjoys this presence. True happiness is too great a thing to be found in anything below this favourable, this signal presence of God. He that enjoys this presence enjoys all; he that wants this presence enjoys nothing at all; he that wants this presence may write nothing

or nought upon his honours, riches, pleasures, dignities, offices, relations, friends, &c., Amos 6:13. All a man has are but ciphers without a figure if he be not blessed with this divine presence. This divine presence was Jacob's 'enough,' yea, Jacob's 'all:' Gen. 33:11, 'I have all,' Esau had much, Li-zab, 'I have much, my brother;' ver. 9, 'But Jacob had all.' Habet omnia, qui habet habentem omnia, 'He hath all who hath him that is all in all.' Omne bonum in summo bono, 'All good is in the chiefest good,' [Augustine.] Secure this divine presence, and you secure all, Col. 3:11. (4.) It is the most desirable presence. Consult these scriptures in the margin. Job 23:3, 'Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat.' Exod. 33:15, 'If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence;' ver. 16, 'For wherein shall it be known here, that I and my people have found grace in thy sight, is it not in that thou goest with us?' Cant. 3:1, 'By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth, I sought him, but I found him not.' The presence of bad men is never desirable; the presence of good men is not always desirable, for there are cases wherein their presence may be a burden to us, as Job and others have experienced, Jer. 9:1, 2; Job 16:1-4, and 19:3-5. Job 16:2, 'Miserable comforters are ye all;' chap. 19:2, 'How long will you vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?' But the presence of the Lord is very desirable, most desirable, and always desirable, and the more any man has of this divine presence, the more his heart will be inflamed after more and more of it. A sound sincere Christian can never have enough power against sin, nor never enough strength against temptation, nor never enough weanedness from this world, nor never enough ripeness for heaven, nor never enough of the presence of the Lord. Enough of the divine presence he may have to quiet him, and cheer him, and encourage him, but whilst he is out of heaven he can never have enough of the divine presence to satisfy him, so as not to cry out, Lord, more of thy presence! oh, a little more of thy presence! Prov. 30:15, 16. (5.) It is the most joyful, refreshing, and delightful presence, Ps. 16:11; Acts 5:40, 41, and 16:25. This Vincentius and many thousand martyrs and suffering Christians have experienced in all the ages of the world, but of this before, Isa. 60:1, 2; Ps. 46:7. (6.) It is a peculiar and distinguishing

presence, Exod. 33:16. This favourable signal presence of God is a choice jewel that he hangs on no breasts, a bracelet that he puts upon no arms, a crown that he sets upon no heads, but such whom he loves with a peculiar love, with an everlasting love. The general presence of God extends and reaches to all sinners and saints, angels and devils; to all, both in that upper and this lower world; but this favourable signal presence of God is peculiar to those that are the purchase of Christ's blood, and the travail of his soul, Jer. 31:3; John 13:1; Ps. 139:7–10; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Isa. 53:11; Ruth 1:4–18. (7.) It is an inflaming presence. Oh, how does it, [1.] In flame the heart to duty! Ps. 63:1–3. [2.] How does it inflame the heart against sin! Job 31:4–7; Gen. 39:9, 10; Rom. 8:10. [3.] To long for the majestic and glorious presence of God in heaven, Cant. 8:14; Luke 2:28–30; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 22:20. [4.] How does it inflame their love to the Lord, his ways, his worship, his interest, his glory! Cant. 1:3, 4, 2:3–6, and 8:1–3, 5–7. [5.] It inflames against temptations, ver. 10, 11. It was this divine presence that did steel and strengthen Basil, Luther, and a world of others, against the worst of temptations, Heb. 11. [6.] It inflames the hearts of the saints into great freeness, readiness, and willingness to suffer many things, to suffer great things, to suffer anything for Christ, his gospel, his interest, &c. Oh, how did this divine presence make many martyrs hasten to the flames! &c. [8.] It is a soul-quieting, a soul-silencing, and a soul-stilling presence, Ps. 3:5, 4:8; Cant. 2:3, 3:4, 5. When friends can't quiet us, when relations can't quiet us, when ministers can't quiet us, when duties can't quiet us, when ordinances can't quiet us, when outward comforts can't quiet us, yet then this divine presence will quiet us. When babies and rattles can't quiet the child, yet then the breasts can. So here. [9.] This divine presence is a sweetening presence: (1.) It sweetens all duties and services, public and private, ordinary and extraordinary. (2.) It sweetens all personal afflictions and trials. (3.) It sweetens all our sufferings for righteousness' sake. (4.) It sweetens all gospel ordinances, Exod. 20:24. (5.) It sweetens all a man's outward mercies and blessings; it sweetens health, strength, riches, trade, &c. (6.) It sweetens all interchangeable providences. Here providence smiles, and there it frowns; here it lifts up, and there it

casts down; this providence is sweet, and that is bitter; this providence kills, and that providence makes alive. Oh, but this divine presence sweetens every providence! (7.) It sweetens all other presences; it sweetens the presence of friends, it sweetens the presence of relations, it sweetens the presence of strangers, it sweetens all civil societies, it sweetens all religious societies. (8.) It sweetens the thoughts of death, the arrests of death; it turns the king of terrors into the king of desires, Job 14:5, 14, 30:23, and 17:13, 14. How does Job court the worms, as if he were of a family with them, and near of kin to them! How does he look upon the grave as his bed, and makes no more to die than to go to bed! It was this divine presence that made the martyrs as willing to die as to dine. But,

[5.] Fifthly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that in great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, you will most need the favourable signal presence of God with you. We always stand in need of the divine presence, but never so much as when we are under great troubles and deep distresses. For, (1.) In days of trouble and distress, men's affections are most apt to be greatly disordered, and their hearts discomposed, as you see in Job and Jonah, Job 3; Jonah. 4. (2.) Now their fears, doubts, and disputes are apt to rise highest. When the wind rises high, and the sea roars, men are most apt to be afraid, Jonah 2:2–7. (3.) Now Satan commonly is busiest. Satan loves to fish in troubled waters. When the hand of God is heaviest upon us, then Satan will shoot his most deadly darts at us, Job 2:9; James 1:12. The sons of Jacob fell upon the Shechemites when they were sore, Gen. 34:25; and Amalek fell upon God's Israel and smote them, when they were weak, and feeble, and faint, and weary, Deut. 25:17–19; and Satan falls foul upon Christ, when he was in the wilderness, and when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, and was a-hungry, Mat. 4:1–11; and as he dealt with the head, so he still deals with the members. (4.) Now unbelief is most turbulent, strong, and mighty in operation, as you may see in the spies, Num. 13:31–33, 'We be not able to go up against the people,

for they are stronger than we. The land through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature; and there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight:' so 2 Kings 6:33, 'This evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?' Vide 2 Kings 7:1, 2, 19, 20: so David, Ps. 116:11, 'I said in my haste, all men are liars.' The prophets have all deceived me, and Samuel has deluded me, they have told me of a kingdom, a crown, but I shall never wear the one, nor possess the other: so 1 Sam. 27:1, 'I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul.' Thus his fear is got above his faith, and his soul wherried about with unbelief, to the scandal of the weak, and the scorn of the wicked, besides his own particular disadvantage. (5.) Now fainting fits will be most strengthened, increased, and multiplied. Now fainting-fits, like Job's messengers, or like the rolling waves, will come thick one upon another, Prov. 24:10; Job 4:5; Lam. 1:12, 13. (6.) Now conscience will be most startled and disquieted, Gen. 42:21, and 50:15; 1 Kings 17:18. Great troubles and deep distresses are many times like strong phisic, which stirs the humours and makes the patient sick, very sick, yea, heart-sick. Conscience commonly never reads the soul such sad and serious lectures as when the rod lies heaviest upon the back. By all which you see, what high cause the people of God have so to order, demean, and carry themselves, as that they may find the gracious presence of God with them in their greatest troubles, and deepest distresses, for then they will certainly need most of the divine presence. But,

[6.] Sixthly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider this divine presence will make you divinely fearless in the midst of your greatest troubles and deepest distresses: Ps. 23:4, '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:' Ps. 46:2, 'We will not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried

into the midst of the sea:' ver. 3, 'Though the waters thereof roar,' &c. Why? 'God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early,' ver. 5; 'The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah,' ver. 7: Num. 14:9, 'Neither fear ye the people, for they are bread for us, their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us; fear them not:' Deut. 7:21, 'Thou shalt not be affrighted at them, for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible:' so Heb. 13:5, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:' ver. 6, 'I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' There is no such way to keep down all base slavish fears of men, as to keep up the presence of God in the midst of you. You will not fear the power of men, nor the policy of men, nor the threats of men, nor the wrath of men, if you do but enjoy this gracious, this signal presence of God that is under our present consideration. Men's fears are never so rampant as when God withdraws his presence from them, 1 Sam. 28:15, 20. But,

[7.] Seventhly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that there is in God a very great unwillingness to withdraw his presence from his people when they are in great troubles and deep distresses: Ezek. 8:6, 'Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary?' Isa. 1:2-4, 16, 18; Ezek. 18:31, and 33:11; Jer. 3:13, 14. Of all sins, the sin of idolatry drives God farthest off from his sanctuary. When God goes off from a people, he goes not off rashly, he goes not off suddenly, but he goes off gradually; he removes not at once, but by degrees; now a step, and then a step, as Lot did when he lingered in Sodom, Gen. 19:16. Lot was not more loath to depart out of Sodom than God is loath to leave his people. He goes first to the threshold: Ezek. 9:3, 'And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub whereupon he was to the threshold of the house.' Then over the threshold: 10:4, 'Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house.' Here is a second step. This is the second time

of resting before God departs. The Lord had his ordinary dwelling-place in the holy of holies. Now God's first remove was from the most holy place; his second remove was from the holy place; his third remove was higher towards heaven: ver. 19, 'And the cherubims lift up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight, then to the door of the east gate,' or foremost gate, 'of the Lord's house,' to note God's total remove from his house. Then to the midst of the city: Ezek. 11:23, 'And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and then he stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.' This is God's last stop in his departure, by which is signified that he was willing to make one trial more, to see if the people would, in this present danger, call him back by invitation and lively repentance. God is greatly troubled when it comes to parting: Hosea 11:8, 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.' This is spoken per anthropopatheian and not properly, because diverse thoughts and repentance are not incident to God, 'who is without all variableness, or shadow of change,' James 1:17. The Lord seemeth here to be at a stand, or at strife with himself, about the destruction of this people. Howbeit God, in the bowels of his mercy, yearning, and taking pity of his elect amongst them, spareth to lay upon them the extremity of his wrath, and is ready to save them for his mercy's sake. Observe how fatherlike he melts and mourns over them, and how mercy interposeth her four several 'hows!' Here are four such pathetic interrogations as the like are not to be found in the whole book of God, and not to be answered by any but God himself, as indeed he doth to each particular in the following words: 'My heart is turned within me;' that is the first answer. The second is, 'My repentings are kindled together.' The third is, 'I will not execute the fierceness of my wrath.' The fourth is, 'I will not destroy Ephraim.' And why? First, 'I am God, and not man;' secondly, 'The Holy One in the midst of thee.' God is mighty unwilling to break up house, and to leave his people desolate. Now is God so unwilling to withdraw his presence; and shall not we do all what we can to retain him in the midst of us? When dear friends are

unwilling to leave us, we are the more earnest in pressing them to stay and abide with us. God is marvellously unwilling to go, and therefore let us, with the church, cry out, 'Leave us not,' Jer. 14:9. But,

[8.] Eighthly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that troubles will be no troubles, distresses will be no distresses, dangers will be no dangers, if you can but secure the presence of God with you. Mountains will be molehills, stabs at the heart will be but as scratches upon the hand, if the divine presence be with you. God's signal presence will turn storms into calms, winter nights into summer days, prisons into palaces, banishments into enlargements. The favourable presence of God will turn sickness into health, weakness into strength, poverty into plenty, and death into life. It can never be night so long as the sun shines. No afflictions, no trials, can make it night with a Christian, so long as he enjoys the presence of God with his spirit, 2 Tim. 4:22. That courtier need not complain that this man slights him, and that the other neglects him, who enjoys the delightful presence of his prince. When Samson had the presence of God with him, he made nothing of carrying the gates of the city, with the posts and bars, to the top of a hill, Judges 16:3. So whilst a Christian enjoys the singular presence of God with him, he will make nothing of this affliction and that, of this trouble and that, of this loss and that. This presence makes heavy afflictions light, and long afflictions short, and bitter afflictions sweet, 2 Cor. 4:16, 17. It was this presence that made the martyrs set light by all the great and grievous things that they suffered for Christ's sake and the gospel's sake, Heb. 11:33–39. God's gracious presence makes every condition to be a little heaven to the believing soul. A man in misery, without this gracious presence of God, is in a very hell on this side hell. There is nothing, there can be nothing, but heaven, where God is signally present. But,

[9.] Ninthly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that the worst of men cannot fasten a curse upon you whilst you keep the presence of God with you: Num. 23:21, 'The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.' There could be no enchantment against them, for the Lord their God was with them, and the shout of a king was among them, that is, God reigneth as a king among them. Hereby also is meant the faith, joy, boldness, courage, and confidence of God's people in their king. As when a king comes amongst the armies of his people, he is received with joyful shoutings and acclamations, and when he goes forth to battle with them, he goes accompanied with the sound of trumpets and shouts of the people, signs of their joy and courage; so it fared with the Israelites, because of that signal presence of God that was amongst them, which was evident by his protecting and defending of them: 1 Sam. 4:5, 'And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again.' Here is a valorous shout of a puissant people, encouraging each other to the battle, and a victorious shout as having obtained the victory in the battle. So 2 Chron. 13:12, 'And behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you, O children of Israel.' Num. 23:23, 'Surely, there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel;' that is, there is none against Israel that shall be of force, or that shall take any effect to do the posterity of Jacob or Israel any hurt, any harm, any prejudice. But why? Because the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. The presence of God with his Israel blasts all Balaam's enchantments, and makes null and void all his divinations. God is with his people to counsel them in all doubtful and difficult cases, and to defend them, and secure them against all their enemies and opposers. Balaam had a month's mind to curse the people of God, as his unwearied endeavours to that purpose do abundantly evidence, Num. 23:1, 13, 28, 29, and 24:1; but the presence of God with his people prevented all his mischievous designs. Shimei curses David, but his curses could not hurt him, for

God was with him, 2 Sam. 16:7, 9, 11, 12. The people generally cursed Jeremiah, chap. 15:10, and 1:17–19; but all their curses could not harm him, for God was with him. The Jews in their prayers daily curse the Christian churches, but all their curses can't prejudice them, because God is in the midst of them, Exod. 20:24. And who will say that the reformed churches are one pin the worse for all the pope's excommunications and execrations with bell, book, and candle? The signal presence of God with his people is a most sovereign antidote against all the curses and cursings of cursed men, and therefore whatever you part with, be sure you don't part with your God; let him be but in the midst of you, and then no curses shall be prevalent against you. This age abounds with such monsters, whose mouths are full of curses; but if every curse should stick a visible blister on the curser's tongue, as it doth insensible ones on the curser's soul, their tongues would quickly be too big for their mouths, and they would soon grow weary of cursing the people of God, the things of God, the ways of God, the providences of God, and the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God. But the best of it is, when they have done their worst, and spat out all their curses, 'the curse causeless will not come,' Prov. 26:2, for the ever-blessed God is in his people, and with his people, and among his people, and 'a wall of fire always about his people,' Zech. 2:5, and therefore they are safe and secure enough when men and devils have done their worst. But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, To move you so to order, demean, and carry yourselves, as that you may enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, consider that the divine presence will make up the absence of all outward comforts. This gracious presence will supply and fill up the place of a friend, a child, a father, a husband. Some of the rabbis write that manna had all sorts of tastes and all sorts of sweets in it. Sure I am that the favourable presence of God has all sorts of sweets in it, Ps. 4:6, 7; Prov. 4:23. It has the sweet of all ordinances in it, it has the sweet of all duties in it, it has the sweet of all church privileges in it, it has the sweet of all relations in it, it has the sweet of all your outward comforts in it; and therefore, above all keeping, keep the presence of

God with you. Many in their distresses and miseries are full of complaints. One cries out, he wants a faithful friend; another cries out, he wants an active relation; a third cries out that he wants necessaries both for back and belly; a fourth cries out he wants the means that others enjoy; but he that enjoys the gracious presence of God finds all these wants made up to him—yea, he finds the divine presence to be infinitely better than the presence of all outward comforts. As Elkanah said to Hannah, 'Am not I better than ten sons?' 1 Sam. 1:8, so assuredly the presence of the Lord is wonderfully better than all other things to every soul that has tasted the sweetness of it. You know that one sun is more glorious, delightful, useful, and comfortable than ten thousand stars; so here. Seneca tells a courtier that had lost his son, *Fas tibi non est, salvo Cæsare, de fortuna tua queri, &c.*, That he had no cause to mourn, either for that or aught else, so long as his sovereign was in safety, and he in favour with his sovereign; he had all things in him, and he should be unthankful to his good fortune if he were not cheerful both in heart and look, so long as things stood so with him as they did. How much more may we say to every sincere Christian that enjoys the gracious presence of God with him, let thy wants and thy crosses be never so great, thy afflictions never so pressing, thy necessities never so biting, thou hast no just cause to be troubled or dejected, so long as thou art in favour with God, and enjoyest the presence of God. All mercies, all comforts, all contentments, all enjoyments, they meet and centre in the gracious presence of God, as all lights meet in the sun, and as all waters meet in the sea; and therefore let not that soul mourn or complain of the want of anything, who enjoys that gracious presence of God that is better than every terrene thing. Thus much for the motives.

But some may say, O sir, what means should we use that we may enjoy the gracious presence of the Lord with us in our greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers? I answer,

1. First, There are some things that you must carefully shun and take heed of; as,

[1.] First, Take heed of high sinnings, take heed of scandalous sins. High sinnings do greatly dishonour God, wound conscience, reproach religion, stagger the weak, grieve the strong, open the mouths of the wicked, and provoke God to withdraw his gracious presence, Ps. 51:11, 12; Exod. 32:8, and 33:3; Isa. 63:10. Turn to these scriptures, and seriously ponder upon them. Great transgressions do eclipse the favour of God as well as the honour of God. In great transgressions we turn our backs upon God, and God turns away his face from us. Gross sins will provoke God to withdraw his presence, both in respect of vigour and strength, as also in respect of peace and comfort. But,

[2.] Secondly, Take heed of impenitency. Next to our being preserved from sin, it is the greatest mercy in the world, when we are fallen by our transgressions, to make a quick and speedy return to God. When by your sins you have made work for repentance, for hell, or for the physician, souls, immediately make up the breach, take up the controversy between God and your souls, humble yourselves, judge yourselves, and speedily return to the Most High, Hosea 6:1; Exod. 32:9–15. Thus Peter did, and recovered the favourable presence of God presently, Mat. 26:75; Mark 16:7. But if men will commit sin and lie in it, if they will fall and have no mind to rise, God will certainly withdraw his favourable presence from them, as you see in David and Solomon, Ps. 51:11, 12; 1 Kings 11:9; Josh. 7:1–5. This is further evident in that case of Achan, Josh, 7, 'The Israelites they came to fight with the men of Ai, and fled before them, for the Lord was not with them.' Why, what was the cause of God's withdrawing himself? See ver. 11, 'Israel hath sinned.' And ver. 12, 'Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs.' Their sins having betrayed them into the hand of divine justice, and into their enemies' hands also; mark what follows, 'Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from amongst you.' If we will not stone our Achans, our sins, by the lively exercise of faith and repentance; if we will keep up our lusts in despite of all that God does against us, we must never expect to retain the gracious presence of God with us. But,

[3.] Thirdly, Take heed either of neglecting gospel-worship, or of corrupting gospel-worship. Omissions will damn as well as commissions, and omissions will provoke God to withdraw his presence, as well as commissions. When persons are careless in their attendance on gospel ordinances, no wonder if God withdraw his presence from them in their distresses, Cant. 5:2, 3, 6, and 4:1–3. Cain went off from ordinances, and the Lord set a mark upon him, Gen. 4:15, 16. Oh, the black and dismal marks of misery, that God has set upon many that have neglected gospel-worship, and for profit's sake, and for Diana's sake, are fallen roundly in with the worship of the world! 2 Tim. 4:10; Acts 19:24, 36. O sirs, the great God stands upon nothing more in all the world than upon purity in his worship. There is nothing that doth so provoke and exasperate God against a people as corrupt worship. Corrupt worship sadly reflects upon the name of God, the honour of God, the truth of God, and the wisdom of God; and therefore his heart rises against such worship and worshippers, and he will certainly withdraw from them, and be a swift and terrible witness against them, as you may see by comparing the scriptures in the margin together. Corrupt worship is contrary to the unity of God. Now deny his unity, and you deny his deity, 'For the Lord is one, and his name is one,' Zech. 14:9. It is contrary to the sovereignty of God, 'He is the only ruler, the only potentate,' 1 Tim. 6:15. It is contrary to the all-sufficiency of God. The heathen worshipped several gods, as thinking that several gods did bestow several blessings. They begged health of one god, wealth of another god, and victory of a third god, thus imagining to themselves several deities for several supplies. Their god was but a Jupiter, a partial helper, an auxiliary god, but 'our God is Jehovah,' who is abundantly able to supply all our wants, Eph. 3:20. Now, if either we neglect his true instituted worship, or fall in with a false worship, with a devised worship, with a human worship, with a worldly worship, he will certainly withdraw his gracious presence from us. Will-worship accuses and charges God with weakness and folly, as if God were not careful enough, nor faithful enough, nor mindful enough, nor wise enough, to order, direct, and guide his people in the matters of his worship, but must be beholden to the wisdom,

prudence, and care of man, of vain man, of sinful man, of vile and unworthy man, of weak and foolish man, to complete, perfect, and make up something that was wanting in his worship! Heb. 3:4–6; John 4:23, 24. Now assuredly God will never keep house with them who give in such severe accusations and charges against him. But,

[4.] Fourthly, Take heed of a willing, wilful, and presumptuous running cross to divine commands, to divine warnings. The disobedient child is turned out of doors; the disobedient servant shall have none of his master's smiles, the disobedient wife has little of her husband's company. A willing, wilful, presumptuous running cross to divine commands speaks out much pride, atheism, hardness, blindness, and desperate security and contempt of the great God. It speaks out the greatest disingenuity, stoutness, and stubbornness that is imaginable; and therefore no wonder if God turn his back upon such, and if he disdains to be in the midst of such: Num. 14:42, 'Go not up, for the Lord is not among you, that ye be not smitten before your enemies.' Ver. 43, 'For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you'—that is, on the top of the hill, lying in readiness to set upon you, and therefore are said, 'to come down,' ver. 45—'and ye shall fall by the sword; because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you,' ver. 43. See Deut. 1:42–46. But they presumed to go up to the hill-top, though they had not the presence of God with them, nor the signs of his grace and favour with them, nor the company of Moses with them; but mark, they paid dear for their presumption. Ver. 45, 'Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them even unto Hormah.' When men are without God's presence they are without God's precincts, and so out of his protection. To act or run cross to God's express command, though under pretence of revelation from God, is as much as a man's life is worth, as you may see in that sad story, 1 Kings 13:24. We frequently deny our presence unto disobedient persons, and so does God his. Disobedience to divine commands shuts the door against the divine presence, and will not suffer God to come in

to succour us, comfort us, or support us, under our greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

[5.] Fifthly, Take heed of carnal confidence, of resting upon an arm of flesh: Ps. 30:6, 'And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved;' that is, when I was prosperously settled in the kingdom, I began to conclude within myself that now there was an end of all my troubles, I should now live all my days in a prosperous estate. David having taken the strong fort of Zion, and having vanquished his enemies round about, and all the tribes having submitted themselves to him, and having built a fair palace, and being quietly settled in his throne, he began to be puffed up with carnal confidence. Oh the hazard of honour! Oh the damage of dignity! how soon are we broken upon the soft pillow of ease! Flies settle upon the sweetest perfumes when cold; and so does sin on the best hearts, when they are dissolved and dispirited by prosperity. Oh how apt are the holiest of men to be proud and secure, and promise themselves more than ever God promised them—viz., immunity from the cross. He thought that his kingdom and all prosperity was tied unto him with cords of adamant; he sitting quietly at Jerusalem, and free from fear of all his enemies, 2 Sam. 11:1; but God quickly confutes his carnal confidence by giving him to know that he could as easily blast the strongest oak as he could trample the smallest worm under his feet. Ver. 7, 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' God will quickly suspend his favour and withdraw his presence when his children begin to be proud and carnally confident. Look, as at the eclipse of the sun the whole frame of nature droops; so when God hides his face, when he withdraws his presence, the best of saints cannot but droop and hang down their heads. So Jer. 17:5, 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.' Ver. 6, 'For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh.' But,

[6.] Sixthly, Take heed of barrenness and unfruitfulness under gospel ordinances. Turn to these scriptures, Isa. 5:1–8; Mat. 13:34–42; 2 Chron. 32:16, to the last. Of all spiritual judgments, barrenness is the

greatest; and when men are given up to this judgment, God withdraws; he has no pleasure to dwell in a barren soil. What are barren grounds and barren wombs to barren hearts? He that remains wholly barren under gospel ordinances, may well question his marriage-union with Christ, Ezek. 47:11; Mat. 13:19; Hosea 9:14; John 15:3; Heb. 2:6–8; Jude 12: for, Rom. 7:4, We are said to be 'married to Christ, that we may bring forth fruit to God.' There is a double end of marriage—viz., cohabitation and propagation; and therefore there cannot be a greater and clearer evidence that thou art not yet taken into a married union with Christ, than a total barrenness under gospel enjoyments. Christ's spouse is fruitful: Cant. 1:16, 'Our bed is green;' chap. 4:1, 'Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair: thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead;' ver. 2, 'Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which come up from the washing: whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren among them.' Christ hath no further delight in his people, nor will no further grace his people with his special presence, than they make conscience of weeping over their barrenness, and of bringing forth fruit to him, Cant. 7:11–13. 'Now my husband will love me, now he will be joined to me, now I have born him this son also,' Gen. 29:34, said Leah. So may the fruit-bearing soul reason it out with Christ: Now I know dear Jesus will love me, now I know he will delight in me, now I know he will dwell with me, now I know he will honour me with his presence, for now I bring forth fruit unto him. Barrenness under the means of grace drives God from us, and the gospel from us, and trade, and peace, and prosperity from us, and one Christian from another. Ursinus observes, that the sins and barrenness of the Protestants under the gospel in king Edward's days, brought in the persecution in queen Mary's days; and he tells us, that those who fled out of England in queen Mary's days acknowledged that that calamity befell them for their great unprofitableness under the means of grace in king Edward's days. Among other prodigies, which were about the time that Julian came to the empire, there were wild grapes appeared upon the vines, with which many wise men in that day were much affected, looking upon

it as ominous. Ah, England! England! I look upon nothing to be so ominous to thee as the barrenness of the professors of the day! No wonder if God leave his house, when the trees that are planted in it and about it are all barren. The nutmeg-tree makes barren all the ground about it; so doth the spice of worldly love make the hearts of Christians barren under the means of grace. But I must hasten.

[7.] Seventhly, Take heed of pride and haughtiness of spirit: Hosea 5:5, 'And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity: Judah also shall fall with them;' ver. 6, 'They shall go with their flocks, and with their herds to seek the Lord, but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them.' Pride is the great master-pock of the soul; it will bud and blossom, it cannot be hid; it is the leprosy of the soul, that breaks forth in the very forehead, and so testifieth to his face, Ezek. 7:10; Isa. 3:16–25. Some have called Rome, *Epitomen universi*, An epitome, or abridgment of the whole world: so it may be said of pride, that it is the sum of all naughtiness, a sea of sin, a complicated sin, a mother sin, a breeding sin, a sin that has all sorts of sin in the womb of it. Consult the scriptures in the margin. Aristotle, speaking of justice, saith, That in justice all virtues are couched, *συλλήβδην*, summarily; so it may be truly said of pride, that in it all vices are as it were in a bundle lapped up together; and therefore no wonder if God withdraw his presence from proud persons, 'He hath withdrawn himself from them'—Heb., 'Hath snatched away himself;' hath thrown himself out of their company, as Peter threw himself out from the rude soldiers into a by corner to weep bitterly, Mark 14:72. God will have nothing to do with proud persons, he will never dwell with them, he will never keep house with them. He that dwells in the highest heavens will never dwell in a haughty heart. 'The proud he knoweth afar off,' Isa. 57:15; Ps. 138:6. He won't vouchsafe to come so near such loathsome lepers; he stands off from such as [are] odious and abominable; he cannot abide the sight of them, yea, his very heart rises against them, Prov. 15:25, and 16:5: James 4:6, 'God resisteth the proud,'—*ἀντιτάσσεται*, 'He sets himself in battle array against him,' as the Greek word emphatically signifies. Above all

sorts of sinners, God sets himself against proud persons, as invaders of his territories and foragers or plunderers of his chief treasures. God defieth such as deify themselves. God will arm himself against them, he will never vouchsafe his gracious presence to them; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the divine presence, arm against pride, watch against pride, and pray hard against pride. But,

[8.] Eighthly, Take heed of a slothful, lazy, trifling spirit in the things of God: Cant. 5:2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh; it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night;' ver. 3, 'I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' Christ's head is filled with dew; i.e., Christ came to his spouse full of the dew of spiritual and heavenly blessings. Christ always brings meat in his mouth, and a reward in his hand, Eph. 1:3, 4; Rev. 22:12. Christ never visits his people empty handed. He is no beggarly or niggardly guest. When he comes, he brings everything that heart can wish or need require. And now stand and wonder at the silly excuse that the spouse makes for herself: ver. 3, Trouble me not, for I am in bed; my clothes are off, my feet are washed, and I am composed to a settled rest! But are you so indeed? might Christ have replied. Is this your kindness to your friend? 2 Sam. 16:17. Is this the part and posture of a vigilant Christian? Would it not have been much better for you to have had your loins girt, your lamp burning, and you waiting for your Lord's return? Is it so great a trouble? Is it such a mighty business for you to rise out of your bed, to put on your clothes, and to let in such a guest, as comes not to take anything from you, but to enrich you with the best and noblest of favours? Now mark how severely Christ punishes his spouse's sluggishness, laziness, slothfulness, and delays to entertain him when he knocked: ver. 6, 'I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave no answer;' or he was gone, he was gone, a most passionate complaint for his departure; or my best-beloved was departed, he was gone away. By the iteration or doubling of this

sentence, wherein the spouse complains of the departure of her bridegroom, is signified her great trouble, her hearty sorrow, her inexpressible grief, that lay as a heavy load upon her spirit; because, by her unworthy usage of him, she had foolishly occasioned him to withdraw his presence from her. Spiritual desertions are of three sorts: (1.) Cautional, for preventing of sin, as Paul's seems to be, 1 Cor. 1:2, 8, 9; (2.) Probational, for trial and exercise of grace; (3.) Penal, for chastisement of spiritual sloth and sluggishness, as here in the spouse. Now this last is far the saddest and heaviest; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of the Lord, take heed of a lazy, slothful, sluggish spirit in the things of God, in the concernments of your souls. That man must needs be miserable that is lazy and slothful, and had rather go sleeping to hell than sweating to heaven. But,

[9.] Ninthly, Take heed of a covetous worldly spirit under the smarting rod, under the severe rebukes of God: Isa. 57:17, 'For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.' Covetousness was the common sin of the Jews. This disease had infected all sorts and ranks of men; this leprosy did spread itself over princes, prophets, and people, as you may see in comparing the scriptures in the margin together. Now 'covetousness being the root of all evil,' as the apostle speaks, and the darling sin of the nation, God is so provoked by it that he first smites, and then hides himself, as one that in displeasure, having left one to the evil and harsh usage of some other, withdraweth himself out of the way, and having shut himself up in his closet, will not be seen or spoken with. A worldly man makes the world his god. Covetousness is flat idolatry: Col. 3:5, 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.' Now though it be true that whatever a man loves most and best, that is his god, be it his belly or his back; yet, in a special manner, covetousness is idolatry, so as no other sin is, Phil. 3:19; Isa. 3:16–25. Three things especially make a god; First, our judgment, when we esteem it in our serious thoughts

to be our chiefest good, and that in which we place our happiness. Now the covetous man looks upon the riches of the world as his heaven, his happiness, his great all. Pope Sylvester placed so much happiness in riches, that, to enjoy the popedom for seven years, he sold his soul to the devil. The people of Constantinople placed so much of their happiness in riches, and were so excessively covetous, that they were buying and selling in their shops, even three days after the Turks were within the walls of the city, and that was the reason that the streets run down with the blood of them, their wives, and children. Secondly, our confidence. That is a homage which makes a god, when we place our trust in anything make it our rock, our fortress, our all-sufficient good. This the covetous man doth, 'He saith to the wedge of gold, thou art my confidence,' Job 21:34. The rich man's heart dances about his golden calf, saying to his 'wedge of gold, thou art my confidence;' and yet his wedge of gold shall prove but as Achan's wedge, a wedge to cleave his soul in sunder, and, as that Babylonish garment, to be his winding-sheet, Josh. 7:21 to end. 'The rich man's wealth is his strong city,' Prov. 10:15; 1 Tim. 6:17. Covetous persons do really think themselves simply the better and the safer for their hoards and heaps of riches; but they may one day find themselves greatly mistaken. Famous is that story of Cræsus among the heathens. He was a great king, and tumbled up and down in his gold and silver; and Solon, that wise man of Greece, coming into his country, he desired to speak with him, and when he saw him, after Solon had seen and viewed all his wealth and glory, he asked him whom he thought to be the happiest man in the world, imagining that Solon would have said Cræsus. But Solon answered, I think Tellus was the most happy man. Tellus, saith he; why Tellus? Because, said Solon, though he was poor, yet he was a good man, and content with that which he had; and having governed the commonwealth well, and brought up his child honestly and religiously, he died honourably. Well, then, said Cræsus, but who dost thou think the second happy man in the world? I think, said he, those two brothers that, instead of horses, drew their mother in a chariot to the temple. Whereupon, said Cræsus, what thinkest thou of me? I think, says he, thou art a very rich man; but a man may be

happy though he be poor, and a man may be unhappy though he be rich, for he may lose all his riches before he die; and therefore, Ante obitum nemo, &c., I think none truly happy but he that lives well and dies well. Whereupon that wise man Solon was dismissed the court with neglect. But afterward this Crœsus, making war against Cyrus, he was overcome by Cyrus; and being taken captive, he was laid upon a pile of wood to be burned to death, then lying on the pile of wood he cried out and said, O Solon! Solon! Solon! Cyrus inquiring what he meant, he answered, This Solon was a wise man of Greece, that told me that happiness did not consist in riches, for they might all be lost, and a rich man might die miserable; whose words, said he, I then neglected, but now I find true; and therefore now I cry out, O Solon, Solon, Solon! Let us now tell the covetous man, the worldly man, that his happiness lies not in riches, though he looks upon his riches as his strong city; he won't mind us, he won't regard. Oh but there is a time a-coming wherein the worldling will cry out, O Solon, Solon, Solon! Thirdly, Our service, Mat. 6:24. That is a homage which makes a god. When we devote all our pains, labour, and service to it, be it this or that, that makes a god. Now the covetous man, his heart is most upon the world, his thoughts are most upon the world, his affections are most upon the world, and his discourse is most about the world. He that hath his mind taken up with the world, and chiefly delighted with the world's music, he hath also his tongue tuned to the same key, and taketh his joy and comfort in speaking of nothing else but the world and worldly things. If the world be in the heart, it will break out at the lips. A worldly-minded man speaketh of nothing but worldly things. 'They are of the world, therefore they speak of the world,' John 4:5. The water riseth not above the fountain. Out of the warehouse the shop is furnished. The love of this world makes men forget God, neglect Christ, slight ordinances, refuse heaven, despise holiness, and oils the tongue for worldly discourses, Mat. 19:21, 22. Ah the time, the thoughts, the strength, the spirits, the words that are spent upon the world, and the things of the world, whilst sinners' souls lie a-bleeding, and eternity is posting on upon them! I have read of a griping usurer, who was always best when he was most in talking of the world. Being

near his end, he was much pressed to make his will. At last he was overcome, and then he dictates to the scrivener after this manner:— First, I bequeath my own soul to the devil, for being so greedy of the muck of this world; item, next I give my wife's soul to the devil, for persuading me to this course of life; item, I give the parson of our parish's soul to the devil, because he did not shew me the danger I lived in, nor reprove me for it. Oh, the danger of making the world our god, when we come to die and to make up our accounts with God! Now when men make the world their god, and set up their riches, pleasures, and profits in the place of God, no wonder if God withdraws his presence from them; and therefore, as ever you would retain the gracious presence of God with you, take heed of a covetous spirit, a worldly spirit. But,

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, As ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, take heed of a cross, froward, and inflexible spirit under the rod. When the child is froward under the rod, the father withdraws; so here, Isa. 57:17, 'I was wroth, I smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his hearty' Isa. 47:6. Though I manifested my displeasure by giving them up to their enemies, and by laying them under the tokens of my anger, they persisted in their own cross, crooked, and rebellious courses, refusing to repent and turn to the Most High; and therefore God changes his countenance, hides his face, and withdraws his presence from them: Deut. 32:20, 'And he said, I will hide my face from them, for they are a very froward generation.' Heb., A generation of perversenesses. When the sick man is froward, friends withdraw and leave him alone: Ps. 18:26, 'With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.' God will meet with froward persons in their own way, and make them reap the fruits of their own doings. God will walk cross and contrary to the froward, opposing and crossing them in all they do. God has no delight to grace froward persons with his presence. When men begin to be froward under a divine hand, God commonly hides his face, and turns his back upon them. Men sick of impatency are no fit company for the God of all

patience. Men that are peevish and pettish under the rod will always see a cloud upon the face of God; and thus you see that there are ten things that you must carefully take heed of, as you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, Rom. 15:5; Prov. 11:20. But,

2. Secondly, As there are many things to be avoided, so there are several things to be put in practice, as you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you, in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers. Let me glance at a few:—

[1.] First, Be sure that you are brought under the bond of the covenant. This gracious signal presence of God with his people, under their greatest troubles, and deepest distresses, is peculiar to those that are in covenant with God. Noah was in covenant with God, and God was with him, providing an ark for him, and preserving of him from drowning in the midst of drowning. Lot was in covenant with God, and God was with him, and secures him in Zoar, when he rained hell out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Joseph was in covenant with God, and God was with Joseph in prison. Jeremiah was in covenant with God, and God kept him company in the dungeon. The three children, or rather champions, were in covenant with God, and God was signally present with them in the fiery furnace. Daniel was in covenant with God, and God was wonderfully with him in the lions' den. Job was in covenant with God, and God was with him in six troubles, and in seven, Job 3:18, 19. David was in covenant with God, and God was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, Ps. 89:33, 34, and 23:4. Take not up in a name to live, nor in a form of godliness, nor in common convictions, nor in an outward reformation; take up in nothing below a covenant-relation, as you would enjoy the precious presence of the Lord with you in your greatest troubles, and deepest distresses, Deut. 26:17–19. If you choose him for your God, you shall then assuredly find him to be your God; if he be the God of our love and fear, he will be the God of our comfort and safety; if God be your God in covenant, then in distress the cities of refuge are open to you; he will stick close to you,

he will never leave you nor forsake you, Heb. 13:5–7; you have a Father to go to, a God to flee to, a God that will take care of you: 'Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpassed.' Here are chambers, with drawing-rooms provided, not open chambers, but with doors, and doors shut round about, intimating that guard of protection, which the people of God shall find from him, even in a common inundation. But,

[2.] Secondly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you, in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then look to the practical part of holiness, keep up the power of godliness in your hearts and lives: 2 Chron. 15:2; John 14:21, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him:' ver. 23, 'If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' He that frames his heart and life according to Christ's rule, shall be sure of Christ's presence. Ezekiel was a man that kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life. And oh! the glorious visions, and deep mysteries, and rare discoveries of God, and of his presence, and of the great things that should be brought about in the latter days, that was discovered to him! Daniel kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life; and oh, what secrets and mysteries did God reveal to him! Many of those great and glorious things, which concerns the destruction of the four last monarchies, and the growth, increase, exaltation, flourishing, durable, invincible and unconquerable estate of his own kingdom, was discovered to him. Paul was a person that kept up the power of holiness and godliness in his heart and life; and oh, what a mighty presence of God had he with him, in all his doing, suffering, and witnessing work! And oh, what glorious revelations and discoveries of God had he, when he was caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, or wordless words, such as words were too weak to utter, such 'as was not possible for man to utter,' and that

either because they transcended man's capacity in this life, or else because the apostle was forbid to utter them, they being revealed to him not for the public use of the church, but only for his particular encouragement, that he might be the better able to encounter with all hardships, difficulties, dangers, and deaths that did or might attend him in his ministerial work, 2 Cor. 1:7–10. Some of the ancients are of opinion that he saw God's essence, for, say they, other things in heaven might have been uttered, but the essence of God is so great and so glorious a thing that no man or angel can utter it. But here I must crave leave to enter my dissent from these learned men, for the scripture is express in this, 'that no man hath thus ever seen the Lord at any time, and that no man can thus see the Lord, and live,' John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 John 4:12; Exod. 33:20–23. And as great a favourite of Heaven as Moses was, yet he could only see the back parts of God, he could only behold some lower representations of God. Some say that he heard the heavenly singing of angels and blessed spirits, which was so sweet, so excellent and glorious, that no mortal man was able to utter it; and this of the two is most probable. But no man is bound to make this opinion an article of his faith. This, I think, we may safely conclude, that in this rapture, besides the contemplation of celestial mysteries, he felt such unspeakable delight and pleasure, that was either like to that, or exceeded that, which Adam took in the terrestrial paradise. Doubtless the apostle did see and hear such excellent things as was impossible for the tongue of any mortal man to express or utter. John was 'a burning and a shining light,' John 5:35, both in life and doctrine. He was a man that kept up in his heart and life the power of holiness and godliness; and Christ reveals to him the general estate of his church and all that should befall his people, and that from John's time unto his second coming. Christ gives John a true representation of all the troubles, trials, changes, mercies, and glories that in all times and in all ages and places should attend his church until he came in all his glory. About sixty years after Christ's ascension, Christ comes to John, and opens his heart, and unbosoms his soul, and makes known to him all that care, that love, that tenderness, that kindness, and that sweetness that he would exercise towards his church from that very

time to the end of the world. Christ tells John, that though he had been absent, and seemingly silent for about threescore years, that yet he was not so taken up with the delights, contents, and glory of heaven, as that he did not care what became of his church on earth. Oh no! and therefore he opens his choicest secrets, and makes known the most hidden and glorious mysteries to John that ever was made known to any man. As there was none that had so much of the heart of Christ as John, so there was none had so much of the ear of Christ as John. Christ singles out his servant John from all the men in the world,-and makes, known to him all the happy providences and all the sad occurrences that were to come upon the followers of the Lamb, that so they might know what to fit for, and what to pray for, and what to wait for. Also he declares to John all that wrath and vengeance, all that desolation and destruction that should come upon the false prophet and the beast, and upon all that wandered after them, and that were worshippers of them, and that had received their marks either in their foreheads or in their hands. Thus you see that they which keep up the power of holiness in their hearts and lives, they shall be sure to enjoy the choicest presence of God, and the clearest, fullest, and sweetest discoveries of God, and of these great things that concern the internal and eternal good of their souls. Nothing wins upon God like holiness, nothing delights God like holiness, nothing engages the presence of God like holiness, Ps. 50:23. He shews his salvation to him that ordereth his conversation aright. He that puts every piece of his conversation in the right order, he shall see and know that he shall be saved. He that walks accurately and exactly, that walks as in a frame, treading gingerly, stepping warily, he shall have a prospect of heaven here, and a full fruition of heaven hereafter, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways,' Isa. 64:5. He that works righteousness and walks in righteousness shall be sure to meet with God, and to enjoy the precious presence of God in his greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

[3.] Thirdly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly

dangers, then keep close to instituted worship, keep close to gospel ordinances, keep close to your church state: Exod. 20:24, 'In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and bless thee, Isa. 64:5; Rev. 2:1; Cant. 7:5; Ezek. 48:35. Where God fixeth his solemn worship for the memorial and honour of his name, there he will vouchsafe his gracious presence: Mat. 18:20, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' The promise of God's gracious assistance, presence, and acceptance is annexed to his church, whether it be great or small, numerous or few: Mat. 28:20, 'Lo, I am with you always,' according to my godhead, majesty, grace, and Spirit. Lo, I am with you, to own you! Lo, I am with you, to counsel and direct you! Lo, I am with you, to cheer and comfort you! Lo, I am with you, to assist and strengthen you! Lo, I am with you, to shelter you and protect you! Lo, I am with you, to do all your works in you and for you! Lo, I am with you, to strengthen your graces and to weaken your sins! Lo, I am with you, to scatter your fears and answer your doubts! Lo, I am with you, to better your hearts and to mend your lives! Lo, I am with you, to bless you and crown you with immortality and glory! And what can the soul desire more? Such as have low thoughts of gospel ordinances, such as slight gospel ordinances, such as neglect gospel ordinances, such as vilify gospel ordinances, such as decry gospel ordinances, such as oppose gospel ordinances,—such may talk of the presence of Christ, and such may boast of the presence of Christ, but all such are out of the way of enjoying the presence of Christ. Christ is only to be met with in his own worship, and in his own ways. Ah, how many in these days are there that are like to old Barzillai, that had lost his taste and hearing, and so cared not for David's feasts and music! 2 Sam. 19:35. How many are there that formerly were very zealous for ordinances, but now are as zealous against them! How many formerly have made many great, hard, and dangerous ventures to enjoy gospel ordinances, who now won't venture a broken shin for an ordinance, no, nor stir out of doors to enjoy an ordinance, &c.! How many in our days, upon neglecting and despising gospel ordinances, have grown from naught to be very naught, and from very naught to be stark naught. He shall be an Apollo to me that can shew me one

man in the world that ever grew better or holier by neglecting or slighting gospel ordinances. Many come to the ordinances, too, like the Egyptian dog, which laps a little as he runs by the side of Nylus,² but stays not to drink. How many in this great city run every Sabbath to hear this man and that; and here they lap a little and there a little, but never stay to drink—never fix in this congregation or that, this way or that. These persons are neither wise, serious, lovely, nor lively in the ways of God. I think they are judicially blinded and hardened, that are indifferent whether they enjoy ordinances or not, or that can part with ordinances with dry eyes. Surely the child is either very sullen or very sick that cries not for the breast, Zeph. 3:18. As ever you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles and distresses, make conscience of sticking close to gospel ordinances. But,

[4.] Fourthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then, when you are not in troubles, distresses, dangers, &c., be sure you make much conscience of five things, (1.) Of prizing his presence above all other things; so Moses did, Exod. 33:13–17; so Augustine would willingly go through hell to Christ; and Luther had rather be in hell with Christ than in heaven without him; and Bernard had rather have Christ in a chimney corner than be in heaven without him. (2.) Of improving this gracious presence against sin, the world, the flesh, oppositions and temptations, &c. (3.) Of walking suitable to this gracious presence. (4.) Of lamenting and mourning over those that want this gracious presence. (5.) Of holding any secret intelligence or correspondence with the profest and known enemies of Christ. Princes will never vouchsafe their favourable presence to such subjects as hold any secret intelligence with their profest and known enemies, either at home or abroad; so here. But,

[5.] Fifthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then, in all your troubles and distresses, &c., maintain

uprightness and integrity of spirit with God, Ps. 5:12; 2 Chron. 16:9, 'For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.' Ps. 84:11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.' This is the largest promise we find in the whole book of God. The creature stands in need of two things, provision and protection; for the first, the Lord is a sun, as full of goodness as the sun is of light. He is a sun, in that he doth enlighten and enliven his church, when as all the world besides lie under darkness and the shadow of death; and in that he doth cheer, and warm, and comfort the hearts of his people by his presence and lightsome countenance, and is the fountain from whence all external, internal, and eternal blessings are derived to them. For the second, a shield, Ps. 18:2. Among all inanimate creatures the sun is the most excellent, and among all artificial creatures a shield is chiefest, and was of greatest use in those days. The sun notes all manner of excellency and prosperity, and the shield notes all manner of protection whatsoever, Isa. 60:20; Ps. 3:4. Under the name of 'grace,' all spiritual good things are to be understood; and under the name of 'glory,' all eternal good things are to be understood; and under that phrase of 'No good thing will he withhold,' all temporal good things are to be understood, so far as they make for his glory, and his people's real good. Now this choice, this sweet, this full, this large promise, is made over only to the upright, and therefore, as you would have any share in it, maintain your uprightness: Ps. 11:7, 'His countenance doth behold the upright;' Heb., His faces. Every gracious discovery of God to the upright is his face. God will all manner of ways make gracious discoveries of his love and delight to upright ones. No father can so much delight to behold the countenance of his child, as God delights to behold the countenance of the upright: Ps. 112:4, 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.' Light commonly signifies joy, comfort, peace, help, deliverance, Job 30:26; Esther 8:16; 2 Cor. 6:10. The upright man shall have joy in tribulation, plenty in penury, liberty in bonds, life in death, as the martyrs have frequently and gloriously experienced.

Sometimes God turns the upright man's adversity into prosperity, his sickness into health, his weakness into strength, his night into day, his storms into calms, his long winter nights into pleasant summer days. Sometimes God hides his upright ones in the hollow of his hand, in his pavilion, in his presence-chamber, Isa. 26:9, 20; Mal. 3:17. When his judgments are abroad in the earth he takes special care of his jewels, and many times, when the upright are in darkness and in great distress, God cheers their hearts with the consolations of his Spirit and the light of his countenance, Ps. 94:19, and 71:20, 21. By all which it is most evident that 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.' O sirs, do but maintain your uprightness in all your troubles and distresses, and then you will be sure of the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles and distresses. God values an upright Job upon a dunghill before a deceitful Jehu upon his royal throne, Job 1:8, and 2:3, 7-9; he sets a higher price upon an upright Lazarus in rags than upon a rich Dives in his purple robes, Luke 16. And therefore when an upright man is in troubles and distresses, God will be sure to keep him company. The upright man's motto is *semper idem*; he is like the philosopher's die, cast him which way you will, and into what condition you will, he is still upright; and therefore, of all persons, God loves to grace the upright man with his gracious presence. But,

[6.] Sixthly, If you would enjoy the gracious presence of God with you in all your troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, then you must be very earnest and importunate with God not to leave you, but to stay with you, to abide with you, and to dwell in the midst of you, Ps. 145:18, 'The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him;' but, to prevent mistakes, I mean, 'to all that call upon him in truth.' There are many that call upon God, but not in truth; from these God stands at a distance, Prov. 1:28; Isa. 1:11-17; Deut. 4:4; 2 John 4. There are others that call upon God in truth, in plainness and singleness of heart; and these God are near, not only in regard of his essence, which is everywhere, but also in regard of the effects of his power, and the readiness of his will in granting their requests. Abijah prays, and finds an admirable presence of God with him, giving him a

mighty victory over his most powerful enemy, 2 Chron. 13:3, 10, 11, 17, 18. Asa prays, and finds such a singular presence of God with him as made him victorious over a host of a thousand thousand and three hundred chariots, a huger host than that of Xerxes. Josephus saith it consisted of nine hundred thousand foot, and one hundred thousand horse, 2 Chron. 14:9 to the end. Jehoshaphat prays, and had such a signal presence of God with him that those numerous forces that were combined against him fall by their own swords, 2 Chron. 20:1–11, with ver. 22–25. The wrath of God wrought their ruin, as by an ambuscade, unexpectedly and irresistibly. Some understand this ambushment of the holy angels sent suddenly in upon them to slay them; whereupon they, mistaking the matter, and supposing it had been their own companions, flew upon them, and so sheathed their swords in one another's bowels. Others say that the Lord did suddenly and unexpectedly cut them off, as when men are cut off by enemies that lie in ambush against them, and that by sending some unexpected strife among those nations, whereupon they fell out among themselves, and slew one another, and so accomplished that which the Levite had foretold, ver. 17, 'Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you.' It was the presence of God with his people that was their preservation, and their enemies' destruction. There is no power, no force, no strength, no combinations that can stand before the powerful presence of God with his people, and a spirit of prayer upon his people. Hezekiah prays, and finds such a powerful presence of God with him as bears up his heart, and as strengthens his faith, and as cuts off his enemies, Isa. 37:14–21, with ver. 36. Oh, beg hard of the Lord that he will stay with you, do as they did when Christ made as though he would have gone from them: Luke 24:29, 'But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent; and he went in to tarry with them.' By prayer and importunity lay hold on Christ; say, Lord, night is near, the night of trouble, the night of distress, the night of danger, the night of death is near; stay with us, depart not from us. They over-entreated him by their importunity,

they compelled him by entreaty. 'Night is near, and the day is far spent.' Some conjecture that Cleophas, observing Christ to be very expert in the prophets, and to discourse so admirable well of Christ's person, sufferings, and glory, his heart burning in him with musing who this should be, he is marvellous importunate with him to stay at his house, and at last prevails. Oh, lay a hand of holy violence upon God, as Jacob did, and say, as he, 'I will not let thee go.' Jacob, though lamed and hard laid at, yet will not let Christ go. Jacob holds fast with both hands when his joints were out of joint, being fully resolved that whatever he did let go, he would not let go his Lord till he had blessed him, Gen. 32:25, 26; Hosea 4:12. Oh, be often a-crying out with Jeremiah, 'Leave us not, Lord,' Jer. 14:9. Though in our great troubles and deep distresses friends should leave us, and relations leave us, and all the world leave us, yet don't thou leave us. Oh, don't thou leave us, Lord! Though all creatures should desert us, yet, if thou wilt but stand by us, we shall do well enough; but woe, woe unto us if God depart from us. Oh, leave us not! But,

[7.] Seventhly, Keep humble, and walk humbly with your God, Micah 6:8; Ps. 25:9. The highest heavens and the lowest hearts, are the habitation of God's glorious presence: Isa. 57:15, 'For saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' He that would in good earnest enjoy the gracious presence of God with him in his great troubles, deep distresses, and most deadly dangers, he must keep humble, and walk humbly with his God. God will keep house with none but humble souls. There are none that feel so great a need of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none that so prize the divine presence as humble souls, there are none that so love the divine presence, and that are so enamoured with the divine presence as humble souls, there are none that so thirst and long for much of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none that so lament and bewail the loss of the divine presence as humble souls, there are none that make such a singular and thorough improvement of the divine presence as

humble souls; and therefore no wonder that of all the men in the world God singles out the humble Christian, to make his heart the habitation where his honour delights to dwell. Abraham is but dust and ashes in his own eyes, Gen. 18:27; and what man on earth had ever more of the divine presence of God with him than he? Gen 15:12–19, 17:1–10, and 18:17–19, &c. Jacob was less than the least of all mercies in his own eyes, Gen. 32:10; and he had a mighty presence of God with him, Gen. 32:24–31, &c. David in his own eyes was but a worm and no man, Ps. 22:6. The word in the original, *tolagnath*, signifieth a very little worm, which breedeth in scarlet. It is so little, that no man can hardly see it or perceive it; and yet what a mighty presence of God had David with him in the many battles he fought, and in the many dangers he was in, and in the many miraculous deliverances he had! See them all summed up in that 18th Psalm. It is his triumphant song after many victories won, deliverances vouchsafed, and mercies obtained; and therefore worthy of frequent perusal. Paul was the least of all saints in his own eyes; yea, he was less than the least of all saints, Eph. 3:8, *ἐλαχιστοτέρω*. This is a double diminutive, and signifies 'lesser than the least,' if lesser might be. Here you have the greatest apostle descending down to the lowest step of humility, 1 Cor. 15:8, 4:9; 1 Tim. 1:15. Great Paul is least of saints, least of the apostles, and greatest of sinners in his own eyes, and never had any mortal more of the gracious presence of God with him in all his services and in all his sufferings, in all his afflictions and in all his temptations, in all his trials and in all his troubles, which were many and great. See Acts 16:23–25, 23:10, 11, 27:23–25; 2 Cor. 1:8–10, 4:8–11, 7:4–7, 11:21, seq., 12:7–10. Is your condition low, then let your hearts be low. He that is little in his own account, is great in God's esteem, and shall be sure to enjoy most of his presence. God can dwell, God will dwell with none but those that are lowly in heart; and therefore as ever you would enjoy the signal presence of God with you in your greatest troubles and deepest distresses, be sure you walk humbly with your God. Many may talk much of God, and many may profess much of God, and many may boast much of God; but he only enjoys much of God who makes conscience of walking humbly with God. But,

[8.] Eighthly, and lastly, If you would enjoy the signal presence of God with you in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then labour every day more and more after greater measures of holiness. The more holiness you reach to, the more you shall have of the presence of a holy God with you in all your straits and trials. If the Scriptures be narrowly searched, you will find that men of the greatest measures and degrees of holiness have always enjoyed the greatest measures of the divine presence: witness Enoch, Gen. 5:24; Noah, Gen. 6:8, 9, 17, 18. So Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Daniel, John, Paul, &c. They were all famous for holiness; and accordingly they had a famous presence of God with them, as hath been shewed in part, and might more fully have been discovered, but that the press calls upon me to hasten to a conclusion; and therefore I shall now but hint at things. Consider,

[1.] First, That the more holy any person is, the more excellent that person is. All corruptions are diminutions of excellency. The more mixed anything is, the more abased it is. The more you mix your wine with water, the more you abase your wine; and the more you mix your gold with tin, the more you abase your gold: but the purer your wine is, the richer and better your wine is; and the purer your gold is, the more glorious and excellent it is. So the purer and holier any person is, the more excellent and glorious that person is. Now the more divinely excellent and glorious any person is, the more he is beloved of God, Dan. 9:23; and the more he is the delight of God, and the more he shall have of the presence of God. Consider,

[2.] Secondly, The more holy any person is, the more that person pleases the Lord. Fruitfulness in holiness fills heaven with joy. The husbandman is not so much pleased with the fruitfulness of his fields, nor the wife with the fruitfulness of her womb, as God is pleased with the fruitfulness of his people in grace and holiness. Now certainly, the more God is pleased with any person, the more he will be present with that person. They commonly have most of our presence that most please us. Enoch had this testimony, before his translation, that he pleased God, or gave God content, as the original

word, εὐηρεστήκεναι, imports. Enoch eyed God at all times, in all places, and in all companies; and this pleased God. Whereever Enoch was, his eye was still upon God. Enoch walked constantly with God; his whole life was but one continued day of walking with God; and this pleased God. Enoch kept himself from the corruptions and pollutions of the times, which were very great; he was not carried away with the stream of the times; he kept a constant counter-motion to the corrupt courses of the times; and this pleased God. Enoch maintained and kept up a clear, choice, and standing communion with God; and this pleased God. Enoch made it his business, his work, his heaven, to approve his heart to God, and his ways to God; and this pleased God. Enoch was very serious and studious to avoid everything that might be a dishonour to God, or displeasing to God; and this pleased God. Enoch had great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God; and this pleased God. God was so pleased and taken with Enoch that he translates him from earth to heaven, from a gracious to a glorious presence.² It was a singular mercy for God to be with Enoch on earth, but it was a far more glorious mercy for Enoch to be with God in heaven. The gracious presence of God is very desirable, but the glorious presence of God is most comfortable. Enoch pleases God, and God translates Enoch. We can never have those friends near enough to us who take a pleasure and delight to please us: so here Enoch was a bright morning star, a rising sun, for virtue and holiness; and therefore God could not satisfy himself, to speak after the manner of men, that he should live at so great a distance from him, and therefore translates him from earth to heaven. Well, my friends, the greater measures of holiness you reach to, the more you will please God; and the more you please God, the more you shall be sure to enjoy of the presence of God. Consider,

[3.] Thirdly, The more holy any person is, the more like to God he is; and the more like to God he is, doubtless the more he is beloved of God. It is likeness both in nature and grace that always draws the strongest love, 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Lev. 11:44, and 19:2, and 20:7. Though every child is the father multiplied, the father of a second edition; yet

the father loves him best, and delights in him most who is most like him, and who in feature, spirit, and action does most resemble him to the life; and so does the Father of spirits also; he always loves them best who in holiness resemble him most, Heb. 12:9. There are four remarkable things in the beloved disciple above all the rest, John 13:23, and 18:16, and 19:26, 27, and Mark 14:50: (1.) That he lay nearest to Christ's bosom at the table; (2.) That he followed Christ closest to the high-priest's palace; (3.) That he stood close to Christ when he was on the cross, though others had basely deserted him and turned their backs upon him; (4.) That Christ commended the care of his virgin mother to him. Now why did Christ's desire, love, and delight run out with a stronger and a fuller tide towards John than to the rest of the disciples? doubtless it was because John did more resemble Christ than the rest, it was because John was a more exact picture and lively representation than the others were of Christ. Now the more any man in holiness is like to Christ, the more any man in holiness resembles Christ, the more that man shall enjoy of the presence of Christ, the more that man shall lie in the bosom of Christ. The Father loves to be most with that child that is like him most: so here, as ever you would enjoy the presence of God in your greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, be sure that you keep up holiness in your hearts and lives, be sure that you grow in holiness, and flourish in holiness, and then you shall be sure of the presence of God with you in all your troubles and deep distresses; a holy God will never leave the holy Christian. And thus much for this use of exhortation.

The last use of all is a use of comfort and consolation to all the people of God, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Now here consider,

(1.) First of all, That God himself hands out this as a rare comfort to his people in all their troubles, distresses, and dangers—viz., That he will be graciously present with them in the midst of all their sorrows and sufferings: Gen. 26:3, 'Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee;' 28:15, 'And behold I am with thee, and will

keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee,' &c., Isa. 43:2; Ps. 91:15; Josh. 1:5; Heb. 13:5; Exod. 3:12. Don't talk of thy loss of friends, for I will be with thee; nor don't talk of thy country, for I will give thee this land, which is the paradise of the world; nor don't talk of thy poverty, for thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south, ver. 14. Nor don't talk of thy solitariness and aloneness, 'for I will not leave thee.' Isa. 41:10, 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.' Suppose a man was injuriously dealt with by this man or that, would it not be a comfort to him that a just and righteous judge stood by and was an eye-witness of all the violences that were offered to him? Suppose a man were in exile with David, or in prison with Joseph, or in a dungeon with Jeremiah, or in the stocks with Paul and Silas, or in banishment for the testimony of Jesus, with John, yet would it not be a singular comfort to him to have the presence of a kind father, a bosom friend, a wise counsellor, an able physician with him? O Christian, be thou in what place thou wilt, and with what company thou wilt, and in what condition thou wilt, yet thy loving God, thy kind father, thy bosom friend, &c., will be still with thee, he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; and oh what a spring of comfort should this be to thee! But,

(2.) Secondly, Know for your comfort, that there is always some special favours and blessings annexed to this signal presence of God, as 'I will be with thee, and bless thee:' Gen. 26:3, 'I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest:' 28:15, 'I will be with him in trouble, and honour him:' Ps. 91:15, 'I will be with him, and strengthen him:' Isa. 41:10, 'I will be with thee, and the flames shall not kindle upon thee:' 43:2, 'I will be with thee, and there shall not a man be able to stand before thee:' Josh. 1:5, 'I will be with thee, to deliver thee:' Jer. 1:19, 'I am with thee, to save thee, and to deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and out of the hand of the terrible,' 15:20, 21. Hushai's presence with David was a burden: Job's wife's presence was but a vexation unto him, and Christ's presence

among the Gergesenes was a terror to them, and the presence of talkative friends is many times a trouble to us, 2 Sam. 15:33; Job 2:9, 10; Mat. 8:28, 34. Oh, but this signal, this favourable presence of the Lord with his people, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses, is a sweet presence, a comfortable presence, a delightful presence, a blessed presence, yea, such a presence as has many singular blessings annexed to it. But,

(3.) Thirdly, Know for your comfort, that you shall have mercy and kindness, and whatever good you need in due season, at that very instant, at that very nick of time wherein you most need mercy. God will time your mercies, and your blessings for you; he is nigh, and will not fail you at a dead lift, Ps. 145:18; Deut. 4:7; Gen. 22:10–13. When Abraham had bound his son, and bent his sword, and the knife was up, then comes a voice from heaven, 'Abraham, Abraham, hold thy hand.' At that very nick of time, when the four hundred and thirty years were expired, Israel was delivered out of their captivity and slavery, Exod. 12:41, 51; Deut. 11:14, 'I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain, and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.' God gives rain to all by a providence, but he gives rain to his Israel by virtue of a promise, Acts 14:18; Job 38:26. God engages himself not only to give rain, but to give it in due season; he will give the first rain after the sowing of the seed, that it might take rooting in the earth; and he will give the latter rain a little before harvest, that the ears might be full. O my friends! it is wonderful mercy, that God will time our mercies for us. When Jehoshaphat was put to a hard pinch, at that very nick of time God owns him, stands by him, and gives him a great victory, 2 Chron. 20:12, 22–26. When David was at a great plunge, Saul being at his very heels, at that very nick of time, tidings were brought to Saul, that the Philistines had invaded the land, and so David escapes, 1 Sam. 23:26–28. When all human help failed, God came in and helped at a dead-lift. So Julian was cut off by the Persian war, at that very nick of time when he had vowed at his return, to make a sacrifice of the Christians' lives. And so Charles the Fifth was diverted from persecuting of the Protestants by the Turks breaking

into Hungary, at that very nick of time when his heart was set upon a warm persecution. And so Justice Gilford, a violent papist in Queen Mary's days, going up the stairs to Mrs Roberts her chamber, to compel her, will she or will she not, to go to mass, at that very nick of time he was suddenly taken with his old disease the gout, and so grievously tormented, that he swore he would never trouble her more.² When Faux was giving fire to the match, that should have given fire to the powder that should have blown up king, lords, and commons, at that very nick of time, he that never slumbers nor sleeps prevented him; and so turned our intended funeral into a festival, Ps. 121:3–5. O Christian! are thy troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure, much in burthen, and long in continuance, yet remember that thy God is near, whose mercies are numerous, whose wisdom is wondrous, and whose power is miraculous. The nearness or remoteness of a friend is very material and considerable in our troubles, distresses, wants, dangers, &c. I have such a friend, and he would help me, but he lives so far off; and I have another friend that has a great love for me, that is able to counsel me, and to speak a word in season to me, and that in my distress would stand close to me, but he is so remote. I have a special friend, that did he know how things stand with me, would make my burdens his, and my wants his, and my sorrows his; but he is in a far country, he is at the Indies, and I may be undone before I can hear from him. But it is not thus with you, O Christians! who have a God so nigh unto you, who have the signal presence of God in the midst of you, yea who have a God always standing by you, 'The Lord stood by me,' &c. O my friends, how can you want comfort, that have the God of all consolation present with you? How can you want counsel, that have the wonderful counsellor so near unto you? How can you want grace, who have the God of all grace standing by you? How can you want peace, who have always the presence of the prince of peace with you? 2 Cor. 1:3; Isa. 9:6; 1 Pet. 5:10; Isa. 9:6. But,

(4.) Fourthly, Know for your comfort, that if God be with you, there is nothing, there can be nothing but weakness against you. Isa. 27:4, 'Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle, I would go

through them, I would burn them together?' What are briars and thorns to a devouring fire, to the consuming flames? no more are all the enemies of the church to the presence of God with his people. God will be a burning and destroying fire to all the enemies of Zion. Wicked men are chaff: Ps. 1:4, 'And what is that to the wind, to the whirlwind? they are stubble.' Job 21:18, 'They are as driven stubble to his bow.' Isa. 41:2, 'They are as stubble fully dry.' Nah. 1:10. 'They are as stubble before the flame.' Joel 2:5, 'They are like dust.' 2 Kings 13:7, 'Yea, like small dust.' Isa. 29:5, 'They are like a morning cloud, an early dew, a little smoke.' Hosea 13:3. The morning cloud is soon dispelled, the early dew is soon dried up, the rolling smoke out of the chimney is presently scattered.' Oh, the weakness of man! Oh, the power of God! No people on earth have such a power on their sides as the saints have. Consult these scriptures, 2 Kings 6:16; 2 Chron. 32:6, 7; Isa. 8:9, 10; Num. 13:28, 30–33, and 14:9. No Christian can look upon the strong and mighty enemies of Zion in a scripture glass, but must behold them as weak and impotent persons. Who could but smile to see weak children to attempt to besiege a wall of brass, or a wall of fire? Zech. 2:5; as great a folly and weakness it is for wicked men to make attempts upon the saints, who have been to this day, and will be to the end, a trembling and a burdensome stone to all that gather together against them, Zech. 12:2, 3. Sense looks upon the powers of the world as strong, mighty, and invincible; but faith looks upon them as poor, weak, contemptible, gasping, dying men. Thus heroical Luther looked upon them, *Contemptus est a me Romanus et favor et furor*, I care neither for Rome's favour nor fury; I am neither fond of the one, nor afraid of the other. It is dangerous to look upon the powers of the world in the devil's multiplying glass; it is best and safest to look upon them in a scripture glass, and then we shall never fear them, nor sinfully shift them. But,

(5.) Fifthly, If God be signally present with his people, in their greatest troubles, deepest distresses, and most deadly dangers, then know for your comfort, that none can be against you but they must be against God himself, Acts 9:4–6; for God is with you in all your troubles, as a father is with his child, a husband with his wife, a

general with his army, and as a confederate with his allies, who is with them offensively and defensively. Hence they are said to rage against God, Isa. 37:28, 29; and to blaspheme God, 2 Kings 19:3, 6; and to fight against God, Acts 5:38, 39, and 23:9; Prov. 21:30. To fight against God is labour in vain. Who ever fought against God and prospered? Some think that this phrase of fighting against God is drawn from the fable of the giants, which were said to make war with the gods. The church of Christ always flourisheth most, and increaseth most, when the tyrants of the earth oppose it most, and persecute it most. Diocletian laid down the empire in great discontent, because he could not by any persecution suppress the true Christian religion. The more violent he was against the people of God, the more they increased and multiplied, and the more they were emboldened and encouraged; and therefore in a rage he throws up all. But,

[1.] First, It is the presence of an Almighty God: Gen. 17:1, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect,' Gen. 49:25, and Num. 24:4. Some derive the word Shaddai, here used from dai, that signifieth sufficiency. God is an all-sufficient good, and a self-sufficient good; he is an independent good, an absolute good, an original good, a universal good. Some derive the word Shaddai from Shad, that signifieth a breast, a dug, because God feedeth his children with sufficiency of all good things, as the loving mother doth the child with the milk of her breasts. God is the only satisfactory good, and proportionable good, and suitable good to our souls; as the breast, the dug is the most suitable good to the child's stomach. And others derive the word Shaddai from Shaddad, which signifieth to spoil, conquer, or overcome, and so they say that God did here invert or overcome the order of nature, in causing the barren to bear. But most authors do translate it omnipotent. God, then, is called Shaddai, that is omnipotent and all-sufficient, for his omnipotency includeth also all-sufficiency.

[2.] Secondly, You have the presence of a loving God with you: Isa. 43:4, 'Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been

honourable, and I have loved thee.' But that this may the better stick and work, you must remember, First, That God loves you with a first love, see Deut. 7:7, 8: 1 John 4:19, 'We love him because he first loved us.' Our love is but a reflex of his. God first cast an eye of love upon us before we cast an eye of love on him, and therefore God is no way indebted to us for our love. Mary answers not Rabboni till Christ first said unto her Mary, John 20:16. The pure nature of love is more seen in God's first love to us than in ours to him. By nature we were without God, and afar off from God; we were strangers to God, and enemies to God, yea, haters of God; and therefore if God had not loved us firstly, we had been done everlastingly, Eph. 2:12, 19; Rom. 5:10, and 1:30. Secondly, As God loves you with a first love, so he loves you with a free love: Hosea 14:4, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' I know they are backslidden, but I will heal their backslidings. I know they have broken their bones by their fall, but I will make those broken bones to rejoice. I know there is nothing at all in them that is excellent or eminent, that is honourable or acceptable, that is laudable or lovely, yet 'I will love them freely,' Ex mero motu, of mine own, free, rich, absolute, sovereign, and independent grace. Thirdly, As he loves you with a free love, so he loves you with an everlasting love: Jer. 31:3, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' Heb., I love thee with the love of perpetuity, or with the love of eternity. My love and my affections continue still the same to thee, and shall do for ever; or, as others carry the words, I love thee with an ancient love, or with the love of antiquity; I love thee still with the same affection that in former ages I bare towards thee. Fourthly, As he loves you with an everlasting love, so he loves you with an unchangeable love: Mal. 3:6, 'I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' Men change, and counsels change, and occurrences change, and friends change, and relations change, and kingdoms change, and commonwealths change, but God never changes, as Balaam confesses, who was the devil's hackney, and who had a mind to dance with the devil all day, and then sup with Christ at night, Num. 23:10. God is neither false nor fickle; he cannot, like men, say and unsay; he cannot alter his mind nor eat his

words. 'The eternity of Israel cannot lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent,' Ps. 89:34; 1 Sam. 15:29. Men are so mutable and changeable, that there is no hold to be taken of what they say; but God is immutable in his nature, in his essence, in his counsels, in his attributes, in his decrees, in his promises, &c. He is, as the school-men say, *Omninò immutabilis*, Altogether immutable. Fifthly, As he loves you with an unchangeable love, so he loves you with a special love, with a peculiar love, with a distinguishing love, with a superlative love, Ps. 146:7, 8. The Lord executes judgment for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry, he looseth the prisoners, he opens the eyes of the blind, he raises them that are bowed down, he loveth the righteous, and this is more than all the rest. Sixthly and lastly, As he loves his people with a special love, with a peculiar love, so he loves them with the greatest love, with a matchless love. 'O Daniel greatly beloved:' John 3:16, 'God so loved the world,' &c. Here is a *sic* without a *sicut*, there being nothing in nature wherewith to parallel it. This *sic* without a *sicut* signifies the greatness of God's love, the vehemency of his love, and the admirableness of his love. Now, what an unspeakable comfort must this be to his saints, to have the presence of a loving God, to have the presence of such a loving God with them in all their troubles and deep distresses! If the presence of a loving friend, a loving relation in our troubles and distresses, be such a mercy, oh, what then is the presence of a loving God!

[3.] Thirdly, It is the presence of an active God, who will be a defence to you, a shield to you, a sword to you, a buckler to you, a sun to you, a strong tower to you, a salvation to you. None can withstand him, none can equal him, none can out-act him, Ps. 18:2; 2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 18:10; Jer. 32:40, 41; Isa. 30:18, 19, and 27:3; Jer. 31:28.

[4.] Fourthly, It is the presence of a wakeful God, of a watchful God, of a God that never, no never, slumbers or sleeps. God will be so far from sleeping, that he will not so much as slumber, Ps. 121:3–5. The phrase is taken from watchmen, who stand on the walls in time of war to discover the approaches of enemies, and accordingly give

warning. Now watchmen have been treacherous and sleepy. The capitol of Rome had been taken by the Gauls, if the geese had not been more wakeful than the watchmen of the walls. Iphicrates, the Athenian captain, visiting the guards on the walls of Corinth, found one of the watch asleep, and presently thrust him through with his sword, saying, Dead I found him, and dead I left him. Though watchmen slumber and sleep, yet that God that is present with his people doth neither; his seven eyes are always open.

[5.] Fifthly, It is the presence of a wise God, of an omniscient God. God fills all things, he encompasseth all things, and he sustaineth all things, and therefore he must needs know all things, Ezek. 3:9; Ps. 33:10, 11; Isa. 46:10, and 40:28; Rom. 11:33; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jonah 1:5; 2 Kings 14:6; Mat. 26:24, 25. God can find Jonah in the bottom of the ship; and Jeroboam's wife in her disguises; and Judas in his treason; and Demas in his apostasy; and the scribes and Pharisees in their hypocrisy, 2 Tim. 4:10; Mat. 23; Rev. 4:6. The whole world is to him as a sea of glass: *corpus diaphanum*; a clear transparent body. There is nothing hid from his eyes; so that he that can but find out a place where God sees not, there let that man sin and spare not: 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. 4:13: *γυμνὰ*, 'naked,' as when the skin is pulled off, and *τετραχηλισμένα*, 'opened as the entrails of a sacrifice,' cut down the back. The apostle, say some, useth a metaphor taken from a sheep, whose skin is taken off, and he hanged up by the neck, with his back towards the wall, and all his entrails laid bare and exposed to open view. He alludes, say others, to the anatomising of a creature, wherein men are very cautious to find out every little vein or muscle, though they be never so close. They are naked, therefore God sees their outside; and opened, dissected, quartered, and cleft asunder through the backbone, so that he sees their inside also. Opened is more than naked: naked is that which is not clothed or covered; opened is that whose inwards are discovered and made conspicuous. Some make it a metaphor from those that lie with their faces upwards, that all passengers may see who they are. Is it such a comfort to have the presence of a wise and knowing friend with us in

our greatest troubles and deepest distresses? what a transcendent comfort must it be then to enjoy the presence of an all-seeing and an all-knowing God in all our troubles and distresses! The eye of heaven sees all, and knows all, and writes down all thy troubles and trials, thy sorrows and sufferings, thy losses and crosses, Mat. 6:32; and accordingly will an all-knowing God act for his own glory and his people's good.

[6.] Sixthly and lastly, It is the presence of a God of mercy, a God of bowels, a God of compassions, Exod. 33:7, 8; Jer. 31:18–20; Hosea 11:8, 9; Lam. 3:22. 'His compassions fail not.' Mercy is as essential to God as light is to the sun, Micah 7:18, 19, or as heat is to the fire. He delights in mercy, as the senses and faculties of the soul do in their several actions. Patience, and clemency, and mercy, and compassion, and peace are the fruits of his bowels—the offspring which the divine nature doth produce. God's compassions are fatherly compassions, Ps. 103:13; they are motherly compassions, Isa. 49:15; they are brotherly compassions, Heb. 2:12; they are friendly compassions, Cant. 5:1, 2. Oh, how sweet must the presence of a God of mercy, a God of compassion, be to the saints in a day of trouble! The presence of a compassionate friend in a day of distress is very desirable and comfortable; what then is the presence of a compassionate God! Thus you see that there is no presence to the divine presence—no presence to the signal presence of God with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. But,

(7.) Seventhly and lastly, If God be signally present with his people in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses, then let them all know for their comfort, that this presence will make up the want or loss of all outward comforts, this presence will make up the loss of a husband, a child, a friend, an estate, &c., 1 Sam. 1:8. Look, as all light meets in the sun, and as all water meets in the sea, so all our outward comforts meet in the God of all comfort, 2 Cor. 1:3. When Alexander asked king Porus, being then his prisoner, how he would be used? He answered in one word, Βασιλικῶς, i.e., like a king. Alexander again replying, Do you desire nothing else? No, saith Porus, all things are

in Βασιλικῶς, in this one word, like a king; so all things, all comforts are to be found in this signal presence of God with his people, in their greatest troubles and deepest distresses. Certainly the gracious presence of the Lord is infinitely better than the presence of all outward comforts, as you know one sun is more glorious and comfortable than ten thousand stars.

Question. But how may a person that has lost this gracious presence of God, recover it again?

Response 1. First, Observe how you lost this presence of God, and labour to recover it by a contrary course. Did you lose it by sinful omissions? then be more active in a way of duty. Didst thou lose the presence of God by neglecting thy watch, or by not walking with God, or by an eager pursuit of the world, or by closing with this or that temptation, or by letting fall thy communion with God? take a contrary course. Now keep up thy watch, walk close with God, keep up a daily converse with lively Christians, let thy heart and affections be set upon things above, keep thy ground in the face of all temptations, maintain a standing communion with God, Ps. 119:63; Col. 3:1, 2. After Christ had stood knocking and calling to his spouse —'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night,' Cant. 5:2, 3, 6—but found no entrance, he retired and withdrew himself, because she would not arise and put on her coat; but when she bestirs herself, 'she finds him whom her soul loved,' chap. 3:1–4. Then Christ comes into his garden again, and returns to his spouse again, and forgets all former unkindness, chap. 6:1, 2. But,

Response 2. Secondly, Inquire where, when, and why God has withdrawn himself; as we do when dear friends absent themselves from us. 'O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?' Jer. 14:8. Ver. 9, 'Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot

save? Yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.'

Response 3. Thirdly, Stand not with Christ for anything, not for a right eye, or a right hand, nor for an Isaac or a Benjamin. Don't say this work is too high, and that too hard, and the other too hot, and the other too dangerous, in order to the recovery of God's countenance and presence. Thou must not think anything in the world too much to do for Christ, or to suffer for Christ. Thou wilt be a happy man if thou canst recover Christ's lost presence; though it be upon the hardest terms imaginable. But,

Response 4. Fourthly, Let your hearts lie humble and low under the loss of God's gracious presence, Ps. 51:8–12; 1 Pet. 5:6. For, (1.) It is the greatest loss. (2.) It is a loss-embittering loss; it is a loss that will greatly embitter all your worldly losses. I have lost my health, I have lost a hopeful child, I have lost a gracious yoke-fellow, which was the delight of mine eyes and the joy of my heart; I have lost a fair estate, I have lost an intimate friend, I have lost a brave trade. Oh, but that which embitters all my losses, and puts a sting into them, is this, that I have lost the gracious presence of God that once I enjoyed. (3.) It is a loss that all outward comforts can never make up. When the sun is down, nothing can make it day with us. (4.) It is an invisible loss; and no losses to invisible losses. As there are no mercies to invisible mercies, so there are no losses to invisible losses. (5.) It is a loss that will cost a man dear before it will be made up again. Oh the sighs, the groans, the strong cries, the earnest prayers, the bottles of tears that the recovery of the divine presence will cost a Christian; upon all which accounts, how well does it become a Christian to lie humble at the foot of God!

Response 5. Fifthly, Lift up a mighty cry to heaven. Thus the saints of old have done. Consult these scriptures, Ps. 51:6–13; Lam. 3:56, 57; Ps. 4:6, 7, 27:9, 38:21, 22, 138:3, and 119:8, 'O forsake me not utterly.' Christ was forsaken for a few hours, David for a few months, and Job for a few years, for the trial and exercise of his faith and

patience; but then they all sent up a mighty cry to heaven. Leave them God did, to their thinking; forsake them he did in regard of vision, but not in regard of union. The promise is, that 'God will draw near to us if we draw near to him,' James 4:8. Draw nigh to God in duty, and he will draw nigh to you in mercy: sanctify him, and he will satisfy you. Prayer is the only means to supply all defects, it gets all, and makes up the loss of all; as a gracious poor woman said in her distress, I have no friend, but I have prayer; that will get favour with my God; so long as I can find a praying heart, God will, I am sure of that, find a pitying heart and a helping hand. It is not the length, but the strength of prayer; it is not the labour of the lip, but the travail of the heart that prevails with God, Jer. 29:12–14. It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they be; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; nor the music of our prayers, how sweet they be; nor the logic of our prayers, how methodical they be, that will carry the day with God. It is only fervency, importunity in prayer, that will make a man prevalent with God. Fervent prayer hits the mark, carries the day, and pierceth the walls of heaven, though like those of Gaza, made of brass and iron, James 5:16, 17; Luke 18; Isa. 45:2. The child has got many a kiss and many a hug by crying. If God has withdrawn his presence, the best, the surest, and the readiest way to recover it is to send up a mighty cry to heaven. But,

Response 6. Sixthly, Be sure you don't take up your rest in any creature, in any comfort, in any contentment, in any worldly enjoyment, Jer. 50:6. When the presence of God is withdrawn from you, say as Absalom, 'What is all this to me, so long as I am banished my father's presence, so long as I can't see the king's face?' 2 Sam. 14:24, 28, 32, 33. When the mother sees that the child is taken with the baby, the rattle, the fiddle, she comes not in sight. If you take up your rest in any of the babies, in any of the poor things of this world, God will certainly keep out of sight. He will never honour them with his countenance and presence, who take up in anything below himself, below his favour, below his presence. I have read of a devout pilgrim, who going up to Jerusalem was very kindly and nobly

entertained in several places, but still he cried out, Oh, but this is not Jerusalem! this is not Jerusalem! So when you cast-your eye upon this creature or that, oh then cry out, This is not the presence of God, this is not the presence of God; and when you begin to be tickled and taken with this and that enjoyment, with this or that contentment, oh then remember this is not the presence of God, this is not the presence of God! Here is a gracious yoke-fellow, here are hopeful children, here is a pleasant habitation, here is brave air, here is a gainful trade, &c., but what are all these to me, so long as my sun is set in a cloud, and God has withdrawn his presence from me? Remember this once for all, that the whole world is but a barren wilderness without the countenance and presence of God, Ps. 63:1–3. But,

Response 7. Seventhly and lastly, Patiently and quietly wait upon him in the way of his ordinances for the recovery of his presence. Consult the scriptures in the margin. Here God dwells, here he walks, here he makes known his glory, here he gives forth his love, here he vouchsafes his presence. When God is withdrawn, your great business is to prize ordinances, and to keep close to ordinances, till God shall be pleased to lift up the light of his countenance and vouchsafe his presence to you. You will never recover the divine presence by neglecting ordinances, nor by slighting ordinances, nor by turning your back upon ordinances, nor by entertaining low thoughts of ordinances. He that thinks ordinances to be needless things, concludes—(1.) That the taking away of the kingdom of heaven from the Jews was no great judgment, Mat. 21:43. (2.) That the bestowing of it upon other people is no great mercy. If God be gone, it is good to lie at the pool till he returns, John 5:2–10. There are many dear Christians who have lost their God for a time, but after a time they have found him again in the way of his ordinances; and therefore let no temptation draw thee off from ordinances; say, Here I will live, here I will lie, here I will wait at the pool of ordinances, till the Lord shall return in mercy to my soul.

I shall follow this discourse of the divine presence with my earnest prayers that it may from on high be so signally blest, as that it may issue in the furtherance of the internal and eternal good, both of Writer, Reader, and Hearer.

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